SPRING 2026 PHILOSOPHY COURSES

January Intersession Classes-Monday through Sunday, (01/02/2026-01/10/2026)
PHIL 20003, PHIL 31003, PHIL 31203

Spring Semester (01/12/2026-05/01/2026)

PHIL 20003 Introduction to Philosophy,
An examination of such philosophical topics as the existence of God, the nature of the human mind, the relationship between appearance and reality, the forms and limits of human knowledge, freedom of will, and standards of right and wrong. This course is well within the reach of students on all levels, including freshmen, and is exciting, useful, and challenging. **No prerequisite.**

PHIL 200H3 Introduction to Philosophy (Honors),
The aim of this course is to introduce the student to some of the central problems discussed by prominent philosophers of both the past and present, to critically examine fundamental beliefs and concepts, and to develop in the student an interest and ability in thinking philosophically, expressing such thought clearly, comprehending philosophical works and positions, and reasoning intelligently about pivotal questions. **Students must be Four Year Scholars or in a departmental honors program or have the permission of the Philosophy Department Chair in order to enroll.**

PHIL 21003 Introduction to Ethics,
This course is a systematic and comprehensive treatment of freedom and determinism, ethical relativism, standards of right and wrong, and meaning and validity of ethical statements. **No prerequisite.**

PHIL 22003 Logic,
Formal logic is primarily concerned with the rigorous assessment of deductive arguments. However, it also plays a significant role in philosophy, linguistics, computer science, and mathematics. This course introduces the subject, covering propositional and quantificational logic, and incorporating a variety of elementary methods for argument assessment (e.g., truth tables, natural deduction, and truth trees). **No prerequisite.**

PHIL 23003 Human Nature & Meaning of Life,
The centerpiece of this course will be an examination of different views on what human nature is like. We will look at questions like 'Do humans act freely?' and 'Do humans only act on selfish motives?' and 'What separates humans from other animals or artificially intelligent devices?'. But we will also investigate different questions surrounding these views on human nature: what makes life meaningful, what makes life worthwhile, what makes our lives good? We will look at various answers to these questions as well. **No prerequisite.**

PHIL 31003 Ethics and the Professions, 3 Sections
This course explores the moral standards, responsibilities, and duties of professionals, such as accountants, architects, engineers, journalists, lawyers, physicians, scientists, and teachers. We will scrutinize the obligations of professionals towards their clients and towards third parties. While we will examine cases that come up in "real life," we will intersperse our study with explorations of common philosophical theories of moral obligation, rights, and justice. Since this is a philosophy course, we will consider various views with an eye toward critical assessment instead of blind acceptance.
No prerequisite.

PHIL 31303: Medical Ethics, 2 Sections **Instructor: Herold**
Is there a morally relevant difference between killing a person and merely letting them die? Is it ever morally permissible for a medical professional to help a patient end their life? Who should decide what is best for a patient? What if the patient is a child? Is it ever morally permissible for a physician to treat a patient against their will? Or lie to a patient? When medical resources are scarce and not everyone can receive treatment, who should get priority? Who should live, and who should die? Should people be permitted to buy or sell their organs?
Medical professionals face a wide range of ethical challenges. The objective of this course is to equip students with the knowledge and analytical tools that are required to meet these challenges. Students will learn the fundamentals of ethical theory, examine professional codes of medical ethics, and explore a range of ethical dilemmas that one could encounter while working as a medical professional. The course will cover informed consent and patient autonomy, truth-telling and patient confidentiality, doctor-patient relationships, medical decision-making authority, euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide, organ donation and organ markets, and the allocation of scarce medical resources. Throughout the semester, the course will emphasize the development of critical thinking and writing skills. Students will learn to read, analyze, and critically evaluate philosophical arguments, as well as to develop and communicate arguments of their own, both verbally and in writing.

PHIL 40303/50303 Modern Philosophy, MWF 11:50am-12:40pm **Instructor: Adler**
This course investigates the philosophical systems (and attendant argumentation) of seven representative thinkers of the early modern period -- Locke, Berkeley, and Hume in Great Britain, as well as Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, and Kant on the Continent. Special attention will be devoted to selected metaphysical and natural philosophical issues, including substance and causation, mind and body, identity and individuation, matter and its qualities, and the relation between God and nature; attention will also be given to a number of epistemological issues, most importantly skepticism and our knowledge of the external world, the nature of self-knowledge**.**

PHIL 40903/409H3/50903 Topic: Philosophy of Biology, MW 3:05-4:20pm Instructor: Attwood
Biology is the scientific study of life and living things. In this course, we will philosophically study biology, its subject-matter, its scientific status, its methods, its core distinctions, and its problems. We will investigate the nature of life itself and explore theoretical issues specific to the science of biology; for example, biological laws, functional explanation, biological models, and the relation between biology and the physical sciences (e.g. physics, chemistry, etc.). Additionally, we will philosophically examine the targets and conceptual resources of biological science; for example, individuals, species/kinds, mechanisms, functions, fitness, levels of selection, genes, information, systems, and processes. This course does not require advanced knowledge of biology, but it will presuppose some basic familiarity.

PHIL 40903/409H3/50903 Topic: Minds and Machines, MWF 10:45-11:35am Instructor: Funkhouser
For millennia, it was thought that human minds are not physical mechanisms. The idea was that no physical mechanism – no machine – could generate intelligent thought or conscious experience. While that idea has long had some challengers, widespread dissent did not emerge until the rise of computing technology in the 20th century. This course begins by providing some of the philosophical background on materialism versus dualism in the philosophy of mind. But the primary focus is on the conceptual and practical revolutions caused by Turing machines and their physical realizations. We will examine the functionalist turn in the philosophy of psychology as well as the development of machine learning and artificial intelligence in computer science. We will study the extent to which cognition can be – and already has been – mechanized. We also will consider whether artificial machines will ever be capable of consciousness in addition to cognition. In contrast to our philosophy of mind survey course, this course focuses on artificial intelligence. Topics covered include: materialism, Turing machines, the computational theory of mind, functionalism, machine learning, AI, LLMs, and embodied/extended cognition.

PHIL 40903/409H3/50903 Topic: Kant, TR 11:00am-12:15pm Instructor: Reidy
The primary aim of this course is to reach a general understanding of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. Following Kant as he seeks to determine whether a science of metaphysics is possible, we shall consider the fundamental question he poses ("How are synthetic judgments *a priori* possible?"), the way of thinking he follows in answering it (the so-called "Copernican Revolution"), and the doctrine of Transcendental Idealism on which his answer to this question depends. A secondary aim of the course is to gain familiarity with Kant's moral philosophy. The final few weeks will accordingly be devoted to his *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, in which he undertakes an analysis of common moral knowledge with a view to reaching a formulation of its supreme principle.

Prior familiarity with some Modern Philosophy (e.g., Descartes, Hume) will be helpful, but is certainly not required.

PHIL 41503/51503: Theories of Legal Punishment, TR 12:30-1:45pm Instructor: Purdy
Political states frequently exercise the power to punish their citizens. But what is punishment, and what licenses the state to punish its citizens? The aim of this course is to consider and evaluate different responses to these and related questions. To do this, we will first consider some of the most influential Western historical justifications of the state and its coercive power. The main set of questions we will focus on in reading these texts are: what rights (if any) do citizens of a state have and what are the ends of the political state, such that some state coercion is justified? We will then consider contemporary justifications of punishment, including consequentialist, retributivist, and pluralist accounts, as well as abolitionist arguments against state punishment. We will end the course by evaluating more applied issues concerning the operation of legal punishment, including some of: civil disobedience, capital punishment, the disenfranchisement of felons, the *mens rea* requirement on just punishment, torture, mass incarceration, and differential treatment of citizens based on socioeconomic status.

PHIL 42103/52103: Philosophy of Science, MWF 9:40-10:30am Instructor: Ward
This course provides an introduction to some fundamental questions in the philosophy of science. What is science? Is it the objective and rational enterprise it is commonly taken to be? What constitutes good evidence for a scientific theory? Does the evidence inevitably underdetermine theory choice in the sciences? What is the nature of scientific explanation? Does science justify belief in unobservable entities, such as electrons? Do social factors play an important role in the deliberations of the scientific community, and if so, how should that inform our understanding of scientific objectivity? Is scientific truth, in some interesting sense, socially constructed? All of these will be discussed, largely in the light of twentieth and early twenty first century philosophical discussion of science. There are no prerequisites for this course. However, students will be expected to engage with some fairly challenging philosophical material.

PHIL 43203/53203: Philosophy of Race and Gender, MWF 2:00-2:50pm Instructor: McMullen
In this course, we analyze and evaluate the following questions. What are 'race' and 'gender'? What are 'racism' and 'misogyny'? Are race and gender "real"? Do 'racism' and 'misogyny' play any role in defining 'race' and 'gender'? Should we define these terms differently depending on our epistemic and/or political goals? Is there any relationship between racism and misogyny and speech? Can speech be used to oppress, cause violence, or resist violence? Are some groups discriminated against as knowers? Does our failure to grasp certain concepts cause others to be oppressed?

PHIL 44003/54003: Philosophy of Art, TR 9:30-10:45am **Instructor: Stevens**

Advanced introduction to main issues in the philosophy of art. The central question: How ought we construe the meaning of the word 'Art'? This is much harder than at first appears. Informed answers require familiarity with debates about related issues, each itself involved: aesthetic experience, aesthetic value, aesthetic judgment, connections between ethics and aesthetics, and the nature and function of definitions in general. After a survey of established definitions of art, we'll deal with each of these issues, while remaining cognizant of its relation to the central question. We'll also keep in mind data any overall theory of art must explain: strong convergence of expert opinion as to a ranking of artworks, a small subset being at the top; the high value so many from early history until now have placed on art (museums exist in nearly all major cities, people travel great distances to see artworks in person, etc.); the high value that those devoted to producing artworks implicitly take artworks or the artistic life to have. For a well-deserved break after having dealt with all this difficulty, we'll finish the course by considering the place of art and aesthetic appreciation in a meaningful or well-lived life. In particular, we'll consider the following ancient question: What if any relations obtain between the good, the true, and the beautiful? If relations are weak or nonexistent, then ethics, logic, and aesthetics are properly separable. If relations are strong, then they're only improperly separable: for instance, perhaps an aesthetically negligent life is a morally deficient one, or a person's believing falsehoods or failing to cultivate their ability to reason makes them less beautiful than they would otherwise be. Some wise people have thought both to be so.

PHIL 49803 Capstone: Mental Time Travel, Memory, & Personal Identity, TR 2:00-3:15pm Instructor: Senor

This course will focus on the nature of memory and its role (if any) in personal identity. We will begin by looking at contemporary work on both the philosophy and psychology of memory. One influential way of understanding memory is as "mental time travel." On this view, memory is part of our imaginative cognitive processes that also allow us to think about the future and counterfactual situations. Once we finish our discussion of the nature of human memory, we'll consider to what extent memory plays a part in our identity over time. We'll read both classical and contemporary work on personal identity, comparing views that emphasize the importance of psychology with those that claim psychology is irrelevant to identity. Finally, we'll read current work that looks at psychological studies of amnesia and the philosophical issues that they raise.

Prerequisite 21 Hours of Philosophy.

PHIL 58803 Seminar: Wittgenstein, Tuesday 3:00-5:15pm Instructor: Minar

The seminar will study the later philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein, primarily by reading in his *Philosophical Investigations*. Our focus will be on issues in philosophy of mind and on Wittgenstein's distinctive conception of the nature aims and methods of philosophy. If time allows, we may discuss Wittgenstein's treatment of issues in epistemology in his *On Certainty*.

This course is for graduate students and will not have an undergraduate section.

Course will be held in MAIN 315 Philosophy Library