Fall 2012 Undergraduate Philosophy
Department Courses

PHIL-UA 1; Central Problems in Philosophy; T/TH 9:30-10:45; James Pryor

This course is an introduction to the methods of contemporary philosophy, concentrating on the following questions:

The Problem of Other Minds: How can we tell whether animals and future computers have minds, or whether they're instead just mindless automata? How can we tell that other people have minds?

The Mind/Body Problem: What is the relation between your mind and your body? Are they made up of different stuffs? If a computer duplicates the neural structure of your brain, will it have the same thoughts and self-awareness that you have?

Life and Death: What does it mean to die? Why is death bad? Do you have an immortal soul which is able to survive the death of your body?

Personal Identity: What makes you the person you are? Why would a clone of you have to be a different person than you are yourself? If we perfectly recorded all the neural patterns in your brain right now, could we use that recording to "bring you back" after a fatal accident?

You must sign up for one of the following recitation times:

Katrina Przyjemski: Wednesday 9:30-10:45 and 2-3:15
Ian Grubb: Tuesday 3:30-4:45 and Wednesday 12:30-1:45

PHIL-UA 2; Great Works in Philosophy; M/W 3:30-4:45; Jonathan Cottrell

This course introduces students to some of philosophy's most central and enduring problems, through some of the most important and influential texts in philosophy's history. Our topics will include: What is the soul, and what is its relation to the body? What does it mean to die, and is dying something we should fear? Do we have free will? Is there a god? Why is there something rather than nothing? Readings will be drawn from the ancient, medieval and modern periods, and will include works by Lucretius, Aquinas and Schopenhauer.
The course has a special focus on training students in philosophical analysis and writing.

You must sign up for one of the following recitation times:

Daniel Waxman: Friday 12:30-1:45 and 2:00-3:15

**PHIL-UA 3; Ethics and Society; T/TH 4:55-6:10; Melis Erdur**

This course consists of two parts. In the first part, we will examine a variety of ethical issues such as abortion, euthanasia, capital punishment and affirmative action, in the light of major ethical theories like utilitarianism and Kantianism. In the second part, we will explore the (legitimate and problematic) ways in which science and religion can inform ethics. There will be several short essays and a final exam.

**PHIL-UA 20; History of Ancient Philosophy; M/W 11-12:15; TBA**

This course will focus on Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. Their methods and ideas set the agenda for subsequent Western philosophy. We will aim to understand and critically evaluate some of their central arguments about knowledge, reality and human action. We will ask what their views were, why they held them, and whether we should accept them even today.

You must sign up for one of the following recitation times:

Bogdan Rabanca : Wednesday 3:30-4.45 and 4:55-6:10
Zach Perry : Thursday 11-12:15 and 12:30-1:45

*Prerequisite: one Introductory course.*

**PHIL-UA 36; Existentialism and Phenomenology; T/TH 11-12:15; John Richardson**

The course will study major texts from the existential and phenomenological movements, beginning with their ‘founders’ Kierkegaard and Husserl, and then examining the fusion of these movements in Heidegger and Sartre, as well as in Beauvoir, Merleau-Ponty, and Levinas.

You must sign up for one of the following recitation times:

Martin Glazier: Fridays 11-12:15 and 2-3:15
Christopher Prodoehl: Thursday 12:30-1:45 and Friday 12:30-1:45
Prerequisite: one Introductory course.

**PHIL-UA 45; Political Philosophy; T/TH 11-12:15; Samuel Scheffler**

This course will deal with central questions about the justification of political and social institutions. The primary focus will be on contemporary philosophical thought in the liberal tradition, with special emphasis on the work of John Rawls.

You must sign up for one of the following recitation times:

Emilio Mora: Friday 11:00-12:15 and 12:30-1:45

Prerequisite: one Introductory course.

**PHIL-UA 53; Ethics and the Environment; T/TH 2-3:15; TBA**

Environmental philosophy is a large subject that involves questions in metaphysics, the philosophy of science, and the history of philosophy, as well as in such normative areas as ethics, aesthetics, and political philosophy. This course is primarily devoted to these normative areas. Beginning with some basic concepts in value theory, the goal is not to arrive at definite solutions to specific environmental problems, but rather to improve students’ ability to think critically, read closely, and argue well about environmental issues. The course also introduces students to some major controversies in environmental philosophy. The ultimate aim is to aid students in arriving at their own rational, clear-minded views about the matters under discussion.

You must sign up for one of the following recitation times:

Chelsea Rosenthal: Monday 12:30-1:45 and 3:30-4:45

**PHIL-UA 70-001; Logic; M/W 11-12:15; Michael Schweiger**

An introduction to the basic techniques of sentential and predicate logic. Students learn how to put arguments from ordinary language into symbols, how to construct derivations within a formal system, and how to ascertain validity using truth tables or models.

**PHIL-UA 70-002; Logic; M/W; 12:30-1:45; Grace Helton**
This course is an introduction to first-order logic (FOL). Topics include: syntax in FOL, truth-functional operators, quantifiers, logical equivalence and consequence, tautological equivalence and consequence, proof by cases, proof by contradiction, formal rules of proof in FOL, and translation between FOL and English.

**PHIL-UA 70-003; Logic; T/TH 12:30-1:45; Rohan Prince**

An introduction to the basic techniques of sentential and predicate logic. Students learn how to put arguments from ordinary language into symbols, how to construct derivations within a formal system, and how to ascertain validity using truth tables or models.

**PHIL-UA 76; Epistemology; T/TH 12:30-1:45; Crispin Wright**

We think we know many things. And even where we think we do not strictly know something—like who was responsible for the Sept 11 attacks? Or: will the Knicks win tonight? —we often think we have justified beliefs, or beliefs that are strongly supported by the evidence. This course focuses on the nature of knowledge and justified belief. In reflecting on these notions, we will examine versions of, and responses to Skepticism: that there is very little we can know or have adequate reason to believe.

You must sign up for one of the following recitation times:

Max Barkhausen: Thursday 3:30-4:45 and 4:55-6:10

*Prerequisite: one Introductory course*

**PHIL-UA 78; Metaphysics; M/W 4:55-6:10; Peter Unger**

What is the ultimate nature of the universe, the nature of all concrete reality? Is it physical, or mental, or both, or neither? And, what is our nature: are we physical, or mental, or both, or neither? We’ll be concerned to use our inquiry into these questions to help us with traditionally central philosophical problems, including the problem of free will, the problem of personal identity, and the mind-body problem. While much of the course will treat these topics, some will treat some other topics.

You must sign up for one of the following recitation times:

Erica Shumener: Friday 12:30-1:45 and 2:00-3:15pm
Prerequisite: one Introductory course

PHIL-UA 85; Philosophy of Language; T/TH 3:30-4:45; Stephen Schiffer

What sort of thing is a natural language such as English or Japanese, and how are languages related to mind and world so as to enable people who speak them to do the things they do with words? Answering these questions requires investigating such central notions as meaning, reference, truth, and communication. Major work on these topics dates only from around 1890 in the writings of the German mathematician, logician and philosopher Gottlob Frege (1848-1925). The course will cover major developments in the philosophy of language from Frege to the present. Among other things, it will look at the relations between philosophy of language and neighboring disciplines of logic, linguistics, and psychology, as well as the ways theories in philosophy of language affect other divisions of philosophy, such as metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics. In addition to Frege, other major figures in the philosophy of language whose views will be studied are Bertrand Russell, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Alfred Tarski, Rudolph Carnap, W. V. O. Quine, P. F. Strawson, Noam Chomsky, H. P. Grice, J. L. Austin, Saul Kripke, Hiliary Putnam, Richard Montague, David Kaplan, and David Lewis. All readings will be made available on Blackboard. Grades will be based on a midterm, final, and 15-20 page paper. The questions to be answered on the midterm and final will be selected by lottery at the exams from take-home questions distributed a week before the exams.

You must sign up for one of the following recitation times:

Mark Vandevelde: Friday 12:30-1:45 and 2-3:15

PHIL-UA 70 and one Introductory course.

PHIL-UA 101; Topics in History of Philosophy; M/W 2-3:15; Tamsin Shaw

Nietzsche on Art and Value

In this course we will examine Nietzsche’s views about the significance of art in human life. His work raises some striking questions about whether art is necessary to give life meaning, whether it can serve as a substitute for religion, what it’s relation might be to truth, and how we should understand the relationship between moral and aesthetic values. We will mainly be concentrating on primary texts (such as The Birth of Tragedy, Human All-Too-Human, and The Gay Science), though we will also discuss some of the secondary literature. And we will look at some of the artworks (paintings, fiction, music) that Nietzsche admired in order to illuminate and critically assess his views about the role of art in human civilizations.
Prerequisite: PHIL-UA 20 or PHIL-UA 21.

PHIL-UA 103; Topics in Metaphysics and Epistemology; T/TH 2-3:15; Paul Horwich

Truth

The course will focus on the concept of truth, addressing such central questions as: whether there is such a thing as “absolute” truth; what truth is; why it is worth searching for; and how we can find it. Answers from a variety of intellectual and cultural traditions will be considered. They will be assessed for their adequacy in dealing with a range of domains in which truth is at issue -- including science, morality, religion, and aesthetics.

Prerequisite: PHIL-UA 76 or PHIL-UA 78 or PHIL-UA 90

PHIL-UA 201; Honors Seminar; W 4:30-6:30; Paul Horwich

A seminar taken in fall of senior year. Students begin developing their thesis projects by presentations in the seminar, which is led by a faculty member. Students also begin to meet individually with a separate faculty adviser. See the description of the honors program in the “Program” section.