Philosophy Department
Undergraduate Courses Spring 2012

Introductory Courses

PHIL-UA 1
Central Problems in Philosophy
T/TH 3:30-4:45
Katrina Elliott

This course is a general introduction to philosophy that aims to familiarize you with philosophical concepts, arguments, and methodology by addressing a few well-known questions that philosophers attempt to answer:

(1) How can we know about things we have not observed?
(2) What's possible? Is free will physically possible? Is time travel metaphysically possible?
(3) In virtue of what do objects and persons retain their identity throughout time, if they do? (Spoiler: They do.)
(4) Can we prove that God exists? Can we prove that it doesn't?
(5) How much money should you give to charity, and why?

While definitively answering these questions is beyond the scope of this course, hopefully you'll find yourself frustrated and fascinated with the stubborn puzzles that arise from each point of inquiry. One text is assigned (Riddles *of Existence: A Guided Tour of Metaphysics* by Earl Conee and Theodor Sider) and the remaining readings will be posted on Blackboard.

Sign up for one of the following sections:

Zachary Perry: Monday 11:00-12:15 and 12:30-1:45
Erica Shumener: Friday 11:00-12:15 and 12:30-1:45

Group I: History of Philosophy

PHIL-UA 21
History of Modern Philosophy
T/TH 11-12:15
Don Garrett

Prerequisite: one Introductory course

In seventeenth and eighteenth century Europe, revolutionary developments in science, religion, and culture led to the generation of new philosophical questions, methods, and theories--and to the transformation of old ones. To a remarkable extent, these two centuries of philosophical

thought are distinctively responsible for many of the questions, methods, and theoretical approaches that still quite recognizably dominate philosophy today. This course will examine the most important contributions of seven influential and systematic modern philosophers of this period--Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, and Kant--to the fields of epistemology, metaphysics, philosophy of mind, philosophy of language, philosophy of science, philosophy of religion, and ethics.

Sign up for one of the following sections:

Daniel Fogal: Friday 8:00-9:15 and 9:30-10:45
Joe Harper: Friday 12:30-1:45 and 2:00-3:15

PHIL-UA 39
Recent Continental Philosophy
T/TH 2-3:15
John Richardson

Prerequisite: one Introductory course

Examines selected works by some of the major figures in German and French philosophy in the second half of the 20th century. Beginning with later Heidegger, the course will go on to treat Gadamer, Habermas, Lacan, Foucault, Derrida, and Deleuze.

Sign up for one of the following sections:

Chris Prodoehl: Thursday 3:30-4:45 and Friday 12:30-1:45
Emilio Mora: Friday 11:00-12:15 and 2:00-3:15

PHIL-UA 101
Topics in History of Philosophy
W 2-4:30
Anthony Kronman

Prerequisite: PHIL-UA 20 or PHIL-UA 21

<u>Nietzsche's Critique of Modernity</u>

In an autobiographical essay written two years after the publication of <u>Beyond Good and Evil</u>, Nietzsche describes the latter book as "in every essential a critique of modernity." How, in Nietzsche's view, does the modern age differ from those that preceded it? What is his "critique" of it? In this seminar, we will explore these questions, paying special attention to the ideas of art, nobility, power, truth and morality, as these figure in the remarkable series of books that Nietzsche wrote in the last three years before his mind was closed by madness. Some attention will also be paid to Nietzsche's unpublished notebooks from this period, and to the question of whether, despite his ferocious attack on what he calls the "prejudices" of "metaphysicians," Nietzsche was not himself, in the end, a metaphysician too.

The seminar will meet once a week, on Wednesdays from 2-4:30. Students in the seminar are required to write a paper on a topic chosen in consultation with the instructor.

Group II: Ethics, Value, and Society

PHIL-UA 40
Ethics
T/TH 9:30-10:45
David Velleman

Prerequisite: one Introductory course

This course covers three great works of moral philosophy: Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, Kant's *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, and Mill's *Utlitarianism*. It concludes with a contemporary work that applies moral philosophy to 20th-century history : Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. Course requirements are: attendance at lectures and a recitation, five short papers and a final exam.

Sign up for one of the following sections:

Melis Erdur: Thursday 12:30-1:45pm and 2:00-3:15pm
Bogdan Rabanca: Friday 11-12:15 and 12:30-1:45

PHIL-UA 41
The Nature of Values
T/TH 2-3:15
Sharon Street

Prerequisite: one Introductory course

The course's central question will be the nature of value and where to "place" it with respect to our scientific conception of the world. On the one hand, we regard ourselves as capable of recognizing, and being guided in our thought and action by, evaluative truths—truths concerning how there is most reason to live, what there is most reason to believe, what ways of life are good, valuable, morally required, and so on. On the other hand, we regard ourselves as part of the world of cause and effect—as beings whose evaluative states of mind are part of the natural order and subject to scientific study and explanation. It is not obvious how to fit these two understandings of ourselves together, nor even whether they are jointly tenable in the end. Are there objective truths about what is good and bad, moral and immoral? Is it possible to understand evaluative truths such as "happiness is good" on the model of scientific truths such as "water is H_2O"? Or is the subject matter of evaluative discourse very different from that of scientific discourse? Do evaluative claims amount to nothing more than sophisticated ways of saying "boo" and "hooray" about the things we happen to like and dislike? The course will survey some of the most prominent contemporary thinking on these questions. Readings will include works by Moore, Ayer, Mackie, Railton, Sturgeon, Nagel, Blackburn, Gibbard, Korsgaard, and others.

Sign up for one of the following sections:

Jared Warren: Friday 12:30-1:45 and 2:00-3:15

PHIL-UA 50
Medical Ethics
M/W 2-3:15
Colin O'Neil

This course will examine ethical issues arising out of medicine and bioethics. We will begin by surveying normative theories such as consequentialism and deontology. We will then explore topics such as informed consent, the right to refuse treatment, paternalism in public health, euthanasia, advance directives, conscientious objection in medicine, animal experimentation, abortion, rights to health care, allocation of scarce medical resources, human subjects research, and drug patents.   By the end of the course, students will have learned how to analyze and evaluate philosophical arguments in bioethics.

PHIL-UA 102
Topics in Ethics and Political Philosophy
T/TH 4:55-6:10
Peter Unger

Prerequisite: PHIL-UA 40, PHIL-UA 41, or PHIL-UA 45

Even as compared to what he or she can do, almost all well-to-do people do little, or nothing, over the course of their lifetime, to prevent the early deaths and great suffering of people in the poorest parts of the world. Is it wrong for a well-to-do person to behave like this - perhaps about as horribly wrong as committing negligent homicide, as with fatal drunken driving? The course will center on this question, though it will also involve us in many other moral questions. In about equal measure, this will be a course in both normative ethics and in applied ethics. (By contrast, little will be said about metaethics and, most likely, not much about political philosophy, either.)

Group III: Metaphysics, Epistemology, Mind, Language, and Logic

PHIL-UA 70-001
Logic
MW 11-12:15
Daniela Dover

PHIL-UA 70-002
Logic
M/W 12:30-1:45
Grace Helton

PHIL-UA 70-003
Logic
T/TH 11-12:15
Michael Schweiger

Introduces the techniques, results, and philosophical import of 20th century formal logic. Principal concepts include those of sentence, set, interpretation, validity, consistency, consequence, tautology, derivation, and completeness. This course satisfies the logic requirement for NYU Philosophy majors.

PHIL-UA 73
Set Theory
T/TH 12:30-1:45
Kit Fine

Prerequisite: PHIL-UA 70

The course will cover the basics of set theory. The required text is 'Introduction to Set Theory' by Jech and Hrbacek (3rd edition), Chapman and Hall (available from NYU bookstore). We will more or less go though the chapters of the book in order. Among the topics to be covered are: the axioms of set theory; Boolean operations on sets; set-theoretic representation of relations, functions and orderings; the natural numbers; theory of transfinite cardinal and ordinal numbers; the axiom of choice and its equivalents; and the foundations of analysis. If time permits we may also consider some more advanced topics, such as large cardinals or the independence results.

The emphasis will be on the technical material, although there will also be some philosophical discussion. Students will be required to do exercises each week. Roughly half of these assignments will be handed in and graded. Each week there will be a review section run by the TA, Olla Solomyak. There will be a mid-term exam and a final exam. The two exams will count for 20% and 30% of the final grade, respectively, the assignment for 50%.

The course will start from scratch; no background in mathematics or logic is strictly required. However, a background in logic will be helpful; and a certain degree of technical sophistication will be essential.

Sign up for one of the following sections:

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

PHIL-UA 76
Epistemology
M/W 3:30-4:45
Tim Maudlin

Prerequisite: one Introductory course

This class will focus on skepticism and responses to skeptical arguments through the history of philosophy. We will discuss general skeptical arguments and particular difficulties about our knowledge of the external world and our use of induction. From the ancient period, will we read parts of Sextus Empiricus' Outlines of Pyrrhonism and Plato's Meno. From the early modern period we will read Descartes' Meditations and parts of Hume's A Treatise on Human Nature.

From the 20th century we will read Moore's "Proof of an External World", Wittgenstein's On Certainty and parts of Goodman's Fact, Fiction and Forecast.

Sign up for one of the following sections:

Jeremy Dolan: Thursday 11-12:15 and 12:30-1:45

PHIL-UA 80
Philosophy of Mind
MW 4:55-6:10
Thomas Nagel

Prerequisite: one Introductory course

The course will concentrate on the recent history of debate over the mind-body problem in the analytic literature. The problem is this: How are mental phenomena such as feeling, perception, thought, and desire related to the physical world, especially to brains and behavior? Can mental phenomena be identified with physical phenomena, or analyzed in physical terms, or does their existence imply that there is more to reality than can be accounted for by the physical sciences?

Sign up for one of the following sections:

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

PHIL-UA 85
Philosophy of Language
M/W 11-12:15
Crispin Wright

Prerequisite: one Introductory course

This course will concentrate on a small number of central questions in recent and contemporary philosophy of language. Some familiarity with elementary formal logic may be helpful. Topics to be covered include skepticism about meaning, with special reference to writings of Quine and Kripke; the nature of knowledge of a language, with special reference to the work of Davidson and Dummett; and the competing paradigms of singular reference deriving from Frege and from Kripke. Grades will be awarded on the basis of two mid-term papers, and a take-home final exam.

Sign up for one of the following sections:

Max Barkhausen: Thursday 9:30-10:45 and 11:00-12:15

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

Prerequisite: one Introductory course

What is science? How does it work? When it works, what kind of knowledge does it provide? Is there a scientific method? What is a scientific theory? How do experiments provide evidence for theories? What is the nature of scientific explanation? How does the social organization of science contribute, if at all, to its success?

PHIL-UA 104
Topics in Mind and Language
M/W 12:30-1:45
James Stazicker

Prerequisite: PHIL-UA 70 and PHIL-UA 80, PHIL-UA 81, or PHIL-UA 85

We will pursue some questions in the philosophy of perception. First we will ask in what sense, if any, perceptual experience is immediate awareness of the world. We will assess the traditional Argument from Illusion, and various responses to it. Then we will ask what distinguishes the different sensory modalities from one another, and explore some structural differences between experiences of space in vision, touch and hearing. We will assess a related question which William Molyneux famously asked Locke: Would a man born blind, who has learned to discriminate a cube from a sphere by touch, and then becomes able to see, be able to discriminate them by sight? Finally we will ask in what way, if any, perceptual experience is a distinctive source of knowledge. Here we will engage with empirical evidence that perception is cognitively penetrated – that what we perceive depends on what we believe.

Honors Courses:

PHIL-UA 200
Junior Honors Proseminar
W 2-4
Stephen Schiffer

See description under **Honors Program**, below.

5 WASHINGTON PLACE, NEW YORK, NY 10003 (212) 998-8320. FAX: (212) 995-4179.

DIRECTOR OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDIES:

Professor John Richardson; jr8@nyu.edu

ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF:

Faith Greulich: Faith Greulich; 998-7846
Debbie Bula: db7@nyu.edu ; 998-8325
Anupum Mehrotra: am3565@nyu.edu ; 998-9056
Leigh Bond: jlb548@nyu.edu; 998-8320

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE MAJOR:

The Department changed the major requirements last spring, by increasing the number of courses needed from 9 to 10. However, the new requirements will only apply to students entering NYU in September 2005 and after.

Requirements for students who began at NYU before September 2005:

A major in philosophy requires **nine** 4-point courses in the department, with numbers higher than V83.0009 (so that Introduction to Philosophy and Ethics & Society do not count). These nine courses must include (1) Logic, V83.0070; (2) History of Ancient Philosophy, V83.0020; (3) History of Modern Philosophy, V83.0021; (4) Ethics, V83.0040; or Nature of Values, V83.0041; or Political Philosophy, V83.0045; (5) Belief, Truth, and Knowledge, V83.0076; or Metaphysics, V83.0078; (6) Minds and Machines, V83.0015; or Philosophy of Mind, V83.0080; or Philosophy of Language, V83.0085; and (7) Topics in the History of Philosophy, V83.0101; or Topics in Ethics and Political Philosophy, V83.0102; or Topics in Metaphysics and Epistemology, V83.0103; or Topics in Language and Mind, V83.0104. No credit toward the major is awarded for a course with a grade lower than C.

Requirements for students who began at NYU in September 2005 and thereafter:

A major in philosophy requires **ten** 4-point courses in the department, with numbers higher than V83.0009 (so that Introduction to Philosophy and Ethics & Society do not count). These ten courses must include (1) Logic, V83.0070; (2) History of Ancient Philosophy, V83.0020; (3) History of Modern Philosophy, V83.0021; (4) Ethics, V83.0040; or Nature of Values, V83.0041; or Political Philosophy, V83.0045; (5) Belief, Truth, and Knowledge, V83.0076; or Metaphysics, V83.0078; (6) Minds and Machines, V83.0015; or Philosophy of Mind, V83.0080; or Philosophy of Language, V83.0085; and (7) Topics in the History of Philosophy, V83.0101; or Topics in

Ethics and Political Philosophy, V83.0102; or Topics in Metaphysics and Epistemology, V83.0103; or Topics in Language and Mind, V83.0104. Of the three honors courses, only the first two—the Junior Honors Proseminar and the Senior Honors Seminar—may be counted towards the ten courses required. No credit toward the major is awarded for a course with a grade lower than C.

Recommendations on course sequence:

Students considering a major in philosophy are encouraged to begin with one of the Intensive Introductory Courses, or with one of the following: History of Ancient Philosophy, V83.0020; History of Modern Philosophy, V83.0021; Ethics, V83.0040; or Belief, Truth, and Knowledge, V83.0076. Logic, V83.0070, should be taken as soon as possible. The Topics courses are the most advanced undergraduate courses, and presuppose coursework in their areas.

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE MINOR:

A minor in philosophy requires four 4-point courses, at least three beyond the Introductory Courses. One course must be History of Ancient Philosophy, V83.0020, or History of Modern Philosophy, V83.0021; one course each must come from Group 2 (Ethics, Value, and Society) and Group 3 (Metaphysics, Epistemology, Mind, Language, and Logic). (Consult the Bulletin or the Department's on-line course-list for the classification of courses in these Groups.) No credit toward the minor is awarded for a course with a grade lower than C.

JOINT MAJOR IN LANGUAGE AND MIND:

This major, intended as an introduction to cognitive science, is administered by the Departments of Linguistics, Philosophy, and Psychology. Eleven courses are required (four in linguistics, one in philosophy, five in psychology, and one additional course) to be constituted as follows. The linguistics component consists of Language, V61.0001; Grammatical Analysis, V61.0013; Introduction to Cognitive Science, V61.0028; and one more course chosen from Computational Models of Sentence Construction, V61.0024; Phonological Analysis, V61.0012; and Introduction to Semantics, V61.0004. The philosophy component consists of one course, chosen from Minds and Machines, V83.0015; Philosophy of Language, V83.0085; and Logic, V83.0070. The psychology component consists of four required courses: Introduction to Psychology, A89.0001; Statistics for the Behavioral Sciences, V89.0010; The Psychology of Language, V89.0056; and Cognition, V89.0029; in addition, one course, chosen from Seminar in Thinking, V89.0026; Language Acquisition and Cognitive Development, V89.0300; and Laboratory in Human Cognition, V89.0028. The eleventh course will be one of the above-listed courses that has not already been chosen to satisfy the departmental components.

INDEPENDENT STUDY:

A student may sign up for an independent study course if he or she obtains the consent of a faculty member who approves the study project and agrees to serve as adviser. The student must

also obtain the approval of either the department chair or the director of undergraduate studies. The student may take no more than one such course in any given semester and no more than two such courses in total, unless granted special permission by either the department chair or the director of undergraduate studies.

HONORS PROGRAM:

The Department has also made changes in its Honors Program, in particular by a) changing the credits for the senior honors courses from 2 to 4 points (per course), b) adding a third course, the Junior Honors Proseminar, and c) raising the grade point requirement (both overall and in philosophy courses) from 3.5 to 3.65. (Note: only the first of these changes applies to students who are seniors in 2005-6.) Here is the description of the new program:

Honors in philosophy will be awarded to majors who (1) have an overall grade point average of 3.65 and an average in philosophy courses of 3.65, and (2) successfully complete the honors program. This program consists in the following 3 courses. (Note: of these courses, only the first two may be counted towards the 10 courses required for the major.)

1. The **Junior Honors Proseminar**, to be taken in spring semester of junior year. This course will play the dual roles of introducing students to core readings in some of the main areas of current philosophy, and of giving them an intensive training in writing philosophy. Admission to this course usually requires a GPA, both overall and in philosophy courses, of at least 3.65, as well as the permission of the Director of Undergraduate Studies. The Department will try to make alternative arrangements for students who wish to participate in the Honors Program but who will be studying abroad in this semester of their junior year.

2. The **Senior Honors Seminar**, to be taken in fall semester of senior year. Here students begin to develop their thesis projects, meeting weekly as a group under the direction of a faculty member, and presenting and discussing their thesis arguments. Students will also select, and begin to meet separately with, their individual thesis advisors—faculty who work in the areas of their thesis projects. Entry to this seminar depends on satisfactory completion of the Junior Honors Proseminar—or on the special approval of the Director of Undergraduate Studies. It also usually requires a GPA of at least 3.65.

3. **Senior Honors Research**, to be taken in spring semester of senior year. The seminar no longer meets, but each student continues to meet separately with his/her individual thesis advisor, producing and discussing a series of rough drafts of the thesis. The final version must be submitted by a deadline to be determined, in April. It must be approved by the thesis advisor, as well as by a second faculty reader, for honors to be awarded. The student must also finish with a GPA of at least 3.65—and here no exceptions will be made. In addition, the thesis advisors will meet after the decisions by readers have been made, and award some students highest or high honors, based on thesis quality and other factors (including GPA in philosophy courses).