

Philosophy

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“Philosophy unties knots in our thinking; hence its results must be simple, but philosophizing has to be as complicated as the knots it unties.”

Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Zettel* #452

The place of philosophy at the center of any educational endeavor is as true today as it ever was. The perennial questions that philosophy addresses, such as “Who am I as a human being?, How should I act?, What can I know?, What are my obligations to others?, How should society be organized?” are fundamental issues with which education must wrestle and into which it must provide insight. Philosophy is a reasoned pursuit of fundamental truths. It is a systematic investigation of the key assumptions that underlie our thinking and which ordinarily are taken for granted. Much of what is learned in philosophy can be applied in virtually any endeavor. This is both because philosophy touches upon so many subjects and, especially, because many of its methods and analyses are usable in any field. The study of philosophy is beneficial in terms of achieving the following:

General Problem-Solving Ability The study of philosophy enhances one’s problem-solving capacities in a way no other activity does. It helps one to analyze concepts, definitions, arguments, and problems. It contributes to one’s capacity to organize ideas and issues, to deal with questions of value, and to extract what is essential from masses of information.

Communication Skills Philosophy provides some of the basic tools of self-expression, namely, skills in presenting ideas through well-constructed, systematic arguments. One learns to build and defend one’s own views, to appreciate competing positions.

Writing Skills Writing is an important part of most philosophy courses. Philosophy teaches interpretive writing through its examination of challenging texts, comparative writing through emphasis on fairness to alternative positions, argumentative writing through developing students’ abilities to establish their own views, and descriptive writing through detailed portrayal of concrete examples, the anchors to which generalizations must be tied.

The Understanding of Other Disciplines Many important questions about a discipline, such as the nature of its concepts and its relation to other disciplines, do not belong to that discipline, are not usually pursued within a discipline, and are philosophical in nature. Philosophy of science, for instance, is needed to supplement the understanding of the natural and social sciences which one derives from scientific work itself. Philosophy of art, social and political philosophy, the philosophy of religion are of similar value in understanding the respective fields of art, sociology, politics, and religion.

Career Applications

Philosophers know, of course, that the important question is not what you can do with a field of study but rather what a field of study does with you. Nevertheless, it has been a welcome surprise within recent years to witness how many professions—business, law, nursing, for example, want and reward many of the capacities that the study of philosophy develops: the ability to solve problems, to communicate, to organize ideas and issues, to assess pros and cons, and to reduce complex data. These capacities represent transferable skills. For this reason, people trained in philosophy are not only prepared to do many kinds of tasks, they can also cope with change, or even move into new careers, more readily than others.

Student Involvement

Student participation in the philosophical activities of the philosophy program is strongly encouraged. Students have organized a Philosophy Majors and Minors Association which provides a forum for students to discuss their philosophical work. This Philosophy Symposium also facilitates communication between faculty and students and ensures student involvement in Departmental deliberations. In recent

years the Philosophy Symposium has invited guest lecturers on a variety of philosophical topics. This has enabled students to meet a broad range of philosophers including international guests.

Programs and Requirements

Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy

The minimum number of credits (exclusive of the University's Core curriculum) required for the major: 36.

Each major in philosophy will arrange a program of courses in conference with the chair or a member of the department who is assigned as the student's advisor. The program will be designed in terms of the student's interests, needs, vocational plans, and the year in which the student declares a major. The major will require 36 hours of courses beyond a PHI 100-level course. Any introductory philosophy course is a prerequisite to all other courses in philosophy.

All philosophy majors must take four history of philosophy courses. Two of these, which need not be taken in sequence, must be PHI 310I (Ancient Philosophy) and PHI 330I (Early Modern Philosophy). Thereafter, any two additional courses in the history of philosophy may be taken. These courses are PHI 312I, PHI 315I, PHI 320I, PHI 340I, PHI 350I, PHI 360I, PHI 370I, PHI 380I, PHI 390I.

In the last year a senior thesis (PHI 410) is optional. This thesis consists of a major paper (minimum length: 50 pages) on a topic selected by the student and directed by one member of the Department. The student will meet with the mentor on a regular basis during the semester of the senior thesis. Upon completion of the paper, an oral examination will be conducted by the full Department. Upon successful completion of the senior thesis and with a cumulative GPA of 3.5 or higher in the major at the completion of required coursework, a student will receive honors in philosophy for graduation. If the thesis (formerly tutorial) option is not taken, students must complete a Seminar in Philosophy (PHI 400). Students may take both the Seminar in Philosophy (PHI 400) and the Senior Thesis (PHI 410).

Philosophy majors who are enrolled in the Honors Program may allow their 3- to 6-hour Honors Independent Tutorial (HON 311-HON 312) to be equivalent to the Senior Tutorial (PHI 410) and count toward the completion of their degree in philosophy, provided that the thesis addresses a philosophical topic and is mentored by a philosophy faculty member. The required thesis defense will involve both Philosophy Department faculty and that of the Honors Program.

Every major intending to pursue graduate study and teach in philosophy will be expected to take German or French through the intermediate level. German is preferred to French, although ideally both sets of courses should be taken. All majors are encouraged to take PHI 205 Symbolic Logic.

The gender-neutral language policy of the Department prohibits the use of sexist language in classes, course materials, and at Departmental events.

Minor in Philosophy

The minimum number of credits (exclusive of the University's Core curriculum) required for the minor: 15.

Students who wish to pursue a minor in philosophy are required to take five courses beyond any PHI 100 course. These must include two courses in the history of philosophy: PHI 310I, PHI 312I, PHI 315I, PHI 320I, PHI 330I, PHI 340I, PHI 350I, PHI 360I, PHI 370I, PHI 380I.

PHI 102E Introduction to Philosophy: The Quest for Certainty

Philosophy has often been defined as the attempt to become aware of the hidden assumptions we make in our everyday outlooks on life. The present course will deal with one of the most pervasive of these assumptions—the thesis that human beings should pursue certainty and objectivity at any price. The history of philosophy will be utilized to trace and to criticize the identification of all true knowledge with certainty. Questions will be raised as to whether the quest for certainty is either feasible or beneficial to the human person. An analysis of some 20th-century alternatives, such as existentialism and pragmatism, will be undertaken. Prerequisite: Core Area C or concurrent. Cr 3.

PHI 105E Introduction to Philosophy: Philosophy Through Its History

An introduction to philosophy through its history and development, i.e., through an examination of central texts in the history of philosophy, up to and including contemporary works. Specific readings may vary from semester to semester, but will always include some canonical works by classic Western philosophers (e.g., Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, and Kant). Prerequisite: Core Area C or concurrent. Cr 3.

PHI 106E Introduction to Philosophy: Why Philosophize?

The course centers about the exploration of a single question: what it means to think philosophically. In the context of this question, we will examine what are the sources of philosophical thought and whether philosophy can justify its claim to be the foundation of all reflective endeavor. Prerequisite: Core Area C or concurrent. Cr 3.

PHI 107E Introduction to Philosophy: World Philosophy

This course presents the world views of philosophers from ancient to contemporary times. The thinkers will be chosen from a broad range of cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Emphasis will be placed on the wide diversity and historical background of philosophical positions. Prerequisite: Core Area C or concurrent. Cr 3.

PHI 109E Introduction to Philosophy: Law, Politics and Society

This course examines the traditional political questions that face every society: Who should rule? What should the rules be? Why should the rules be obeyed? The approach is largely historical, emphasizing the answers that major philosophical figures have offered to these questions. The relevance of these historical answers to current social issues is addressed using a number of contemporary topical readings. Prerequisite: Core Area C or concurrent. Cr 3.

PHI 110E Introduction to Philosophy: Gender and Society

To what extent are social norms influenced by

assumptions about sex and gender? The course examines philosophical arguments on topics such as masculinity, femininity, sexualities, war, religion, fatherhood, motherhood, abortion, gay marriage, and politics. Prerequisite: Core Area C or concurrent. Cr 3.

PHI 111E Introduction to Philosophy: Philosophical Reading (and Writing)

This course aims to teach the student a particular skill: philosophical reading (and writing). On the most immediate level this will be a course in reading (and writing about) philosophical texts. The texts will give the student a sense of the immense history, wealth, and suggestibility of philosophical writing, its various genres, and its authors. On another level, the course will teach the skill of reading (and writing) philosophically. Any piece of writing can be read (and written about), with profit, philosophically. The second skill and its profit cannot be acquired without first studying the first, thus the bulk of the course will focus on reading (and writing about) philosophy texts philosophically. About one month will be devoted to the reading of each book. Prerequisite: Core Area C or concurrent. Cr 3.

PHI 112E/W Introduction to Philosophy: Feminist Perspectives

To what extent do cultural assumptions about gender shape a society's notion of rationality and justice? The course explores this question by examining feminist critiques of Western philosophy along with a selection of contemporary anti-sexist and anti-racist theories of social life. Core Area C or concurrent. Writing intensive course. Cr 3.

PHI 200 Metaphysics

An analysis of various theories of reality, together with a critical examination of their conceptual constructs, principles and methodologies. Issues to be discussed include change, time, freedom and necessity, immortality and God, good and evil. Thinkers to be studied include Plato and Aristotle, Spinoza, Kant, Hegel, Whitehead, and Heidegger. Prerequisite: any PHI 100-level course. Cr 3.

PHI 205 Symbolic Logic

Techniques of modern deductive logic; properties of formal systems; logical implications and paradoxes of language. Prerequisite: any 100-level philosophy course. Cr 3.

PHI 210 Ethical Theories

Critical evaluation of major ethical theories and systems. Extensive reading in original texts. Analysis of contemporary ethical issues. Prerequisite: any PHI 100-level course. Cr 3.

PHI 211 Media Ethics

In the information age, media play an increasingly large role in our lives. Our notion of living in a global society is largely shaped by media. What is responsible journalism? Does violent programming

contribute to violence in America? What are professional ethics and how should they guide media practitioners? We will discuss these questions by examining key ethical values in media such as: privacy, confidentiality, truth telling, conflicts of interest, and social responsibility. We will also explore some fundamental issues in ethical theory such as: Why be ethical? What is ethics? How do ethical theories differ? What are the best ways to evaluate and apply ethical theories to media controversies today? The course is designed for majors in philosophy, media studies, and communication as well as other interested students. Cr 3.

PHI 212 Environmental Ethics

This course analyzes the relations between human beings and the environment in terms of the concepts of justice, the good, and human responsibilities. It attempts to provide a new cosmological model for adjudicating between conflicting rights and duties. Issues to be discussed include animal rights, environmental protection, and ecological harmony. Prerequisite: any PHI 100-level course. Cr 3.

PHI 215 Philosophy of Literature

While many cultures accord a vital role to stories, myths, and poetry in the cultivation of wisdom, traditional European philosophy has tended to marginalize them. This course seeks to investigate the historical roots for this separation between philosophy and literature in European thought. It will then consider the perspectives of several contemporary thinkers (e.g., Robert Coles, Michael Ende, Martha Nussbaum, and Martin Heidegger) who are convinced that literature plays an indispensable role in the pursuit of wisdom. Prerequisite: any PHI 100-level course. Cr 3.

PHI 220 Philosophy of Art

What makes a person creative? What do artists think about their art? How do critics evaluate a work? If art is created for a cultural ritual or healing, is it to be understood differently? How do the circumstances of a work's creation and reception affect its evaluation? How does a person's class, ethnicity, or gender influence art work and its reception? Philosophers in the field of aesthetics attempt to answer questions which artists, art historians, anthropologists, and critics ask about art. The works of art and philosophy considered will be drawn from a wide variety of cultural contexts. Prerequisite: any PHI 100-level course. Cr 3.

PHI 221 Philosophy of Film

This course concentrates on the construction of meaning in the context of cinema. Major emphasis is placed on cinema as a product of social construction. Issues to be discussed include perception, memory, images, and the use of social stereotypes. Prerequisite: any PHI 100-level course. Cr 3.

PHI 225 Philosophy of Mind

An analysis of the major philosophical issues facing

the science of psychology: language and the unconscious, body-mind interaction, freedom and determinism. Major figures to be studied include Plato, Aristotle, Spinoza, Freud, Merleau-Ponty, Lacan, and Skinner. Thematic emphasis will be on the historic interaction between psychology and philosophy in the development of Western thought. Prerequisite: any PHI 100-level course. Cr 3.

PHI 230 Philosophy of Religion

Analysis of the nature of religious experience, knowledge, and language. Special attention given to problems, classical and contemporary, exhibited in religious experience and relevant to areas of common concern in the sciences, humanities, and philosophy. Prerequisite: any PHI 100-level course. Cr 3.

PHI 240 Political Philosophy

Critical evaluation of political philosophies, classical and contemporary; extensive reading in original texts; analysis of contemporary political issues. Prerequisite: any PHI 100-level course. Cr 3.

PHI 250 Philosophy of Science

An examination of two different models generally used in approaching scientific activity philosophically: the logical model and the historical model. Questions to be raised include whether these two approaches are mutually exclusive or whether one can subsume the other, and at what cost. Issues to be covered include description vs. explanation; scientific vs. non-scientific explanation; the issue of whether to include pragmatic and psychological dimensions of meaning in scientific explanations; the question of whether all facts are "theory-laden"; and the relationship between facts, laws, and theories in science. Prerequisite: any PHI 100-level course. Cr 3.

PHI 260 Philosophy of Law

Critical evaluation of select issues in the philosophy of law. Possible topics include: the nature of law (positivism, natural law, legal realism); judicial decision making; constitutional adjudication; the justification of punishment; the legal enforcement of morality; legal responsibility; the judicial system. Readings are drawn from the disciplines of both philosophy and law, and include contemporary as well as historical selections. Prerequisite: any PHI 100-level course. Cr 3.

PHI 265 Philosophy and Gender

The course explores the contributions of feminist philosophers to gender analysis. It will examine the philosophical assumptions inherent in theories of gender difference that arise in sociobiology, biological determinism, physiology, and the social construction perspective. Assumptions about gender will be studied in some of the following areas: violence, war, religion, reproduction, family, sexualities, and sport. Prerequisite: any PHI 100-level course. Cr 3.

PHI 270 Epistemology

An analysis of various theories of knowledge in reference to their methodologies and consequences. Texts to be read include Berkeley, Hume, Descartes, Kant, and Hegel. Prerequisite: any PHI 100-level course. Cr 3.

PHI 275 The Nature of Compassion

Whether and how we respond to the suffering of others defines, in many ways, who we are as persons and communities. This course is an investigation into the emotion of compassion and its social role. Drawing upon a wide variety of sources such as Greek tragedy, Buddhist scriptures, classical and contemporary philosophical thought, it will address philosophical defenders of the need to cultivate compassion (Rousseau, Schopenhauer, and Adam Smith) as well as thinkers suspicious of this notion (Nietzsche, e.g.). The work of contemporary philosophers—Phillip Hallie and Martha Nussbaum—will also receive close attention. Students will have the chance to think through some important philosophical issues, such as the role of the emotions in moral deliberation, the extent to which compassion can be both aided and obstructed by the use of language, and whether there are appropriate limits to compassion. Cr 3.

PHI 290 Problems in Philosophy

Consideration of selected problems or systems of philosophical significance, including general problems of metaphysics, epistemology, axiology, specialized areas, etc. May be repeated for credit. Prerequisite: any PHI 100-level course. Cr 3.

PHI 291 Death and Dying

Recent success in life-prolonging techniques has resulted in the creation of new disagreements over the proper definition of death. Which definition of death is the most adequate? Some have argued that dying, not death, is the vitally important topic. Has the term death changed its meaning from time to time and place to place in human history? This course will deal with these and similar epistemological issues. Prerequisite: any PHI 100-level course. Cr 3.

PHI 295 Medicine, Madness, and Disease

Recent advances in modern medicine and medical technology challenge traditional notions of health, sanity, and the social order. The course will examine some of the controversial ethical dilemmas that patients, families, and health care providers confront, such as informed consent, truth-telling, prenatal screening, abortion, involuntary commitment for the mentally ill, drug testing, and patient rights. The course will critique the assumptions behind these and other medical practices. Prerequisite: any PHI 100-level course. Cr 3.

PHI 310I History of Ancient Philosophy

Philosophic thought from the pre-Socratics to the late Hellenistic period, with major emphasis on Plato and Aristotle. Prerequisite: any PHI 100-level course. Cr 3.

PHI 312I Women Philosophers from Africa and the Diaspora

This course concentrates on the work of women of wisdom who are of African origin. Intellectual and literary movements will be examined through generations of thinkers in various national, religious, cultural, and geographical settings. Writings from the diaspora and Egypt, Ghana, Nigeria, South Africa and Kenya. Prerequisite: PHI 100-level course. Cr 3.

PHI 315I Eastern Philosophy

This course examines the major texts of the great Asiatic religions: Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, and Zen. Special emphasis is placed on the ethical and metaphysical dimensions of these traditions as well as their significance for contemporary theories of the person, social justice, and human fulfillment. Prerequisite: any PHI 100-level course. Cr 3.

PHI 320I History of Medieval Philosophy

The merger of the philosophic with the religious stream; ideas of Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Bonaventure, and others critically examined; determining cultural factors explored. Prerequisite: any PHI 100-level course. Cr 3.

PHI 330I History of Early Modern Philosophy: Descartes to Kant

Main currents of rationalism and empiricism are explored, as developed in major writings from Descartes to Kant. Prerequisite: any PHI 100-level course. Cr 3.

PHI 340I History of Late Modern Philosophy

Development of German idealism; emergence of social and scientific philosophies; contributions of Kant, Hegel, Marx, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Feuerbach, and others. Prerequisite: any PHI 100-level course. Cr 3.

PHI 350I American Philosophy

History and background of the origin of philosophical ideas in America; particular emphasis given to Peirce, James, Royce, Dewey. Prerequisite: any PHI 100-level course. Cr 3.

PHI 360I Existentialism

An examination of the historical development and basic themes of existentialism as found in the writings of its major representatives: Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Sartre, Buber, Marcel, and others. Prerequisite: any PHI 100-level course. Cr 3.

PHI 370I Analytic Philosophy

An historical approach to twentieth-century linguistic philosophy. This course will begin with logical atomism, continue through the era of logical positivism, and end with ordinary language analysis. Extensive reading of primary sources and major commentators. Prerequisite: any PHI 100-level course. Cr 3.

PHI 380I Postmodernism

The course presents a survey of central movements within continental philosophy in the 20th century: phenomenology, structuralism, hermeneutics, and deconstruction. Possible figures of study are: Foucault, Derrida, Levinas, Gadamer, Barthes, Lacan, Irigaray, Cixous, and Lyotard. Prerequisite: any PHI 100-level course. Cr 3.

PHI 390I Hermeneutics

How do we go about interpreting something that is foreign to us? What does it mean to understand a person or a text? Hermeneutics is a tradition of philosophical inquiry into the dynamics of interpretation and understanding. The course examines the historical roots of hermeneutics in the works of Friedrich Schleiermacher and Wilhelm Dilthey, and it proceeds with the close analysis of several 20th century thinkers—for example, Hans-Georg Gadamer and Martin Heidegger—whose works extend and develop the hermeneutical tradition. Prerequisite: any PHI 100-level course. Cr 3.

PHI 398 Independent Study

This course provides students with an opportunity to design a set of readings and learning objectives concerning a topic in the history of philosophy or a specific issue in philosophy. Students must complete an independent study proposal, and obtain permission of a faculty mentor and the Department chair. Students must meet regularly with the faculty men-

tor. May be repeated for credit. Prerequisite: a minimum of two 300-level philosophy courses plus written permission of the instructor involved. Cr 3.

PHI 400 Seminar in Philosophy

This is a seminar course dealing with a specific topic or person in philosophy. Topics or individual philosophers will change from year to year and the course may be repeated for credit. The prerequisite for any 400-level seminar course is two (2) 300-level courses in philosophy, or permission of the instructor. Cr 3.

PHI 409 Research Seminar

A research seminar designed to provide senior level students an opportunity to participate in the research efforts of individual faculty and collaborate with each other in the design, methodology and completion of their tutorials. Prerequisites: advanced standing as a philosophy major and permission of the Department. Cr 3.

PHI 410 Senior Thesis

Designed to furnish senior philosophy majors with extensive training, under tutorial supervision, in analysis of a philosophical problem or system or philosopher, with a view to producing and presenting a senior paper for oral defense. Prerequisites: advanced standing as a philosophy major and permission of the Department. Cr 3.