Fall 2016 Undergraduate Philosophy Department Courses

PHIL-UA 1; Central Problems in Philosophy; T/R 4:55-6:10; Ang Tong

An introduction to philosophy through the study of selected central problems. Topics may include free will; the existence of God; skepticism and knowledge; the mind-body problem. Gives training in philosophical argument and writing.

You must sign up for one of the following recitation times:
Instructor TBA: Mondays 4:55-6:10; Wednesdays 4:55-6:10

PHIL-UA 2; Great Works in Philosophy; M/W 9:30-10:45; Tim Maudlin

This course will study a selection of classic works of philosophy, with particular attention to issues of the possibility of knowledge, the objects of knowledge, the origin of ideas and the nature of the human soul. We will focus on learning to extract arguments from the texts and evaluate them. Texts range from antiquity to modern authors, including Plato, Hume and Kant among others.

You must sign up for one of the following recitation times:
Andreas Ditter: Thursdays 9:30-10:45; 11-12:15
Samuel Lee: Wednesday 4:55-6:10; Thursday 4:55-6:10

PHIL-UA 4; Life and Death; T/R 3:30-4:45; Max Barkhausen

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.

You must sign up for one of the following recitation times:
Kyle Blumberg: Fridays 9:30-10:45; 11-12:15
Nathaniel Pensler: Fridays 12:30-1:45; 2-3:15

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:
Annette Martin: Fridays 9:30-10:45; 11-12:15
Vera Flocke: Mondays 12:30-1:45; 2-3:15

Prerequisite: one Introductory course.

PHIL-UA 45; Political Philosophy; M/W 4:55-6:10; Daniel Viehoff

Examines fundamental issues concerning the justification of political institutions. Topics may include democratic theory, political obligation and liberty, criteria of a just society, human rights, and civil disobedience.

Prerequisite: one Introductory course.

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

This course surveys central issues in the ethics of medical research and practice. Students will develop understanding of influential moral theories as well as central issues within medical ethics debates. Students will also gain familiarity with methods of ethical reasoning and with the application of ethical theory to medical practice. Topics will include the nature and value of life, the special roles of patient and medical professional, and justice in the distribution of scarce medical resources.

PHIL-UA 53; Ethics and the Environment; M/W 2-3:15; Duncan Purves

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:
TBA: Tuesday 12:30-1:45; Wednesday 5-6:15

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

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; TBA

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 70-003; Logic; T/R 11-12:15; TBA

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 78; Metaphysics; M/W 4:55-6:10; Gabriel Rabin

This is an introductory course in metaphysics. Metaphysics studies the nature of reality at its most general and abstract level. We will examine a variety of metaphysical problems, including the existence of universals, the nature of time, whether and how objects endure and undergo change, whether gender and race are genuine or merely social constructs, and the nature of causation. A theme of the course will be, "What is metaphysics?" Toward this end, we finish with a unit on metametaphysics, in which we examine whether metaphysical questions have substantive answers or whether they are in some sense merely verbal disputes. Throughout the course, we focus on philosophical method and strive for clear, careful, and analytical reasoning. We will practice this method and hone our philosophical skills in class discussions, in written work, and via examination.

You must sign up for one of the following recitation times:
Andrew Lee: Friday 9:30-10:45; Thursday 4:55-6:10

Prerequisite: one Introductory course

PHIL-UA 80; Philosophy of Mind; T/R 3:30-4:45; Una Stojnic

In this course we will explore the nature of the mind, and the relations between the mind and the brain, the mind and the world, and the mind and action, examining questions such as: What is it to have a mind? How is having a mind different from having a brain (if at all)? Can computers have minds? Can non-human animals have minds? What is it to have a thought, and how do thoughts come to be about the world? What is the connection between thought and behavior?

You must sign up for one of the following recitation times:
Daniel Hoek: Fridays 11-12:15; 12:30-1:45
Ben Holguin: Mondays 11-12:15; 3:30-4:45

Prerequisite: one Introductory course.

PHIL-UA 93; Philosophical Applications of Cognitive Science; M/W 9:30-10:45; E.J. Green

We will consider several issues at the intersection of philosophy and cognitive science. In particular, we will discuss theories of cognitive architecture (with special focus on the border between perception and cognition), the computational approach to perception, the science of free will, and the psychology and neuroscience of moral reasoning.

Prerequisite: one introductory course

PHIL-UA 101; Topics in the History of Philosophy; T/R 12:30-1:45; Tuomo Tiisala

Introduction to Existentialism

This course provides an introduction to existentialist philosophy with a focus on the 20th century. The topics that we will address include the meaning of life and death, anxiety as a fundamental feature of the human condition, what it would mean to live authentically, the nature of human freedom, the nature of existence, and the absurdity of life.

We will be reading texts by Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, and Albert Camus, among others.

PHIL-UA 102-001 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 102-002 Topics in Ethics and Political Philosophy; M/W 2-3:15; Miriam Schoenfield

An exploration of leading theories in the philosophy of race and gender and their ethical and political implications.

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

PHIL-UA 103-001 Topics in Metaphysics and Epistemology; T/R 2-3:15; 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 most recent book, Empty Ideas: A Critique of Analytic Philosophy. This book discloses how terribly little has ever been accomplished 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. What's more, it exposes how terribly little has been even attempted on that most central philosophical front in the last half-century, or more. 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 103-002 Topics in Metaphysics and Epistemology; T/R 3:30-4:45; Stephen Schiffer

Many of the issues that define epistemology are determined by skeptical arguments purporting to show that we can't know or be justified in believing most of the things we're confident we do know and are justified in believing. We will study what the various skeptical arguments have in common, what knowledge and justified belief must be like if the problem of skepticism is to have a solution, and whether our concepts of knowledge and justified belief even permit a solution. Readings for the course will be both classical (pre-Socratics, Descartes, Hume) and contemporary.

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

PHIL-UA 201; Honors Seminar; Thursday 4-6; Rob Hopkins

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.

RELATED COURSES

LING-UA 7; Formal Languages; Lucas Champollion and James Pryor; MW 11-12:15

Formal language theory is a collection of formal computational methods drawn chiefly from fields such as mathematics and computer science. Formal languages can be used to represent the syntax of axiomatic systems that are studied in the guise of logical calculi, or as models of richer information-encoding systems like natural languages or human cognition. In philosophy of mathematics, there was an ambition to reduce all of math to the syntactic manipulation of formal languages. Beyond linguistics and philosophy, formal language theory also has practical applications in virtually every area where computers manipulate formal systems, such as natural language processing, artificial intelligence, and programming more generally. This course offers an introduction to this field and to selected applications in linguistics, philosophy, and computer science. Topics to be discussed include set theory, algebra, automata theory, the Chomsky hierarchy, parsing, tree-adjoining grammars, and effective decidability. The course does not presuppose any specific background in math or computer science; but students are required to have already taken one of: PHIL-UA 70 Logic, LING-UA 1 Language, LING-UA 28 Language and Mind, or to have equivalent preparation as determined by the instructors.