

Fall 2015 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:

Andrew Lee: Wednesday 4:55-6:10; Thursday 9:30-10:45

Penn Lawrence: Thursdays 11-12:15; 4:55-6:10

PHIL-UA 2; Great Works in Philosophy; T/R 3:30-4:45; John Richardson

The course will introduce students to a selection of basic philosophical problems, by examining how they are treated in a number of major texts from a wide range of historical periods and philosophical traditions.

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

Mike Zhao: Mondays 11-12:15; 3:30-4:45
Vera Flocke: Fridays 11-12:15; 12:30-1:45

PHIL-UA 4; Life and Death; M/W 4:55-6:10; 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/R 4:55-6:10; Grace Helton

This course is designed to introduce students to theoretical issues that arise in the scientific study of the mind. In the first portion of the course, we will consider how to characterize computation and will evaluate computationalist approaches to the mind. In the second portion, we will consider several issues in cognition, including the proper characterization of inference and the issue of how judgments are formed and regulated. In the third portion, we will explore several debates in perception, including the question of whether perception can be influenced by desires and the issue of which kinds of features we can perceive. In the final portion, we will review three major theories of emotion—cognitive theories, feeling theories, and perceptual theories—and evaluate these in light of recent empirical results.

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:

Kyle Blumberg: Fridays 9:30-10:45; 11-12:15

Michelle Dyke: Mondays 12:30-1:45; 2-3:15

Prerequisite: one Introductory course.

PHIL-UA 40; Ethics; T/R 3:30-4:45; David Velleman

This course is an introduction to philosophical ethics. We will study four classic works that defined the discipline and one modern work that criticizes it: John Stuart Mill's Utilitarianism, Aristotle's The Nicomachean Ethics, Immanuel Kant's Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals, and Hannah Arendt's Eichmann in Jerusalem. The course requires four papers and a final exam.

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

Dan Hoek: Fridays 9:30-10:45; 11:00-12:15

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

Prerequisite: one Introductory course.

PHIL-UA 41; Nature of Values; T/R 8-9:15; Alex Worsnip

We all make value judgments every day: judgments about whether we have been treated fairly, about whether we have various duties and obligations to those around us, about whether the actions of others were justified or wrong, and so on. But what is the status of these judgments? Do they attempt to describe an objective, mind-independent reality? If so, do they succeed? Are they like ordinary beliefs that can be straightforwardly true or false? Or are they more like expressions of emotion or approval? These are the central questions of "metaethics", and this course is devoted to investigating them. Much of the course will be spent examining the doctrine known as "moral realism", the view that there are in fact objective, mind-independent moral facts. We will learn about different versions of moral realism, its relation (or lack of) to religious belief, and central arguments for it. We then turn to a series of challenges for moral realism, including its purported explanatory redundancy, the challenge from evolutionary theory, its metaphysical "queerness", its capacity to explain the authority and motivational power of our moral judgments, and its capacity to explain widespread moral disagreement. We critically assess these arguments, before turning to various alternatives to moral realism. If there aren't objective moral facts, what should we say about our moral thought and talk? Is it somehow still capable of being true, but in a way that is somehow "subjective" or "relative" to us (and if so, what does that really mean)? Are our moral utterances the sorts of claims that aren't capable of being true or false at all, like exclamations of approval or commands? Or is it all just bluff and pretense - false talk that presupposes a moral reality that isn't there? Throughout, our primary focus is on moral judgments, but we also consider analogies and disanalogies with other value judgments, such as judgments about prudence, aesthetic value, and about what we ought to believe.

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; 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:

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

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

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; Brian Ballard

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; Kevin Coffey

This course is an introduction to logic, pre-supposing no prior background in either philosophy or logic. Its aim is to introduce you to the techniques of formal reasoning, and to illustrate the

application (and limitations) of those methods for the evaluation of everyday cases of ordinary reasoning.

PHIL-UA 73; Set Theory; M/W 3:30-4:45; Harvey Lederman

The course will cover the basics of set theory. The emphasis will be on the technical material, although there will be some philosophical discussion. Students will be required to do exercises each week.

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:

Ben Holguin: Thursdays 3:30-4:45; 4:55-6:10

Prerequisite: one Introductory course

PHIL-UA 80; Philosophy of Mind; T/R 4:55-6:10; Brian Cutter

This course examines fundamental questions about the the mind and its place in nature. Questions to be addressed include: what is the relationship between the mind and the brain? Can the existence of consciousness be reconciled with a materialist view of the world? What is the relationship between the mind and the “external” world? What is the nature of the self? Do I—does my self—persist through time, and if so, what sorts of changes might a person undergo while remaining the same person?

Prerequisite: one Introductory course.

PHIL-UA 93; Philosophical Applications of Cognitive Science; M/W 9:30-10:45; Michael Strevens

We will discuss the relevance of recent discoveries about the mind to philosophical questions about metaphysics, logic, and ethics. Most of the class concerns metaphysics. The questions include: What is causation? Is there a right way to "carve up" the world into categories? Why do we see the world as consisting of objects in places? Are the rules of logic objective or just the way we happen to think? Is there such a thing as objective right and wrong?

Prerequisite: one introductory course

PHIL-UA 101; Topics in the History of Philosophy; M/W 9:30-10:45; Jonardon Ganeri

An exploration of the thought of major philosophers in the geographical region of the Indian subcontinent, what is nowadays designated South Asia, from ancient times to the early modern period. Indian Philosophy is written in many languages—including Pali, Prakrit, Sanskrit, Malayalam, Gujarati, Tamil, Telugu, Persian, Arabic, Tibetan and Bengali—reflecting India's north-western borders with the Arabic and Persianate world, its north-eastern boundaries with Tibet and China, the southern and eastern shores that link it with lands of Theravāda Buddhism today. The reach of Indian ideas has been vast, both historically and geographically, and it has been and continues to be a major world philosophy. It spans the philosophies of Buddhism, Jainism, Islam and Hinduism, as well as philosophy of law, of medicine, of mathematics, of politics and of society, but it is most strongly associated with wide-ranging discussions in the philosophy of mind, the study of language, as well as of epistemology and metaphysics. Attention will be paid to strong undercurrents of naturalism within Indian thought. If you are interested in the way in which culture influences structures of thinking, or want to study alternative histories of ideas, or are merely curious to know what some of the world's greatest thinkers have thought about some of the most intractable and central philosophical puzzles about human existence, Indian Philosophy is a domain of unparalleled richness and importance. The aim of the course is to present a balanced and impartial picture of the richness, diversity, and depth of philosophy in this region.

Prerequisite: History of Ancient Philosophy (PHIL-UA 20) or History of Modern Philosophy (PHIL-UA 21)

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 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 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; T/R 12:30-1:45; Paul Horwich

This course will address a series of problems relating to our concepts of truth and meaning. Can "true" be defined? If it can, then how? If it can't, what engenders its meaning? Ought we wish for our beliefs to be true? If yes, then for what reason? Is "true" itself a term of evaluation? Are all truths absolute, or are some merely relative? Can we even make sense of "relative truth"? What sort of thing, or property, is the meaning of a word? Are there objective facts as to what words mean? Should we explain meaning in terms of truth – or is it the other way around?

Prerequisite: Philosophy of Language (PHIL-UA 85).

PHIL-UA 122; The Greek Thinkers; M/W 3:30-4:45

The origins of nonmythical speculation among the Greeks and the main patterns of philosophical thought, from Thales and other early speculators about the physical nature of the world through Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics, the Epicureans, and the Neoplatonists.

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