

Fall 2014 Undergraduate Philosophy Department Courses

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

<http://intro.jimpryor.net>

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:

Rosa Cao: Wednesday 4:55-6:10, Thursday 11-12:15

Yu Guo: Thursdays 9:30-10:45; 4:55-6:10

PHIL-UA 4; Life and Death; T/R 12:30-1:45; Nic Bommarito

An introduction to philosophy through the study of issues bearing on life and death. Topics may include the definition and value of life; grounds for creating, preserving, and taking life; personal identity; ideas of death and immortality; abortion and euthanasia. Gives training in philosophical argument and writing.

PHIL-UA 5; Minds and Machines; T/TH 3:30-4:45; Ned Block

<https://www.nyu.edu/gsas/dept/philo/courses/m&m2014/>

This course examines the conflict between computational and biological approaches to the mind. Topics covered this semester will be: whether a machine could think or be conscious, the Turing Test, whether thinking could be symbol manipulation, mental imagery, Searle's arguments against artificial intelligence, the inverted spectrum, the self and the body. The emphasis will be on whether computational and biological approaches are complementary or whether they conflict; that is, whether the mind is fundamentally computational or whether it is fundamentally neural or whether it can be fundamentally both.

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

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

Martin Abreu: Fridays 9:30-10:45; 11:00-12:15

PHIL-UA 20; History of Ancient Philosophy; T/R 9:30-10:45; Jessica Moss

An introduction to Ancient Greek and Roman Philosophy. We will study the PreSocratics, Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics, the Epicureans, and the Sceptics, exploring their answers to questions about the nature of reality, the nature and possibility of knowledge, and how one should live.

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

Camil Golub: Fridays 9:30-10:45; 11-12:15

Dan Waxman: Mondays 12:30-1:45; 2-3:15

Prerequisite: one Introductory course.

PHIL-UA 36; Existentialism & Phenomenology; T/TH 3:30-4:45; 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:

Michelle Dyke: Mondays 11-12:15; 3:30-4:45

Mike Zhao: Fridays 11-12:15; 12:30-1:45

Prerequisite: one Introductory course.

PHIL-UA 40; Ethics; T/TH 4:55-6:10; Nic Bommarito

Examines fundamental questions of moral philosophy: What are our most basic values, and which of them are specifically moral values? What are the ethical principles, if any, by which we should judge our actions, ourselves, and our lives?

Prerequisite: one Introductory course.

PHIL-UA 50; Medical Ethics; M/W 12:30-1:45; Regina Rini

Examines moral issues in medical practice and research. Topics include euthanasia and quality of life; deception, hope, and paternalism; malpractice and unpredictability; patient rights, virtues, and vices; animal, fetal, and clinical research; criteria for rationing medical care; ethical principles, professional codes, and case analysis (for example, Quinlan, Willowbrook, Baby Jane Doe).

PHIL-UA 53; Ethics and the Environment; M/W 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.

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

Monday 12:30-1:45; Wednesday 9:30-10:45

PHIL-UA 70-001; Logic; M/W 11-12:15; Grace Helton

This course is an introduction to first-order logic (FOL) and to methods of proving results within 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 70-002; Logic; M/W; 12:30-1:45; Jeremy Dolan

Modern symbolic logic provides us with formal techniques for representing and evaluating arguments. This course will introduce students to two formal languages: sentential logic and first-order predicate logic. We will focus on learning how to translate arguments from English into these languages, on how to construct derivations within a proof system, and on how to ascertain validity using truth tables and models.

PHIL-UA 70-003; Logic; T/TH 11-12:15; 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 70-004; Logic; M/W 3:30-4:45; Eli Alshanetsky

This course is an introduction to the basic techniques of modern symbolic logic. Topics will include: truth-functional connectives, quantifiers, logical equivalence and consequence, tautological equivalence and consequence, proof by cases, proof by contradiction, conditional proof, formal rules of proof for propositional and first-order logic, and translation between natural language and the language of first-order logic.

PHIL-UA 74; Modal Logic; T/R 8-9:15; Harvey Lederman

This course will provide an introduction to modal logic. The focus of the course will be on formal results, but these will be motivated by considering applications in metaphysics, in epistemology and economic theory, and in the theory of provability.

We will begin with basic methods and results related to standard possible world semantics for modal logic, covering elementary correspondence theory and proving soundness and completeness for the most commonly used normal modal propositional logics. We will then study transformations between frames and models in the propositional case, before closing the first half of the course by introducing quantified modal logic. In the second half of the course, three applications will motivate three generalizations of the semantics considered in the first half. First, the metaphysical question of whether existence is a necessary matter will be used to motivate the study of variable-domain semantics for quantified modal logic. Second, we will introduce the basics of propositional epistemic logic, commonly used to describe the knowledge and belief of agents in both epistemology and economic theory. Considering one facet of the problem of "logical omniscience" will motivate a move from relational semantics to more general neighborhood semantics. Finally, time permitting, the application of modal logic to the theory of provability will lead us, via incompleteness, to general frame semantics.

There will be weekly exercises, a midterm and a final exam. Assessment will be as follows: homework: 50%; midterm: 25%; final: 25%

Prerequisite: Logic (PHIL-UA 70)

PHIL-UA 76; Epistemology; M/W 4:55-6:10; Jane Friedman

Considers questions such as the following: Can we have knowledge of anything outside our own minds—for example, physical objects or other minds? If we have knowledge, how do we come to know the things we do? How does knowledge differ from belief? What is it rational for us to believe and why?

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

Harjit Bhogal: Thursdays 3:30-4:45; 4:55-6:10

Prerequisite: one Introductory course

PHIL-UA 80; Philosophy of Mind; T/R 2-3:15 Lisa Miracchi

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?

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 91; Philosophy of Biology; M/W 3:30-4:45; Brad Weslake

This class is an introduction to philosophy of biology focusing on issues connected with the nature and scope of biological explanations. We first examine a set of foundational questions concerning the nature and scope of the explanations provided by natural selection. We then examine the explanatory role of genes in development. No prior philosophy of science or biology will be assumed.

Prerequisite: one introductory course

PHIL-UA 102 Topics in Ethics and Political Philosophy; T/R 9:30-10:45; Anthony Appiah

In *On Liberty*, John Stuart Mill seeks, in the third chapter, to defend and articulate individuality as an ideal. Roughly, Mill believes that each of us should play the central part in planning and managing our own lives. This ideal of individuality is often said to be modern and Western in its origins. Certainly it finds expression in many places in contemporary Western cultures. In this course we will explore Mill's idea of individuality by reading and discussing both philosophy and fiction, including some novels that are neither contemporary nor Western. We will be able to consider how modern and how Western the ideal of individuality actually is.

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

PHIL-UA 103 Topics in Metaphysics and Epistemology; T/R 4:55-6:10; Peter Unger

Though there will be many shorter selections read and discussed, as well, this course will be primarily concerned with what's presented in Professor Unger's brand new (2014) book, *Empty Ideas: A Critique of Analytic Philosophy*. This book is an expose of how terribly little has been accomplished in, or, really, even attempted in, the core of academic philosophy – in metaphysics, and in the most metaphysical parts of, or aspects of, epistemology, philosophy of language and philosophy of mind. For philosophical sophisticates, this will seem shocking: Most academic philosophers are under the impression that, with the work of such brilliant thinkers as Saul Kripke, David Lewis and Hilary Putnam, mainstream philosophy has made some real contributions to our understanding of how things are, in certain quite deep and general respects, with concrete reality - with the likes of water and gold, and tables and chairs, and sentient beings, too. But, as *Empty Ideas* explains, that's all just an illusion, pretty easily recognized as such, when, as the book tries to make happen, philosophical sophisticates are awakened from their dogmatic slumbers. As Professor Unger greatly hopes, you will greatly enjoy being awakened from any and all of your own dogmatic slumbers, whatever yours may be.

Prerequisite: Epistemology (PHIL-UA 76) or Metaphysics (PHIL-UA 78) or Philosophy of Science (PHIL-UA 90)

PHIL-UA 104; Topics in Mind and Language; M/W 4:55-6:10; Jim Pryor

<http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/courses/topics/index.html>

We will study central 20th century work in philosophy of language, focusing on descriptions, presupposition, and the difference between *de dicto* and *de re* claims.

Prerequisite: Philosophy of Language (PHIL-UA 85). Students with different but comparable background should write the instructor for permission to enroll.

PHIL-UA 201; Honors Seminar; W 4-6; 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.