Please note: No prerequisites are required for any summer courses.

FIRST SUMMER SESSION:

PHIL-UA 4; Life and Death; MTWR 1:30-3:05; Tienmu Ma

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 20; History of Ancient Philosophy; MTWR 6-7:35; Eli Alshanetsky

Examination of the major figures and movements in Greek philosophy, especially Plato and Aristotle.

PHIL-UA 45; Political Philosophy; MTWR 11:30-1:05; Daniel Waxman

This course provides an introduction to some of the central problems of political philosophy, many of which are the subject of deep controversies in public life. The two issues on which we will primarily focus are political authority and distributive justice.

Questions of political authority ask why, and to what extent, governments have (or could have) legitimate power over their citizens. States are unique among social institutions in that they claim a special authority to impose coercion on their citizens. Do they have such authority in the first place? If so, does it arise from the consent of the governed? And if not, where does it come from? Are there limits on what a democratically elected government can permissibly do, and if so, why?

Questions of distributive justice ask how, morally speaking, resources should be distributed. Is capitalism a just economic system, even if it leads to the unequal distribution of wealth? Can people ever be said to deserve their income? Should the government seek economic equality, and if so, what kind of equality should it seek?

PHIL-UA 70; Logic; MTWR 1:30-3:05; Camil Golub

This course is an introduction to symbolic logic, an invaluable tool for philosophy students, and more generally for anyone interested in identifying and evaluating arguments expressed in ordinary language. We will study two formal languages – sentential and predicate logic – and in each case, we will learn to
PHIL-UA 78; Metaphysics; MTWR 3:30-5:05; Harjit Bhogal

In this course we are going to consider some questions about the fundamental nature of the world. We will start by asking questions about the nature of time: Do past events exist in the same way as future events? Is the future `open'? In what ways is time different from space? We will then move to considering the nature of objects: Do objects persist though time? If the statue and the lump of clay it’s made from are the same thing why can I destroy the statue without destroying the clay? And then we will talk about the nature of properties: Do there exist these things, the properties or features that objects have, in addition to the objects existing? And why do some properties, like the property of having mass, seem especially important while others, like the property of being 2 feet from a table do not?

PHIL-UA 80; Philosophy of Mind; MTWR 6-7:35; Martín Abreu Zavaleta

Science fiction has taught us that robots could in principle behave very much like humans, but could they have minds? Could they experience the sweetness of a ripe peach? What does it take to have a mind in the first place? In this course we will examine various answers to these and other fundamental questions in the philosophy of mind. The topics include: the relation between the mental and the physical, the nature of conscious experience, the nature of beliefs and desires, how we represent the world in thought, and many others.

SECOND SUMMER SESSION:

PHIL-UA 1; Central Problems in Philosophy; MTWR 1:30-3:05; Daniel Fogal

This course will be an introduction to some central issues in contemporary philosophy. The goal will be to practice thinking hard and writing clearly about questions like the following. How can we know about things we have not observed, such as what the future holds or whether animals and other people have minds? What is the relation between your mind and your brain? What is it to be conscious? Do people have free will? In what sense are you the same person as you were in middle school? Why is death bad? Are you morally obligated to give to charity?

PHIL-UA 5; Minds and Machines; MTWR 6-7:35; Philippe Lusson

How do our minds, our thoughts, and our experiences, fit into the world described by physics, chemistry, and biology? Could a machine, a physical device, whether made of silicon or
neurons, think? Could it reason, represent its environment, enjoy conscious experiences? Drawing on readings in recent philosophy and cognitive science, we will explore different proposals to answer these questions, and to flesh out and critically examine the idea that our brains and nervous systems give rise to our mental lives. Topics will include the computer model of the mind, neural nets, the relationship between thinking and the body or the environment at large, how mental states may represent the world, the relationship between thought and consciousness, and the relationship between the science of the mind and our everyday picture of it. This course gives training in philosophical argument and writing.

PHIL-UA 21; History of Modern Philosophy; MTWR 1:30-3:05; Tienmu Ma

Examination of the major figures and movements in philosophy in Europe from the 17th to the early 19th century, including some of the works of Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Hobbes, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, and Kant.

PHIL-UA 40; Ethics; MTWR 3:30-5:05; Mihailis Diamantis

This course will examine 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? The course will begin by covering three major approaches to these questions: Deontologism, Utilitarianism, and Virtue Ethics. We will then turn our attention to more specific questions about the nature of moral norms, how we can know them, and what we really mean when we use them to criticize or praise others. The course will end with a detailed treatment of some contemporary, hot-button ethical controversies selected by the class.

PHIL-UA 52; Philosophy of Law; MTWR 11:30-1:05; Emilio Mora

This class will be a seminar-style course on the philosophy of law. We will examine some fundamental issues in the philosophy of law with a particular emphasis on issues relating to political theory. Topics will include the nature of law and its relation to morality; the obligation to obey the law; debates over constitutional interpretation; the relation of judicial review to democracy; taxation; punishment; and property.

PHIL-UA 70; Logic; MTWR 6-7:35; Christopher Prodoehl

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.
Epistemology is the philosophical study of human knowledge. We will begin by considering a very natural conception of knowledge, most famously defended by Descartes. We will then go on to consider a of number of reasons that this conception might not be as obvious as it would first appear. In particular, we will be interested in four main questions. First, how should we respond to sceptical arguments about the extent of human knowledge, and what is their philosophical significance? Second, is it possible to have knowledge that does not depend on experience? Third, what should we make if the idea that there’s a special way in which we know about our own mental states? And fourth, is human knowledge best conceived of as resting on foundational beliefs that are not open to doubt?

Examination of philosophical issues about the natural sciences. Central questions include the following: What is the nature of scientific explanation? How does science differ from pseudoscience? What is a scientific law? How do experiments work?