

Fall 2013 Undergraduate Philosophy Department Courses

PHIL-UA 1; Central Problems in Philosophy; M/W 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:

Abreu Zavaleta: Thursday 4:55-6:10, Friday 11-12:15

Golub: Thursday 9:30-10:45, Thursday 11-12:15

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

This course is a historical introduction to philosophy that focuses on a close reading of some of the most influential works of Western philosophy. Our main questions will include: What is the nature of reality? What is the good life? What is beauty? What is it to die, and is it rational to fear our own death? Is there a god? What is love and friendship? What is the mind, and how does it relate to the body? Readings will span the history of philosophy from the Ancient to the Modern period, including work by Plato, Lucretius, St. Augustine, and Descartes.

PHIL-UA 4; Life and Death; T/TH 3:30-4:45; Sharon Street

Description forthcoming.

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

Prince: Fridays 9:30-10:45; 11-12:15

Bhogal: Fridays 12:30-1:45; 2:00-3:15

PHIL-UA 5; Minds and Machines; T/TH 9:30-10:45; Carlotta Pavese

Throughout history, metaphors drawn from technology of the time have been proposed to understand how the mind works. While Locke described the newborn's mind as a blank slate, Freud compared the mind to hydraulic and electro-magnetic systems. In recent decades, many have followed Alan Turing's proposal to think of the mind as a kind of computer. Indeed, this idea is often said to be one of the foundational assumptions of cognitive science. What do cognitive scientists mean when they claim that the mind is a computer? What is a computer? Are computers intelligent? What are the main challenges to the idea that minds are like computers? Are there genuine alternatives to thinking of the mind on the model of computers?

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

This course examines some representative texts and arguments of Greek and Roman philosophers from the Presocratics to the Academic sceptics, with special emphasis on Plato and Aristotle. Topics in epistemology, metaphysics, moral and political philosophy will be included.

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

Shumener: Thursdays: 12:30-1:45, 2:00-3:15

Passinsky: Mondays 12:30-1:45, 2:00-3:15

Prerequisite: one Introductory course.

PHIL-UA 30; Kant; T/TH 4:55-6:10; Beatrice Longuenesse

No philosopher has been more influential than Immanuel Kant in shaping the questions of philosophy from the eighteenth century to present times. His influence is felt in all areas of contemporary philosophy, especially epistemology, moral philosophy and philosophy of mind. In this course we will do

a close reading of Kant's most important work, the Critique of Pure Reason, as well as of selections from some of his related writings. Topics discussed in those texts include: the relations between mind and world; knowledge and justification; the nature of space and time; causation; self-consciousness and self-knowledge; freedom and causal determinism.

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

Qu: Fridays 12:30-1:45 and 2:00-3:15

Prerequisite: one Introductory course.

PHIL-UA 45; Political Philosophy; T/TH 11-12:15; Aaron James

Political Philosophy: This course addresses central questions of political philosophy with special emphasis on the social contract tradition. Historical and contemporary readings will be from Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Rawls, Nozick, Beitz, and Nagel. Topics will include the authority of law, democracy, socio-economic inequality, status competition, property, stability, international justice, and the global economy.

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

Waxman: Mondays 12:30-1:45, 2:00-3:15

Prerequisite: one Introductory course.

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

This course introduces philosophical ethics through an engagement with environmental issues of population growth and resource use, sustainability, non-human animal welfare, biodiversity loss, environmental justice, and global climate change. No prior experience with philosophy is required. The two main goals of the course are to provide students with a more sophisticated conceptual vocabulary to make and evaluate ethical arguments across domains and to engage students' ethical reasoning and reflection on environmental issues in particular.

PHIL-UA 70-001; Logic; M/W 8-9:15; Yu Guo

An introduction to symbolic logic. Sample topics: how to render sentences of natural language into logical notation; validity and consequence in sentential and predicate logic; systems of deduction, and their soundness and completeness.

Course website: yguo.net/logic

PHIL-UA 70-002; Logic; M/W; 4:55-6:10; Daniel Fogal

This course is an introduction to the aims and techniques of modern symbolic logic. We'll study formal languages for representing sentences in logically precise ways, we'll study algorithms for evaluating arguments as logically valid or invalid, and we'll discuss some interesting applications of logic to various puzzles and problems in philosophy.

PHIL-UA 70-003; Logic; T/TH 12:30-1:45; Christopher Prodoehl

This course is an introduction to the basic techniques of propositional and quantified first-order logic. We will learn how to put arguments from ordinary language into symbols, how to construct derivations within a formal system, and how to determine validity using truth-tables or models. Topics will include: truth-functional connectives, quantifiers, logical equivalence and consequence, tautological equivalence and consequence, proof by cases, proof by contradiction, formal rules of proof for propositional and quantified first-order logic, and translation between natural language and the language of first-order logic. This course satisfies the logic requirement for NYU Philosophy majors.

PHIL-UA 72; Advanced Logic; M/W 2-3:15; Paul Egre

This course will be devoted to the study of predicate logic and its metatheory. The course's ambition is to consolidate the elements acquired in a first course in logic, and to introduce elements of model theory and proof theory for first-order logic. On the proof-theoretic side, the plan is to introduce standard proof methods, in particular tableaux and sequents, to prove their soundness and completeness, and to examine the relation between both methods. On the model-theoretic side, the course will focus on some central notions (isomorphism, elementary equivalence, compactness), so as to characterize the expressiveness of first-order logic. Time permitting, the course will also give elements of second-order logic, in order to get a better grasp of some fundamental concepts of first-order logic (such as identity, existence, and quantifiers). The only prerequisite for the course is an exposure to propositional logic. Validation will be based on regular homework assignments and a final exam.

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

Grubb: Thursday 4:55-6:10 and Friday 11-12:15

Prerequisite: Logic (PHIL-UA 70).

PHIL-UA 78; Metaphysics; T/TH 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:

Diamantis: Fridays 11-12:15; 12:30-1:45

Prerequisite: one Introductory course

PHIL-UA 80; Philosophy of Mind; M/W 4:55-6:10; Jane Friedman

Examination of the relationship between the mind and the brain, of the nature of the mental, and of personal identity. Can consciousness be reconciled with a scientific view of the world?

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

Warren: Fridays 12:30-1:45; 2:00-3:15

Prerequisite: one Introductory course

PHIL-UA 90; Philosophy of Science; M/W 9:30-10:45; Michael Strevens

What is science? How does it work? When it works, what kind of knowledge does it provide? Is there a scientific method? How do experiments provide evidence for theories? Does science help us to understand why things happen, or does it merely describe what happens? How does the social organization of science contribute, if at all, to its success? Prerequisite: one introductory course

PHIL-UA 101; Topics in History of Philosophy; T/TH 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 its 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 Ethics and Political Philosophy; M/W 3:30-4:45; Barry Maguire

Equality

1% of US citizens have 40% of the nation's wealth. The bottom 80% only have 7% of the nation's wealth. One American family is as wealthy as the bottom 40% of Americans put together. Should we be concerned about this? If so, why? In this course we will consider the notion of equality from several different angles: economic, political, axiological, and ethical. We will read short stories, vignettes, political manifestos, and some outstanding works of contemporary philosophy. You will develop your own answers to the following questions among others. What sort of inequalities should we care about? Should we equalise wealth, or resources, or opportunities for welfare, or something else? Does equality matter for its own sake, or only instrumentally? Does caring about equality mean that you cannot privilege your family and friends?

Prerequisite: Ethics (PHIL-UA 40), The Nature of Values (PHIL-UA 41), or Political Philosophy (PHIL-UA 45)

PHIL-UA 104; Topics in Mind and Language; T/TH 3:30-4:45; Stephen Schiffer

The focus will be on mental representation, i.e. on those mental states with propositional content, such as a belief that NYU is a football powerhouse, or a perception as of there being a red ball before you.

Among the questions to be explored are:

- What's the relation between mental-representation states and underlying neural states? For example, are beliefs neural states? If so, what makes a neural state a belief?
- What makes it the case that a mental state has the content it has?
- Does, say, your believing that NYU is a football powerhouse consist in your standing in the belief relation to the proposition that NYU is a football powerhouse, where a proposition is an abstract mind-

and language-independent entity that has a truth condition? If so, what more can be said about the nature of those propositions mental states represent?

- Does our having mental representations mean that we think in a “language of thought,” a language-like system of neural representation?
- Does the hypothesis that we think in a language of thought imply the Computational Theory of Mind, the theory that the brain is a kind of computer and that thinking is information processing?
- What’s the relation between mental and linguistic representation, between thought and talk? Does thought come first and make talk possible, or vice versa, or neither?
- Do perceptual experiences have representational content? If so, is it the same sort of content that “propositional attitudes” such as belief, desire and intention have?

There will be a midterm and final, both with take-home questions to be answered in class, and a short paper due at the end of the semester.

Prerequisite: Prerequisite: Logic (PHIL-UA 70) and one of the following: Philosophy of Mind (PHIL-UA 80), Consciousness (PHIL-UA 81), or Philosophy of Language (PHIL-UA 85)

PHIL-UA 201; Honors Seminar; W 11-1 Laura Franklin-Hall

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.