

Department of Philosophy



Introductory Courses

PHIL 101: Introduction to Philosophy

PHIL 101 - is an introduction to several fundamental philosophical issues including: the existence of God, the possibility of knowledge of external objects, and the nature of personal identity. Classes are held in the lecture/discussion format.

PHIL 102: Ethics

PHIL 102 - is an introduction to basic issues in the philosophic investigation of ethics. Topics include: general theories of the nature of right and wrong, and theories of the functions of ethical language. Classes are held in the lecture/question format. The texts are Introductory Ethics by Fred Feldman, and an anthology, The Right Thing to Do, James Rachels, ed.

PHIL 103: Contemporary Moral Problems

PHIL 103 - An introduction to moral philosophy as applied to various controversial topics. Is torture morally permissible in the fight against terrorism? Is it okay to destroy embryos to derive stem cells for research or therapy? Can abortion ever be justified? How? Is active euthanasia ever permissible? Is capital punishment justifiable in principle? In practice? How far does our moral duty to aid distant strangers extend? What sorts of political and socioeconomic principles are morally justifiable? Do animals have moral rights, and if so, how does this constrain our behavior toward them? How should we understand the meaning and value of life and death? We will also explore related general questions: Is it always possible for a good enough end to justify bad means? What is the relation, if any, between morality and religion? Are there objective facts about right or wrong, or is morality ultimately subjective or relative to cultures or times?

PHIL 105: Reason and Argument

PHIL 105- Arguments are used both to try to persuade people of things and to try to establish the truth about a topic. PHIL 105 examines these different uses of arguments and then examines in detail the criteria for distinguishing good arguments from those that are not good. Methods are then developed for identifying, interpreting, and evaluating arguments of the sort you might find in speeches, newspaper editorials, letters to the editor, magazine articles, and scientific reports. Class meets for two lectures per week plus one discussion period per week.

PHIL 106: Writing Across Disciplines (crosslisted with WRTG 265 and ENGL 284)

PHIL 106 - In this course students will investigate the following questions: What is argument? What is evidence? To answer these questions, students will also think deeply about how context does or does not shape our understanding of these concepts. For instance, what do arguments in STEM fields have in common with those in the humanities? Do different fields such as philosophy, psychology, and biology share evidence and argumentative strategies? Is the meaning of evidence static across these fields? We will begin by investigating different models of argument from philosophy and argumentation theory, and then students will use these broad models to investigate and analyze argument in academic contexts of their choice. We will also explore how these theoretical accounts of argument apply to popular contexts such as advertising, public deliberation, and journalism. Students will explore these issues through reflective writing, several short papers and a research project of their own design.

PHIL 110: Introductory Logic

PHIL 110 - is an introductory class in symbolic logic, in which students study the validity of arguments using formal languages. Students learn the language of propositional logic, and the first order predicate calculus with identity. In each case, students learn to translate between English and logic, to construct derivations of valid arguments, and to establish the invalidity of invalid arguments. Students interested in philosophy, mathematics, law, or simply in thinking clearly will benefit from this course.

PHIL 111: Philosophy of Religion (crosslisted with RELC 111)

PHIL 111 - Topics include the existence of God, the nature of God, and the relation of God to the world. We will examine traditional arguments for and against God's existence, we will consider divine attributes such as omnipotence and omniscience, and we will discuss such topics as miracles and the relation of faith and reason.

PHIL 112: The University's Values

PHIL 112 - The University recently adopted a Vision and Values statement, identifying as its values Meliora, Equity, Leadership, Integrity, Openness, Respect, and Accountability. Over the years we have also expressed commitment to values such as freedom, fairness, and responsibility. In this course, we will read important essays examining the meaning and significance of these concepts and then examine their implications for a contemporary university setting. We'll use examples of incidents that have occurred on campuses around the country to examine the challenges that arise in an effort to live up to these values.

PHIL 114: Philosophy and Science Fiction

PHIL 114 - In this course there will be discussions about science fiction that raises philosophical problems—about personal identity, time, free will, etc.—and investigate these problems.

PHIL 120: Ethics of Technology

PHIL 120 - This course is an introduction to the ethics of emerging technologies and the value judgments that are integral to the engineering design process. The technologies addressed will include information technology (IT) and artificial intelligence (AI), biomedical engineering (BME), and environmental and agricultural technology. The course will examine ideals of professionalism and the influence of institutional settings on professional decision-making.

PHIL 135: Environmental Ethics

PHIL 135 - An examination of central concepts and issues in environmental ethics, including the nature of and responsibility for current environmental crises, the varying responsibilities of individuals, institutions, and nations, the importance of sustainability, and the ultimate principles and values at stake.

PHIL 152: Science and Reason

PHIL 152 - This course is an introduction to basic questions which arise when one reflects on the nature of science and its development. These questions may include: How is scientific knowledge arrived at; in what circumstances are scientific theories rejected and replaced; and what criteria and values govern these processes? Do scientific theories describe an underlying reality, or do they simply provide us with an elegant systematization of a host of experimental results? What exactly is a scientific explanation; are there criteria which can be used to distinguish scientific from unscientific explanations; and in any case, what makes a scientific explanation successful?

PHIL 171: Philosophical Foundations of Feminism (cross-listed with WMST 205)

PHIL 171 - The study of contemporary feminist theory. PHIL 171 considers the conception of women expressed through our practices, laws, theories and literature. Is this conception that of an inessential Other as one philosopher has argued? Other topics to be discussed include: equality and equal rights, sex roles and gender specific language, power relations and self-determination, marriage and maternity. This course may be taken for upper-level writing credit.

PHIL 201: History of Ancient Philosophy

PHIL 201 - Survey of the origins of Western philosophy. PHIL 201 begins with the Presocratics and ends six centuries later with the Hellenistic philosophers. The great philosophers of the Classical period, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle are studied in detail. Texts: Ancient Greek Philosophy, edited by S. Marc Cohen, Patricia Cord and C.D.C. Reeve; Hellenistic Philosophy, edited by Brad Inwood and L.P. Gerson.

PHIL 202: History of Modern Philosophy

PHIL 202 - develops the main philosophical responses of the 17th and 18th centuries (other than Kant's) to the new science and scientific methodology found, for example, in Galileo. Students start out by reading some Galileo and then go on to study Descartes' universal methodology. Motion, space and time, causality, and the mind-body problem (including the problem of perception) are also discussed. The next part of the course consists of Leibniz and of Newton and Locke, to be followed by Berkeley and Hume. There will be both lectures and discussion meetings. Texts: Galileo, Discoveries and Opinions (tr. S. Drake; Doubleday); Descartes, Philosophical Writings (tr. Anscombe & Geach; Bobb-Merrill), From Descartes to Locke (ed. Smith & Grene; Phoenix), and Berkeley, Hume, and Kant (ed. Smith & Grene; Phoenix). This course may be taken for upper-level writing credit.

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