

The Department of Philosophy
Fall 2024 Course Descriptions
336 ten Hoor Hall • 205-348-5942 • *philosophy.ua.edu*

INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

PHL 100

Not open to anyone who has taken PHL 191 (Honors Introduction to Philosophy).

- **PHL 100.003 – MWF 2:00pm-2:50pm, Eric Solis**
- **PHL 100.004 – TR 9:30am-10:45am, Dr. Stephen Davey**
- **PHL 100.005 – TR 11:00am-12:15pm, Dr. Stephen Davey**

PHL 100.003: Philosophy is often described as a question-driven or problem-driven discipline. This is appropriate, since ‘doing philosophy’ involves asking difficult questions, and formulating complex problems. But philosophers don’t ask questions and formulate problems just for their own sake. They do this in hopes of finding answers and solutions. This course is an introduction to philosophy. Hence, in this course, we will be taking a close look at some of the most significant philosophical questions and problems that have arisen throughout the course of history. We will also consider solutions to the problems, and answers to the questions. We will talk about the existence or nonexistence of God, the problem of evil, knowledge and reality, free will, the nature of morality, personal identity, love, life, death, and other existential issues. This course requires no prior courses in philosophy, and should be of equal interest to students who intend to pursue other majors.

PHL 100.004 & 100.005: Philosophers get excited about things they don’t understand. This provides a lot of material, as there are puzzles and unanswered questions in most every facet of our lives. In this class, students will be introduced to a variety of questions that have received great attention from philosophers, and to some of the most influential historical and contemporary attempts to address them. They will learn to analyze philosophical theories and arguments, and to construct their own answers to these difficult questions with a measure of creativity and rigor. We will cover a broad range of topics in metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, and the philosophy of mind.

Prerequisites: None

Requirements (tentative): Varies from section to section; contact instructor for details.

Core Curriculum: This course carries an *HU* designation.

CRITICAL THINKING

PHL 104

- **PHL 104.001 – TR 9:30am-10:45am, Dr. Adam Arico**
- **PHL 104.002 – TR 12:30pm-1:45pm, Dr. Adam Arico**

- **PHL 104.003 – MWF 10:00am-10:50am, Leonard Feldblyum**
- **PHL 104.004 – MWF 11:00am-11:50am, Leonard Feldblyum**

Course Description: Thinking critically does not come naturally to most of us; in fact, it is often contrary to our natural inclinations. In this course, we begin by looking at how human cognition typically operates, and why our psychology can often interfere with rational, critical thought. We will explore the basic features of human learning, memory, and reasoning, including common predispositions that often lead us to draw faulty conclusions, to arrive at mistaken judgments, and to make bad decisions.

Having identified some of the obstacles to and difficulties in behaving rationally and thinking critically, we will move on to the larger goal of the course: to better understand the structure of arguments and know how to critically assess them. This portion of the course will cover both inductive and deductive reasoning, as well as basic features of arguments, and will instruct you in identifying major fallacies, including ad hominem arguments, straw man arguments, appeal to irrelevant reasons, false dilemmas, etc. (see schedule for class meetings for more topics to be covered). Acquiring these skills will help you both better assess others' arguments and better construct your own.

Prerequisites: None

Requirements (tentative): (a) three in-class exams; (b) homework and writing assignments (d) a course participation grade.

Core Curriculum: This course carries an *HU* designation.

HONORS PHILOSOPHICAL INTRODUCTION TO DEDUCTIVE LOGIC

PHL 106 – Dr. Chase Wrenn

- **PHL 106.001 – MWF 10:00am-10:50am, Dr. Chase Wrenn**

Course Description: What is the difference between a good argument and a bad one? This course focuses on tools developed by philosophers and mathematicians for answering that question. In it, you will learn to use analytical methods such as the construction of proofs and countermodels to evaluate arguments. Along the way, you will explore and analyze influential arguments from the history of philosophy, including some concerning questions of value, ethics, and aesthetics. Philosophical arguments examined in this course may include Aquinas's arguments for the existence of God, Parmenidean arguments that change is impossible, Berkeley's argument for idealism, Descartes' Cogito argument, John Stuart Mill's "proof" of Utilitarianism, Kant's argument for the Categorical Imperative, Singer's argument for animal rights, the Stoics' argument that death is not to be feared, and more. The formal tools used in this class include the notation of sentential and predicate logic (with identity), truth tables, a natural deduction proof system, and the use of semantic countermodels.

Prerequisite: C- or better in MATH 100, or equivalent. Admission to UA Honors or a 28 ACT.

Requirements: Class attendance, discussion participation, up to seven tests. Course is self-paced and your grade is based largely on how many of the tests you pass by the end of the term.

Core Curriculum: This course carries an *HU* designation.

PHILOSOPHICAL INTRODUCTION TO DEDUCTIVE LOGIC

PHL 195 – Dr. Chase Wrenn

- **PHL 195.001 – MWF 11:00am-11:50am, Dr. Chase Wrenn**

Course Description: What is the difference between a good argument and a bad one? This course focuses on tools developed by philosophers and mathematicians for answering that question. In it, you will learn to use analytical methods such as the construction of proofs and countermodels to evaluate arguments. Along the way, you will explore and analyze influential arguments from the history of philosophy, including some concerning questions of value, ethics, and aesthetics. Philosophical arguments examined in this course may include Aquinas's arguments for the existence of God, Parmenidean arguments that change is impossible, Berkeley's argument for idealism, Descartes' Cogito argument, John Stuart Mill's "proof" of Utilitarianism, Kant's argument for the Categorical Imperative, Singer's argument for animal rights, the Stoics' argument that death is not to be feared, and more. The formal tools used in this class include the notation of sentential and predicate logic, truth tables, a natural deduction proof system, and the use of semantic countermodels.

Prerequisite: C- or better in MATH 100, or equivalent.

Requirements: Class attendance, discussion participation, up to six tests. Course is self-paced and your grade is based largely on how many of the tests you pass by the end of the term.

Core Curriculum: This course carries an *HU* designation.

ANCIENT PHILOSOPHY

PHL 211 – Eric Solis

- **PHL 211.001 – MWF 10:00am-10:50am, Eric Solis**

Course Description: This course provides an introduction to some of the most important philosophical ideas, texts, and figures of Ancient Greece and Rome. We will read and discuss a selection of philosophical masterpieces, many of which are literary masterpieces as well, and have exercised an unparalleled influence on the subsequent course of Western Philosophy. Authors to be discussed may include Plato, Aristotle, the Epicureans, Stoics, and Skeptics, as well as some earlier pre-Socratic thinkers. We will be considering the views of these authors on a number of issues, many of which continue to be influential today. These may include their views on ethics, politics, psychology, epistemology, physics, metaphysics, rhetoric, and philosophical method. This course requires no prior courses in philosophy, and should be of equal interest to students who intend to pursue other majors.

Prerequisites: None

Requirements:

Core Curriculum: This course carries an *HU* designation

EARLY MODERN PHILOSOPHY

PHL 212

- **PHL 212.001 – TR 4:00pm-5:15pm, Dr. Seth Bordner**
- **PHL 212.001 – MWF 1:00pm-1:50pm, Leonard Feldblyum**

PHL 212.001 Course Description: This course will look at the main figures and intellectual developments of the early Modern period of philosophy. We will proceed chronologically, starting with Descartes's seminal *Meditations on First Philosophy* and tracing two very different branches of influence from there to what are often called the Rationalist and Empiricist schools. Other figures of note will be Locke, Leibniz, Berkeley, Hume, and Kant.

PHL 212.002 Course Description: This course will look at the main figures and intellectual developments of the early Modern period of philosophy. We will proceed chronologically, starting with Descartes's seminal *Meditations on First Philosophy* and tracing two very different branches of influence from there to what are often called the Rationalist and Empiricist schools. Other figures of note will be Spinoza, Leibniz, Locke, Hume, and Kant.

Prerequisites: None

Requirements: There will be three exams throughout the course; two mid-term exams and one final exam

Core Curriculum: This course carries an *HU* designation.

PLATO

PHL 213 – Eric Solis

- **PHL 213.001 – MWF 11:00am-11:50am, Eric Solis**

Course Description: Few have had a more profound impact on a discipline than Plato has had on philosophy. Our purpose in this class is gain a better understanding of Plato's philosophical thought and writings. We will read a selection of dialogues from the early, middle, and late period of Plato's philosophical career. Special attention will be paid to each dialogue in its own right, but we will also consider the development of Plato's thought across dialogues. Topics to be discussed may include (but are not limited to) life and death, the soul, the nature of reality, knowledge, virtue and happiness, rhetoric and persuasion, love, law, and political expertise. This course requires no prior courses in philosophy, and should be of equal interest to students who intend to pursue other majors.

Prerequisites: None

Requirements: There will be three exams throughout the course; two mid-term exams and one final exam

Core Curriculum: This course carries an *HU* designation.

MEDICAL ETHICS

PHL 223.001 – Dr. Stuart Rachels

- **PHL 223.001 – MWF 11:00am-11:50am, Dr. Stuart Rachels**

Course Description: This course is an introduction to some of the ethical issues involved in medicine. Topics include: physician-assisted dying; the allocation of organs and other scarce resources; abortion; stem cell research; and patient autonomy. Our main text will be Lewis Vaughn, *Bioethics: Principles, Issues, and Cases (4th ed.)* (Oxford University Press, 2020).

Prerequisites: None

Requirements: There will be three exams. Students will be required to attend every class meeting.

Core Curriculum: This course carries an *HU* designation.

PHL 223.002 – Dr. Jennifer Gleason

- **MWF 2:00pm-2:50pm – Dr. Jennifer Gleason**

Course Description: This class provides an introduction to the philosophical study of applied ethics by way of a discussion of topics related to the practice of medical and biological science. Topics of discussion will include malpractice and negligence, paternalism vs patient autonomy, informed consent, euthanasia, abortion, and genetic engineering. Along the way, other important topics in moral philosophy will be discussed.

Prerequisites: None

Core Curriculum: This course carries an *HU* designation.

PHL 223.003 – Dr. Holly Kantin

- **PHL 223.003 – 1:00pm-1:50pm, Dr. Holly Kantin**

Course Description: This class is an introduction to the philosophical study of biomedical ethics. Topics covered include physician-assisted dying, the ethics of abortion, the concept of medical futility, the definition of death, patient autonomy, and the ethics of medical research, among others. Along the way, other important issues in moral philosophy will be discussed.

Prerequisites: None

Core Curriculum: This course carries an *HU* designation.

PHL 223.003 – Marie Feldblyum Le Blevenec

- **PHL 223.003 – TR 3:30pm-4:45pm, Marie Feldblyum Le Blevenec**

Course Description: The objective of this course is to examine ethical challenges and moral questions that emerge in medical settings, and as a result of the development of new medical technologies. We will examine topics such as euthanasia and end-of-life care, abortion, the distinction between treatment and enhancement, genetic screening for disability traits, clinical research on human subjects, the right to healthcare, and the role of AI in medical care and research. Through rigorous examination of these subjects, students will gain an understanding of ethical issues in the medical field, and develop the ability to analyze complex moral arguments, preparing them to navigate the challenges they will encounter as future healthcare professionals, policymakers, or informed citizens.

Prerequisites: None

Core Curriculum: This course carries an *HU* designation.

PHL 223.900(M)/902(D) – Dr. Adam Arico (online)

- **PHL 223.900 – ONLINE (MAIN CAMPUS)**
PHL 223.901 – ONLINE (DISTANCE LEARNING)

Course Description: This class provides an introduction to the philosophical study of applied ethics by way of a discussion of topics related to the practice of medical and biological science. Topics of discussion will include abortion, stem cell research, cloning, the allocation of scarce or limited resources, animal experimentation, and patient autonomy, among others. Along the way, other important topics in moral philosophy will be discussed.

Prerequisites: None

Core Curriculum: This course carries an *HU* designation.

PHILOSOPHY AND THE LAW

PHL 240 – Dr. Luke Hunt

- **PHL 240.001 – TR 9:30am-10:45am, Dr. Luke Hunt**

Course Description: Should laws about sex and pornography be based on social conventions regarding what is offensive? Are emotions reliable guides for human behavior and what the law should be? This course examines the nature of the law and its relation to morality, with a special emphasis on whether emotions such as shame and disgust should be the basis for criminalization and punishment. The course draws upon a rich variety of philosophical, psychological, and historical references—from Aristotle to Freud—and on legal examples as diverse as the trials of Oscar Wilde, the Martha Stewart insider trading case, and recent

controversies about free speech on campus. The course themes will be linked to several "doctrinal digressions" in tort, contract, property, criminal, and constitutional law.

Prerequisites: None

Requirements:

Core Curriculum: This course carries an *HU* designation.

MIND AND NATURE

PHL 260 – Dr. Torin Alter

- **PHL 260.001 – TR 11:00am-12:15pm, Dr. Torin Alter**

Course Description: This course introduces students to the philosophy of mind primarily by way of reflection on puzzles and thought experiments. The puzzles and thought experiments concern consciousness, dualism, physicalism, representation, perception, persons, skepticism, and related matters.

Prerequisites: None

Requirements: 3 in-class exams, at least some of which will include essay questions, and an optional final paper

Core Curriculum: This course carries an *HU* designation.

This course is part of the Mind - Brain concentration and Philosophy and Medicine specializations.

PHILOSOPHY, PSYCHOLOGY, AND NEUROSCIENCE

PHL 261 – Dr. Benjamin Kozuch

- **MWF 11:00am-11:50am, Dr. Benjamin Kozuch**

Course Description: While philosophy has traditionally been done from the armchair, our large and growing body of scientific knowledge has made this approach less tenable. More to the point, recent results in psychology and neuroscience have relevance to perennial topics in philosophy such as free will, rationality, ethics, and religion. As well, the philosophical knowledge accumulated over aeons on these topics continue to inform psychological and neuroscientific research into these areas. This class surveys the give and take between these fields that has occurred over the last few decades, with a keen eye to seeing how the cognitive sciences have helped further the debate over some of these often ancient philosophical issues.

Prerequisites: None

Requirements: TBA

Core Curriculum: This course carries an *HU* designation.

CONSCIOUSNESS AND COGNITION

PHL 262 – Dr. Benjamin Kozuch

- **MWF 9:00am-9:50am, Dr. Benjamin Kozuch**

Course Description: Though studied for millennia, consciousness remains a mystery. This course takes a critical look at philosophical and scientific attempts to account for the mind and consciousness, giving an emphasis to cognitive neuroscientific approaches. The course traces the arc of both philosophical and scientific approaches to studying the mind, and culminates with an examination of how these two approaches have recently become entwined in present-day studies of consciousness. Among the topics covered are the mind-body problem, consciousness research in psychology, and contemporary theories of consciousness.

Prerequisites: None

Requirements: TBA

Core Curriculum: -

INTRODUCTION TO ETHICS

PHL 292

Not open to anyone who has taken PHL 221 (Honors Introduction to Ethics).

- **PHL 292.001 – MWF 9:00am-9:50am, Dr. Holly Kantin**
- **PHL 292.002 – MWF 10:00am-10:50am, Dr. Holly Kantin**
- **PHL 292.003 – MWF 12:00pm-12:50pm, Dr. Holly Kantin**
- **PHL 292.004 – MW 4:00pm-5:15pm, Dr. Seth Bordner**
- **PHL 292.005 – MWF 10:00am-10:50am, Dr. Stuart Rachels**
- **PHL 292.006 – TR 2:00pm-3:15pm, Dr. Stephen Davey**

PHL 292.001-003 Course Description: This course is designed to provide students with a general introduction to the philosophical study of ethics. Students will become familiar with some of the main issues in ethical theory and learn how different approaches to those issues bear on specific ethical controversies. Topics covered include the following: whether there are moral facts and if so, where they come from and how we can know them; the relationship between morality and religion; what general moral principles we should accept; the treatment of nonhuman animals; the ethics of assisted dying; the ethics of abortion.

PHL 292.004-006 Course Description: This course is designed to give the students a broad introduction to the field of philosophical ethics. The primary aim is to acquaint students with the basic subject matter of ethics as it is studied within philosophy, a few central authorities and positions, and a feel for how philosophers engage with contemporary ethical issues in light of some of the historical influences on the discipline. We will read a variety of texts ranging from historical works on ethics generally to contemporary works focusing on

specific moral issues. The hope is that students will develop an understanding and appreciation of how different ethical theories apply to particular cases, and how they might begin to engage in genuine ethical debates.

Prerequisites: None

Requirements: There will be three exams throughout the course; two mid-term exams and one final exam. In addition, there will be periodic, unannounced quizzes given in class to test your comprehension of the readings. These quizzes will be graded on a High Pass/Low Pass/Fail scale.

Core Curriculum: This course carries an *HU* designation. *This course is included in the Jurisprudence and Philosophy and Medicine specializations.*

ART AND HUMAN NATURE

PHL 388 – Dr. Richard Richards

- **TR 2:00pm-3:15pm, Dr. Richard Richards**

Course Description: The arts are seemingly found in all human cultures. Every society seems to have some kind of music, song, dance, storytelling, theatre, decoration and visual art. Why is this so? Is art deeply embedded in what we might call “human nature”? Philosophers have long thought about the arts in terms of human nature. More recently, there are proposals that we can think about the arts “naturalistically” in terms of what the biological and human sciences tell us about human nature, and the human tendencies to make and appreciate art of all kinds. This naturalistic turn requires philosophical thinking first about how we should conceive art; second, how we can interpret and evaluate art, and third, how art functions in a variety of cultural and environmental contexts. We will be looking first at some classical theories of art and human nature, then at some scientific theories of art – all in the context of the traditional debates about the interpretation, evaluation and definition of art. Writing proficiency within this discipline is required for a passing grade in this course.

Prerequisites: Successful completion of at least two PHL courses or permission of the instructor

Requirements: Writing proficiency

Core Curriculum: This course carries an *W* designation.

NEUROETHICS

PHL 422 – Dr. Benjamin Kozuch

- **MWF 1:00pm-1:50pm, Dr. Benjamin Kozuch**

Course Description: Due to advances in psychopharmacology and brain imaging, scenarios resembling those of science fiction may soon be upon us: Medications that enhance our memory, cognition, or happiness could be widely available in the near future, and advances in neuroimaging promise to allow the detection of lying, mental illness, or even level of intelligence. Technologies like these bring a host of ethical questions in their

wake, ones pertaining to privacy, justice, and authenticity to self. Issues such as these are what compose the field of Neuroethics, and will be what we look at in this class.

Prerequisites: Successful completion of at least two PHL courses or permission of the instructor

Requirements: Writing proficiency

Core Curriculum: This course carries an *W* designation.

ADVANCED SEMINAR IN MEDICAL ETHICS

PHL 423 – Marie Feldblyum Le Blevenec

- **TR 12:30pm-1:45pm, Marie Feldblyum Le Blevenec**

Course Description: This course provides an in-depth examination of some of the central ethical issues encountered by physicians and other medical professionals. Students will engage in an in-depth examination of specific issues in medical ethics, with a special emphasis on the ethics of reproductive technologies, including beginning-of-life decision-making (genetic counseling and prenatal screening). We will also discuss related issues including the ethics of genetic data and privacy, the ethics of pediatric care, and the physician-patient relationship. The course is specifically aimed at students who are considering a career in healthcare but will be of interest to anyone who has a special interest in biomedical ethics. This course carries a *W* designation. Writing proficiency is required for a passing grade in this course. A student who does not write with the skill normally required of an upper-division student will not earn a passing grade, no matter how well the student performs in other areas of the course.

Prerequisites: None

Requirements: Writing proficiency

Core Curriculum: This course carries a *W* designation.

PHILOSOPHY OF OPPRESSION

PHL 430 – Dr. Rekha Nath

- **M – 3:00pm-5:30pm, Dr. Rekha Nath**

Course Description: In this course we study philosophical issues concerning oppression. We take up questions about how we should understand social categories such as race and gender: for instance, what does it mean to belong to a certain race, or to be a man or woman? We consider the nature of oppression, working to understand what the hallmarks of oppressive relations are, and we engage in an in-depth exploration of different forms of contemporary oppression. In particular, significant attention will be paid to three specific forms of oppression: racism, sexism, and sizism. In each of these cases, we will survey different views concerning how these different forms of oppression manifest themselves as well as what sorts of social and

legal remedies might be called for. We will also consider questions of responsibility—such as whether victims of oppression have a responsibility to resist the oppressive circumstances they face—and questions concerning what forms of civil disobedience might be justified to combat oppression, and on what grounds.

Prerequisites: You are required to have taken at least two philosophy classes prior to this one, including one at the 200-level or above. If you do not meet this requirement, you must obtain special permission from the instructor.

Requirements: Writing proficiency

Core Curriculum: This course carries a *W* designation. Writing proficiency within the discipline is required for a passing grade in this course.

TICKING TIME BOMBS: PHILOSOPHY & NATIONAL SECURITY

PHL 442 – Dr. Luke Hunt

- **TR 11:00am-12:15pm, Dr. Luke Hunt**

Course Description: As the “ticking time bomb” hypothetical typically goes, you are an intelligence agent or law enforcement officer who has detained the one terrorist with knowledge of how to prevent a large-scale attack. One may contort the hypothetical to make it as heart-rending as possible, but the ultimate question is whether you should torture the detainee in such an extreme scenario. These scenarios raise pressing practical and philosophical questions, but they need not be so extreme. This course examines the central legal and philosophical issues relating to national security, including terrorism, torture, the ethics of intelligence, the national security uses and risks of artificial intelligence, and the balance between security and liberty. Writing proficiency is required for a passing grade in this course. A student who does not write with the skill normally required of an upper-division student will not earn a passing grade, no matter how well the student performs in other areas of the course.

Prerequisites: None

Requirements: Writing proficiency

Core Curriculum: This course carries a *W* designation.

PHILOSOPHY OF MIND

PHL 460 – Dr. Torin Alter

- **TR 9:30am-10:45am, Dr. Torin Alter**

Course Description: What is the relationship between the mental and the physical? That is the central question in the philosophy of mind, and we will approach it from different angles. We will focus largely on consciousness and its place in nature. Most readings will be from the contemporary literature but some will be historical.

Prerequisites: Successful completion of at least two PHL courses or permission of the instructor (PHL 260 Mind and Nature is recommended but not required)

Requirements: Two five-to-ten page papers, regular reading quizzes, and a final

Core Curriculum: This course carries an *W* designation and so writing proficiency within the discipline of philosophy is required for a passing grade in this course.

PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE

PHL 486 – Dr. Adrian Erasmus

- **TR 11:00am-12:15pm, Dr. Adrian Erasmus**

Course Description: Science serves an important role in society, from satisfying our interest in the nature of reality to informing technological advancements and public policy. But we can ask several questions about science. What exactly is science? Is there a unique ‘scientific method’? Does science get to truth? What is the role of science in society? Should science be free from the influence of societal values? This course will cover major topics in philosophy of science: the demarcation of science and pseudoscience, scientific methods, the nature of evidence, scientific progress, scientific realism and antirealism, and the role of values in science.

Prerequisites: Successful completion of at least two PHL courses or permission of the instructor

Requirements: Writing proficiency

Core Curriculum: This course carries a *W* designation.

PHILOSOPHY OF MENTAL HEALTH

PHL 488 – Dr. Jennifer Gleason

- **MWF 10:00am-10:50am, Dr. Jennifer Gleason**

Course Description: This course provides an in-depth examination of the nature of mental disorder. Topics of discussion will include: the nature of mental disorder, the relationship between disorder, disease, and dysfunction, and whether mental disorder is naturally or socially constructed. We will also consider how our understanding of mental disorder impacts how we diagnose and treat issues of mental health.

Prerequisites: Successful completion of at least two PHL courses or permission of the instructor

Requirements: Writing proficiency

Core Curriculum: This course carries a *W* designation.