

PHILOSOPHY (PHIL)

PHIL 115 Becoming a Person (4 Credits)

Who am I? What makes me me? Who gets to say who I am? How do personal qualities, relations with others, and social categories like race, gender, gender identity, ethnicity and class come together to form my personal and social identity? How does who I am inform what I know and don't know? Does who I am give me specific responsibilities? If so, what are they? This course invites you to explore multiple dimensions of who you are using philosophical ideas and tools.

Prerequisites: None

Attributes: CSD: Identity (CI)

PHIL 121 Great Issues in Philosophy (4 Credits)

An introduction to philosophical questioning through a study of perennial issues in philosophy. Questions that might be treated: truth, freedom and responsibility, God, love, being, knowledge, death. Topics in this course may be treated in the context of introductory philosophical texts, past and present, or through a methodological approach to philosophical problems.

Prerequisites: None

Equivalent courses: HONR 250C, PHIL 180

Attributes: Human Experience (HE), Thematic Encounter1/2 - Truth

PHIL 123 The Philosophy of Human Nature (4 Credits)

An introduction to philosophical questioning through a study of what it means to be human. Are humans "merely" animals? What's the relationship between self-interest and the common good? What's the relationship between reason and emotions? What is a soul? What is the meaning of life?

Prerequisites: None

Equivalent courses: HONR 250L

Attributes: Human Experience (HE), Thematic Encounter1/2 - Truth

PHIL 125 What is Justice?: Social Philosophy (4 Credits)

An introduction to philosophical questioning through a study of the human in society. Questions that might be treated: the meaning of society; individual and society; society and law; economy and society; work as social phenomenon; society and freedom; world of culture and society; violence and nonviolence; philosophy of power; philosophy of conflict in community; political philosophy.

Prerequisites: None

Equivalent courses: HONR 250J, PHIL 130

Attributes: Human Experience (HE), Thematic Encounter1/2-Justice

PHIL 150 Philosophy in Literature (4 Credits)

From the beginnings of human thought, imaginative literature—poetry, stories, plays and novels—has been a means for humans to reflect on profound questions: How should we live our lives? Can life put us in touch with higher truths, or is this world all there is? Is imagination the opposite of truth or a means of discovering it? How well do we know ourselves? Do we have a moral duty to other persons? Can I be responsible for suffering that I have not caused myself? We will read a number of novels, plays, and short stories ranging from classic literature to contemporary fiction, seeking to discover how imaginative writing is related to serious philosophical thought. Readings for the first half of the course focus on issues of truth, and in the second half, issues of justice.

Prerequisites: None

Equivalent courses: PHIL 150A, PHIL 150C

Attributes: Human Experience (HE)

PHIL 150A Philosophy in Literature I (2 Credits)

From the beginnings of human thought, imaginative literature—poetry, stories, plays and novels—has been a means for humans to reflect on profound questions: How should we live our lives? Can life put us in touch with higher truths, or is this world all there is? Is imagination the opposite of truth or a means of discovering it? Is insisting on truth always a good thing, or can it be destructive to human well-being? How well do and can we know ourselves? Readings may include stories, novels and plays, as well as other literature. (Offered AB mods.)

Prerequisites: None

Equivalent courses: PHIL 150

Attributes: Human Experience (HE), Thematic Encounter1/2 - Truth

PHIL 150C Philosophy in Literature II (2 Credits)

From the beginnings of human thought, imaginative literature—poetry, stories, plays and novels—has been a means for humans to reflect on profound questions: How should we live our lives? Do we have a moral duty to other persons? Can I be responsible for suffering that I have not caused myself? Do the rules of justice and morality change in situations of distress such as war or natural disasters? Or does this duress give us insight into what should be norms of just human interaction in "normal life"? Readings may include stories, novels and plays, as well as other literature. (Offered CD mods.)

Prerequisites: None

Equivalent courses: PHIL 150

Attributes: Human Experience (HE), Thematic Encounter1/2-Justice

PHIL 155 Reinventing Identity (4 Credits)

This course explores philosophical questions surrounding race and ethnicity and gender and how the boundaries around these identities are enforced and resisted. We examine the historical evolution of racial and gender concepts up to the present day. This deeper philosophical understanding will be used to discuss contemporary topics like disparities in health, immigration policies, and barriers to political participation.

Prerequisites: None

Attributes: CSD: Identity (CI)

PHIL 156 Buddhist Philosophy and Benedictine Spiritual Practice (4 Credits)

How does one gain authentic insight into one's own true nature, into the true nature of the world we inhabit, and the relation between the two? This course will explore these questions by studying early sutras from the Theravada Buddhist tradition, the Taoist classic known as the Tao Te Ching, Mahayana Buddhist teachings, Zen Buddhism, the Rule of Benedict and, finally, a wonderful book conceived, and written on the campus of St. John's University – Benedict's Dharma, which explores the wisdom and practical insights shared by the Buddhist and Benedictine traditions. Class participants will learn that there are striking affinities in the contemplative goals and practices endorsed by Benedictines and Buddhists. Students will also discover remarkable similarities in the Buddhist and Benedictine diagnoses of the challenges and difficulties faced by practitioners of a contemplative way. Course requirements will include regular journaling, contemplative practice (meditation, Qigong, and prayer), and reflective essays.

Prerequisites: None

Equivalent courses: PHIL 172, PHIL 272

Attributes: Human Experience (HE), Thematic Encounter1/2 - Truth

PHIL 2700A Introduction to Systematic Philosophy (3 Credits)

Systematic study of the nature, methods and aims of philosophy as a distinctive discipline. Basic concepts of logic (truth, validity, soundness, deductive and inductive argumentation, the principle of non-contradiction, logical form and basic patterns in argumentation, etc.). Meaning and language use; disputes and definitions; recognising fallacies; the manipulation of language and meaning; rhetorical strategies. Exercises in the analysis of reasoning.

Prerequisites: None

PHIL 271 Individual Learning Project (1-4 Credits)

Supervised reading or research at the lower-division level. Permission of department chair required. Consult department for applicability towards major requirements. Not available to first-year students.

Prerequisites: None

PHIL 279B Logic (4 Credits)

This course is an introduction to formal symbolic logic. It focuses on the development of a symbolic language to capture the structure of natural-language arguments, in order to evaluate the validity of those arguments. Topics include truth functions, truth tables, natural deduction, and how logic relates to arguments in regular life.

Prerequisites: You must take INTG 100 or 205 prior to taking a Thematic Focus Course. You must take a Cultural and Social Difference: Identity (CI) course prior to or at the same time as Thematic Focus Courses.

Equivalent courses: PHIL 210

Attributes: Abstract Structures (AS), Thematic Focus - Truth

PHIL 318 Readings in Philosophy (0-1 Credits)

Reading and discussion of philosophic works, moderated by a member of the Philosophy Department. Interested faculty and staff in other areas are welcome to participate as well. Each section of this course is typically devoted to a single work, but occasionally a group of smaller works by a single author may be selected. S/U grading only. May be repeated for credit.

Prerequisites: None

PHIL 321 My Goodness!: Moral Philosophy (4 Credits)

Introduction to philosophical thought about morality. Topics include major ethical theories (e.g. virtue ethics, consequentialism, deontology, care ethics), as well as big concepts such as rights and responsibilities, values and obligations, good and evil, right and wrong.

Prerequisites: None

Equivalent courses: PHIL 359

Attributes: Human Experience (HE), Thematic Encounter3 - Justice, Writing Requirement (WR)

PHIL 322 Environmental Ethics (4 Credits)

This course investigates a variety of ethical issues that arise from consideration of the relation between humans and the non-human natural world (i.e., the environment, animals, land, ecosystems, wilderness areas). This course will introduce students to the basic concepts of environmental ethics, to specific ethical issues associated with environmental policy, and to philosophical theorizing about the environment.

Prerequisites: None

Equivalent courses: COLG 370IA, PHIL 243

Attributes: Benedictine Raven (BN), Human Experience (HE), Thematic Encounter3 - Justice, Writing Requirement (WR)

PHIL 323 Biomedical Ethics (2 Credits)

An examination of ethical questions raised by health-care practice and recent advances in medical technology. Both ethical theory and ethical decision-making will be addressed. Possible topics include: confidentiality, informed consent, genetic engineering, reproductive technology and death and dying issues.

Prerequisites: None

Attributes: Human Experience (HE), Thematic Encounter3 - Justice

PHIL 324 Business Ethics (4 Credits)

This course will examine ethical and social issues associated with contemporary American business. Responsibilities of businesses to employees, consumers and the society at large will be considered.

Questions of individual moral responsibility and questions of social justice and public policy will be addressed. Students will examine these issues from the point of view of a variety of stakeholders:

business management, employees, investors, consumers, and citizens.

Prerequisite: students are strongly encouraged to have taken at least one previous course in management, accounting, philosophy, or economics.

Prerequisites: None

Equivalent courses: PHIL 362

PHIL 327 Existential Ethics (4 Credits)

Existentialism, a 20th century philosophy with roots in the 19th century and various developments in post-modern thought, rejects all foundational givens except the raw fact of existence. This means that it rejects ethical traditions grounded in religion, in reason, in "virtues," in particular theories of human nature, and in cultural tradition. Nevertheless, existentialist thinkers have often emerged as powerful ethical thinkers, precisely because they refuse to embrace any traditional foundations for ethics and thus keep ethical questions open for debate. We will examine existentialism's radical critique of traditional philosophical foundations using readings from such thinkers as Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Sartre and Beauvoir. As we proceed, we will explore the ethical implications of these existential currents of thought by reflecting on short pieces of literature and narratives illustrative of ethical dilemmas of modern and contemporary life.

Prerequisites: None

PHIL 331 Ancient Philosophy (4 Credits)

Raphael's famous fresco The School of Athens accurately depicts the world of Ancient Philosophy. The painting features a multitude of ancient thinkers involved in conversation, writing, or meditation in a beautiful public space. The focal point of the painting is the two central figures of Plato and Aristotle, who will also serve as the foundation for this course, which aims to help students become knowledgeable participants in the conversations and practices that pursue truth, virtue and the good that shaped the beginnings of Western philosophy. The course approaches philosophy not simply as an academic discipline, but as a "way of life."

Prerequisites: None

Attributes: Human Experience (HE), Thematic Encounter3 - Truth

PHIL 336 19th Century Philosophy (4 Credits)

Philosophy on the European continent followed no one pattern in the 19th century. G.W.F. Hegel, Karl Marx, and Friedrich Nietzsche make this century one of the most varied in the history of philosophy. This course will focus on one or more thinkers to explore European thought of that epoch. This course can be repeated for credit, with the approval of the department chair, when content varies.

Prerequisites: None

PHIL 338 American Philosophy (4 Credits)

Though American thinkers have been heavily influenced by European philosophers, an indigenous philosophy began to develop in North America in the 19th century and continued into the 20th century. Philosophers that may be discussed include Charles Sanders Peirce, Josiah Royce, William James, John Dewey and Alfred North Whitehead. This course can be repeated for credit, with the approval of the department chair, when content varies.

Prerequisites: None

PHIL 339 Confucius and the Tao (4 Credits)

An introduction to the Classical Chinese tradition of philosophy. Students will study in particular the two Confucian Classics, the Analects and the Mencius (Mengzi), and the two Taoist Classics, the Tao Te Ching and the Chuang Tzu (Zhuangzi) - texts that have shaped the culture and civilization not just of China, but of Korea and Japan as well. A question guiding discussion throughout the semester is whether these ancient teachings might still offer insight and guidance to contemporary students. We attend especially closely to this question in the final weeks of the semester by reading commentary on these classical texts written by contemporary English language scholars.

Prerequisites: None

Equivalent courses: HONR 250W

Attributes: Human Experience (HE), Thematic Encounter3 - Truth

PHIL 341 Existence and Care (4 Credits)

Philosophies of Existence explored a new dimension of thought in the 20th Century. Humans are beings concerned about their being, about where it comes from and where it's going and what it means. We exist as being-in-the-world, for in our being we are concerned with other entities and beings that shape this world. Our being is existence or "standing-out into the world," both shaping and being shaped by it. Existence points to care, which shapes our concern for our being all the way to anxiety-in-the-face-of-death. We'll explore this way of thinking through an in-depth reading of Martin Heidegger's Being and Time, a watershed work for contemporary Continental philosophy.

Prerequisites: None

Equivalent courses: PHIL 341A

Attributes: Human Experience (HE), Thematic Encounter3 - Truth

PHIL 346 Philosophy of Religion (4 Credits)

While philosophy sometimes seems opposed to religious faith, their relation has often been friendly, as "faith seeking understanding." Philosophical reflection on religious belief critically examines the claims of faith as well as attempts to discredit or dismiss the claims of faith. This course will explore this tradition through one or more lenses: philosophical reflection on: a) the validity of religious experience, b) the reasonableness of belief in God, c) the problem of evil or reconciling the experience of evil and suffering with religious belief, or d) other historical or emerging themes in the philosophy of religion. The course will consider also the perspective of theology in responding to philosophical reflection. Alternate years.

Prerequisites: THEO 100 or THEO 111

Equivalent courses: HONR 250F, PHIL 146, PHIL 246, THEO 329F

PHIL 355 Philosophies of Violence/Nonviolence (4 Credits)

This course looks at the way that the search for security and the claim to possession of absolute truth can lead to violence. The way of thinking involved in technology easily structures the world so that whatever does not fit into that framework is discounted and ignored and treated violently, as the philosopher Martin Heidegger shows. How does such an attitude lead to violence? Finally, the course will look at the nonviolent ethical response which the philosopher Emmanuel Levinas demands from the person who hears the call of the poor and the oppressed when they cry out against their oppression and poverty. Alternate years.

Prerequisites: None

Equivalent courses: PCST 343, PHIL 343

PHIL 358 Philosophy of Law (4 Credits)

This course will consider some of the central conceptual and normative issues in the area of jurisprudence. Concepts such as legal responsibility, negligence, causality, cruel and unusual punishment, etc., will be considered. Frameworks for legal decision-making will be developed and applied.

Prerequisites: None

PHIL 363 Scientific Revolutions: Understanding Humans' Place in the Universe (4 Credits)

What am I? This question will be explored through the study of the three periods marked by a change in scientific paradigms; the scientific revolution of the sixteenth and seventeenth century, the publication of Charles Darwin's Origin of Species in the nineteenth century, and the rise of cognitive science in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. We'll read philosophers, scientists, historians, and novelists, as well as explore pieces by performance and visual artists. By the end of the course, you should have a basic understanding of different metaphysical views about human nature from the claim that humans are fundamentally autonomous and independent to the view that human nature derives from the unique social bonds we form. We will have studied various accounts of the relationship between the mind and body, especially dualism and materialism, and how these theories are shaped by various philosophical and scientific commitments. You will have a deeper understanding of the changing relationships humans have with the natural world and with each other. In studying these topics, you will learn to recognize in past debates a reflection of contemporary struggles over human nature and our place in the natural world and vice versa.

Prerequisites: Before taking a Cultural and Social Difference: Systems Courses (CS) you first must complete the following Integrations requirements; Learning Foundations (LF), Theological Encounter (TE), and Cultural and Social Difference: identity (CI).

Attributes: CSD: Systems (CS), Writing Requirement (WR)

PHIL 367 Philosophy of Mind (4 Credits)

Philosophy of Mind explores a number of issues of interest to contemporary philosophers of mind and cognitive scientists. It is designed with a particular interdisciplinary aim: to examine how the empirical work of scientists informs the theories of contemporary philosophers. The course is designed around three topics: the relationship between the mind and the body; issues of personal identity and the self; and the nature of our concepts and mental representations. As we discuss these topics, we will be examining the ways these metaphysical questions are intertwined with questions of gender and race.

Prerequisites: Before taking a Cultural and Social Difference: Systems Courses (CS) you first must complete the following Integrations requirements; Learning Foundations (LF), Theological Encounter (TE), and Cultural and Social Difference: identity (CI).

Equivalent courses: PHIL 368E, PHIL 368I

Attributes: CSD: Systems (CS)

PHIL 368M The Good Life (4 Credits)

Aristotle's ideas regarding friendship, virtue, community, and the roles each play in human flourishing have been remarkably enduring. Contemporary scholars in philosophy and psychology are still mining his major works for insights into how to live a fulfilling and happy life. But Aristotle also argued that some people are natural born slaves and that women are naturally inferior to men, ideas that had real-world effects. In this era in which many figures and institutions are being "cancelled", it's important to consider: How do we make sense of this complex intellectual inheritance by one of the founding figures of western thought? In this course we will explore how Aristotle's ideas have moved across time and disciplines. After situating Aristotle's Ethics within the context of his politics and biology, we will examine contemporary perspectives on Aristotle in virtue theory, empirical psychology, and feminist/ race theory. We'll grapple with understanding both the promise and potential of Aristotle's views for living well in our contemporary situation and the more unsavory aspects of his philosophy.

Prerequisites: None

Attributes: Human Experience (HE), Thematic Encounter3 - Movement

PHIL 370AA Moral Philosophy (4 Credits)

Prerequisites: None

PHIL 370GA The Concept of Life in Ancient Greek Philosophy & Its Relevance Today (3 Credits)

The aim of this class is to explore the concept of life in ancient Greek philosophy and its relevance today. In the first part we will explore the first systematic account of the concept of life which is Aristotle's. To do this we will examine Aristotle's understanding of nature as having its own ends, his understanding of life as genus and as species, his account of the logic of life and his distinction between forms of life [vegetative (plants), sensitive (animals), rational (humans)]. In the second part we will see that the concept of life plays a crucial role in the formation of the ancient Greek philosophy of ethics, politics and culture, and that this philosophy of life is both an influence and an alternative to modern and contemporary philosophies of ethics, politics and culture.

Prerequisites: None

Attributes: Human Experience (HE)

PHIL 370IA Philosophy, Magic, and Religion in the Renaissance (3 Credits)

This course explores the complex interactions between scientific theory and religion in the fifteenth century through a practical and mythical lens. Through reading primary sources, students will engage with the major philosophical personalities of the Renaissance. The class will analyze case studies that engage scientific and magical thinking. From Leonardo DaVinci's experiments to the historic scandal and trial of Galileo Galilei, students will gain a historical framework for early thinking in Western Europe, with a strong emphasis on Italy. Students will track the cultural view of the role of religion, science, magic, and philosophy and see how these shifts still impact contemporary western culture.

Prerequisites: None

Corequisites: XXXX 54

PHIL 370OA Subdisciplines in Philosophy (4 Credits)

Systematic study of questions relating to specific philosophical disciplines, namely epistemology, philosophy of science and/or aesthetics. Note: Two of the three disciplines are taught in any given year.

Prerequisites: None

Corequisites: XXXX 64

PHIL 370SA Modern European Mind (3 Credits)

Prerequisites: None

Corequisites: XXXX 61

PHIL 371 Individual Learning Project (1-4 Credits)

Supervised reading or research at the upper-division level. Permission of department chair and completion and/or concurrent registration of 12 credits within the department required. Consult department for applicability towards major requirements. Not available to first-year students.

Prerequisites: None

PHIL 377A Feminist Ethics (4 Credits)

This course will introduce students to competing feminist conceptions of justice that envision a world free of systems of privilege, power, and oppression and in which the dignity and value of all persons is upheld. We will also examine feminist critiques of justice theory which argue that feminist conceptions of justice must be supplemented by alternate moral frames (e.g. care ethics, embodied feminism, an explicit grappling with intersectionality) if we are to secure the flourishing of self and human and nonhuman others.

Prerequisites: You must take INTG 100 or 205 prior to taking a Thematic Focus Course. You must take a Cultural and Social Difference: Identity (CI) course prior to or at the same time as Thematic Focus Courses.

Equivalent courses: PHIL 325

Attributes: Human Experience (HE), Thematic Focus - Justice

PHIL 377B Liberty, Equality & Race in American Political Thought (4 Credits)

This course examines the relation between moral and political values and goods. Consideration of such questions as whether politics can be neutral among competing conceptions of morality, the nature, justification, and limits of political authority and whether politicians should be held to different moral standards from the rest of us.

Prerequisites: You must take INTG 100 or 205 prior to taking a Thematic Focus Course. You must take a Cultural and Social Difference: Identity (CI) course prior to or at the same time as Thematic Focus Courses.

Equivalent courses: HIST 326, PHIL 326

Attributes: Human Experience (HE), Thematic Focus - Justice, Writing Requirement (WR)

PHIL 379A Modern Philosophy's Quest for Truth (4 Credits)

Modern Philosophy is not "modern" in the everyday sense, but studies the 17th and 18th century shift in European thought away from the influence that classical thinkers had come to have, especially as their works were reinterpreted and incorporated into the religious dominion that Judeo-Christian and Islamic paradigms exercised over philosophical thought. This shift involved a radical re-appraisal of the human subject as thinker and knower. Even those thinkers skeptical of the human capacity to grasp absolute truths upheld the authority of human reason to understand its own limits and to assert itself as the ultimate judge of where and how "truth" could be claimed—though they disagreed significantly on these limits. These philosophers asserted an independence and autonomy for human reason that paved the way for later declarations of political freedoms. Thinkers studied include Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Locke, Berkeley, and Kant.

Prerequisites: You must take INTG 100 or 205 prior to taking a Thematic Focus Course. You must take a Cultural and Social Difference: Identity (CI) course prior to or at the same time as Thematic Focus Courses.

Equivalent courses: PHIL 334

Attributes: Human Experience (HE), Thematic Focus - Truth

PHIL 379B Knowledge and Power (4 Credits)

Epistemology, or the study of knowledge, is the philosophical discipline which studies the nature of knowledge and how it is acquired. This course will focus on feminist epistemology and the ways in which gender influences our conceptions of knowledge, knowers, and our practices of knowledge acquisition and justification, with a special emphasis on the sciences. Central to the topics of the course will be an examination of epistemic questions around racial and gender oppression.

Prerequisites: You must take INTG 100 or 205 prior to taking a Thematic Focus Course. You must take a Cultural and Social Difference: Identity (CI) course prior to or at the same time as Thematic Focus Courses.

Equivalent courses: HONR 350S, PHIL 364

Attributes: Human Experience (HE), Thematic Focus - Truth

PHIL 397 Internship (1-16 Credits)

Approved Application for Internship Form REQUIRED. See Internship Office Web Page.

Prerequisites: None

Attributes: Experiential Engagement (EX)