

PHILOSOPHY DEPARTMENT

SPRING 2026 COURSES



PHI 100: INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY - KNOWLEDGE AND REALITY

UK Core Requirement Intellectual Inquiry in the Humanities

Sections 001-004: Do you exist? Does the world exist? Does God exist? Are you free? Does any of this even matter? We will approach these fundamental questions by looking at your experience of reality. We will show how experience can justify certain claims about what exists, all while challenging common sense about the nature of reality.

Sections 005-010 & 201: These words are not real. You have no free will. That chair you're sitting on? Questionable. Everyone around you? A robot. But don't panic - this is philosophy. In this course, we'll consider strange possibilities as we explore important questions: Can we know anything for certain? Do we have free will? Do you have a soul, or are you just a material, organic machine? We'll analyze arguments, challenge assumptions, and think with precision as we ask deep questions about ourselves and the world around us.

PHI 120: THE ART OF THINKING – AN INTRODUCTION TO LOGIC

Credit is not given to students who already have credit for PHI 320.

UK Core Requirement Quantitative Foundations

Sections 001-007 & 201: How can you tell when an argument really supports its conclusion—or only sounds like it does? This course introduces the tools of logic and critical thinking for analyzing everyday reasoning, scientific inference, and public debate. We'll explore what makes arguments valid or strong, how evidence and probability guide belief, and how clear, strategic thinking can cut through confusion, bias, and misinformation. Highly recommended for LSAT prep. Satisfies Core: Quantitative Foundations.

PHI 130: INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY – MORALITY AND SOCIETY

UK Core Requirement Community, Culture, and Citizenship in the US

Sections 001-002: What actions count as morally right or morally wrong and why? This course will investigate and compare several different answers to this question, and then look at how these accounts have informed the social and ethical structure of contemporary society.

Section 003-004 & 202: You donate to charity - but only when you can let everyone know. You lie on social media - but only when it will help out a friend. You'll ghost someone - but only to spare hurting someone's feelings. So: are you a good person? In this course, we'll explore philosophical questions about right and wrong, justice and freedom, virtue and vice. You'll learn to think critically about moral dilemmas and to argue clearly about what makes actions good or bad.

Section 005: In this introductory course, we will read and attempt to understand some of the major works of social and political philosophy in the Western tradition. The philosophers we will be reading are: Plato, Aristotle, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, John Stuart Mill, Mary Wollstonecraft, Adam Smith, and John Rawls. By the end of the course, we will learn about these thinkers' theorization about human nature, society, and political authority. Students will develop skills such as close reading, analyzing arguments, and critical writing in addition to learning concepts that might help them to make better sense of the world we live in.

Section 201: This online introductory course in ethics focuses on contemporary, challenging issues, including euthanasia, abortion, eating animals, climate change, gun control, and why be moral. Students will read (at least portions of) philosophical papers on these issues. Emphasis will be on examining the arguments the philosophers propose in support of their views. Assignments include a mid-term and a final paper on assigned topics.

PHI 135: THE ETHICS OF A HUMAN LIFE

UK Core Requirement Intellectual Inquiry in the Humanities

Section 001: Ethical questions arise at every stage of a human life, from before a person is born until after she dies. This course will explore the ethical questions that arise at familiar stages of a person's life: her conception, childhood, adulthood, death, and what happens after death. We will consider some surprising ways philosophers have tried to answer these questions, and we will think about how the arguments they make can help us better understand the ethical shape of a human life as a whole.

PHI 150: A PHILOSOPHER'S GUIDE TO CONSPIRACY THEORIES

UK Core Requirement Intellectual Inquiry in the Humanities

Section 001: Designed as an introduction to philosophical inquiry by way of conspiracy theories, "A Philosopher's Guide to Conspiracy Theories" will aim to equip students with the tools they need to seek out the truth in a "post-truth" world. The course will include a survey the basics of epistemology (the study of knowledge), philosophical argumentation, and good research practices. Over the course of the semester, we will address the following questions: (How) do my beliefs affect others? What is an echo chamber and how is it similar to the psychological practices of cult leaders? What is required to thoroughly test and research a claim? What is a conspiracy theory? Is the world around me exactly as it appears? What can I know about events for which I was not present? How can I question the "official story" in a sophisticated, logically responsible way?

PHI 193: CIRCUS AND PHILOSOPHY

UK Core Requirement Intellectual Inquiry Arts & Creativity

Section 001: How is juggling like being a good person? What does the trapeze have to do with trust? How does circus teach us about the self? In Circus and Philosophy, we use circus arts as a springboard to explore philosophical questions about the self, our society, and what it means to live well. This is a hands-on class: you'll be learning to juggle ideas and objects, to balance ethical theories and acro poses. No experience in circus or philosophy required. Curiosity and courage are strongly recommended.

PHI 205: FOOD ETHICS

UK Core Requirement Community, Culture, and Citizenship in US

Sections 001-002: An examination of philosophical issues about food, including whether taste is subjective or objective, why different foods are acceptable to eat in some cultures but not in others, the moral permissibility of eating animals and animal products, and the impact of food production on the environment.

Section 003: What should we eat, and why does it matter? In PHI 205 Food Ethics, students explore the moral, cultural, and political dimensions of everyday food choices. How do our diets shape our character, culture, and planet; and how, in turn, do culture and character shape what we eat? When we choose what's on our plates, how should we think about the animals we may be eating, the people who grow our food, and the future generations our choices affect? Through lively discussion and accessible readings, this course shows how something as ordinary as eating connects us to some of the most far-reaching questions of our time.

PHI 245: INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

Section 001: What kind of thing is a god? Are there any such things? Can we know whether God exists, and if so how? What difference should the presence or absence of God make to our ethical lives? Do the world's religions converge on some common insight? Or if, instead, there is pervasive disagreement, how do we make sense of the fact that such smart people have arrived at such different (ir)religious beliefs? In our class on the philosophy of religion, we'll learn to discuss answers to all these questions, both charitably and critically.

PHI 260: HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY I - FROM GREEK BEGINNINGS TO THE MIDDLE AGES

UK Core Requirement Intellectual Inquiry in the Humanities

Section 001: By way of introduction to ancient and medieval philosophy, we are going to examine three different conceptions of love by a Greek, a Roman, and a medieval philosopher. The Greek philosopher is Plato, who writes a famous dialogue about eros. Eros is what you think it is, but in Socrates' view it must ultimately lead to truth and beauty. Augustine will be our Roman philosopher. He composes an autobiography, the Confessions, in which he reflects on the life he used to lead: one of many passions. But what holds it all together? Only God can do that, he comes to believe. Without God, one just ends up all dispersed. Finally, Thomas Aquinas is a rather dry medieval thinker—but famous! He too argues that only God fulfills human desire but gets there through very methodical reasoning. Take this course if you enjoy reading and asking fundamental questions about the ultimate goals of human life.

PHI 270: HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY II - FROM THE RENAISSANCE TO THE PRESENT ERA

UK Core Requirement Intellectual Inquiry in the Humanities

Section 001: Can we know reality as it truly is? What does it mean to be rational? Is reality material, mental, or a mix of the two? Topics include: mind and body relation, rational versus irrational belief, different kinds of ideas, and how and whether we can know reality.

PHI 300: SPECIAL TOPICS IN PHILOSOPHY - PORNOGRAPHY, TECHNOLOGY, & LAW

Section 002: In recent history, pornography has become widespread, altering the world and associated with harms that, as a society, we're just beginning to understand. Powerful technologies such as the Internet, our digital devices, and now Artificial Intelligence (AI) have played a central role in pornography's reach and impact. We seek to understand this shift by investigating what pornography is, in contrast with long-standing popular perceptions of it, and by questioning the assumptions at work here about human nature, freedom, sexuality, and human relations. We examine the distinctive role of technology in creating this new cultural, social, and political phenomenon. And we consider the role of law in mitigating harms, focusing on a civil rights approach and on how it may aid us in addressing harms associated with new technologies such as AI deepfake pornography.

PHI 305: HEALTH CARE ETHICS

Sections 003-004: What makes the United States' health care system unique, and what problems does it raise for providing equitable access to health care? How do science and medicine share responsibility for keeping people safe in medical research? Do you, personally, have a right to be healthy? Tackle these questions and more in Health Care Ethics.

Section 201: A consideration of the ethical issues and difficult choices generated or made acute by advances in biology, technology, and medicine. Typical issues include: informed consent, healer-patient relationships, truth telling, confidentiality, problem of birth defects, abortion, placebos and health, allocation of scarce medical resources, genetic research and experimentation, cost containment in health care, accountability of health care professionals, care of the dying, and death.

PHI 310: PHILOSOPHY OF HUMAN NATURE

Section 002: What is the role of love in being human? What is that of reason? Of passion and desire? Of community? Of friendship? Of freedom? We will examine these and related questions as they have been treated by a range of philosophers from Plato to Sartre. We will also consider the implications for our humanity of more recent developments such as transhumanism, virtual reality, and the rise of AI.

PHI 315: PHILOSOPHY AND SCIENCE FICTION

Sections 001 & 003: In this class we will use the possible futures portrayed in science fiction stories to consider questions like whether we have free will, what we can know, and what goals we should try to steer society towards. We shall pay special attention to what we can learn about the good aspects and shortcomings of our own society by comparing it to fictional societies as well as to what we can learn about developing technologies such as AI from stories about more advanced versions of these technologies.

Sections 002 & 201: An examination of fundamental questions in metaphysics, epistemology, and value theory through a comparison of works of philosophy and science fiction. Questions will be discussed such as: Can there be time travel? Can computers think? Can there be non-human persons, and if so how would we identify them? Can there be ways of knowing that are radically different from our own, and what might they be like? How much can a person change while remaining the same person?

PHI 317: EXISTENTIALIST THOUGHT AND LITERATURE

UK Core Requirement Intellectual Inquiry in the Humanities

Section 001: What does it mean to live a meaningful life? Can we create value without appealing to God, nature, or fate? This course asks whether and how life can be meaningful in light of your existence. Through classic texts by Nietzsche, Dostoevsky, Camus, Sartre, Heidegger, Hegel, and Beauvoir, we'll explore the central existentialist themes of freedom, authenticity, and the search for meaning in a universe that can seem absurd. We'll examine how these thinkers confront nihilism, expose the self-deceptions of "bad faith," and reveal how our freedom is always entangled with others.

PHI 320: SYMBOLIC LOGIC I

Section 001: When we reason, we make inferences from certain thoughts to other thoughts. Sometimes these inferences make sense, and other times they don't. What is the difference? We answer this question in a formally rigorous way that will be both useful and helpful in philosophy, mathematics, computer science, and law.

PHI 330: ETHICS

Section 001: What actions are morally right vs morally wrong? What does it even mean to be morally right and morally wrong? This course explores answers to these questions and the robust connections between the two. In it, we will explore different accounts of right and wrong action as well as different accounts of the meaning of our words like "right", "wrong", "good", and "evil".

PHI 334: BUSINESS ETHICS

Sections 001-002 & 201: An introduction to moral problems that arise in contemporary business practice and the ethical frameworks proposed to resolve them. Topics will include areas such as truth-telling and integrity; social responsibility; property rights and their limitations; and justice in personnel and labor practices.

PHI 335: THE INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIETY

UK Core Requirement Community, Culture, and Citizenship in US

Section 001: This introductory course examines the relationship between the individual and society in the history of modern philosophy, with an emphasis on Enlightenment thought and law, and considers their relevance to contemporary topics. It is designed for students of all majors and backgrounds and may be of special interest to pre-law students.

Section 002: An examination of several incompatible views concerning the relation between the individual and society, including radical individualism and collectivism, as well as more moderate theories. Attention will be given to contemporary as well as classical spokesmen for these views and emphasis will be placed upon relating these theories to contemporary social, cultural, and political issues.

PHI 336: ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

Sections 001-002: An introduction to moral problems that arise in human interaction with the natural environment. Topics to be addressed include questions such as: what is man's place in nature? Do nonhuman animals or ecosystems have intrinsic moral worth, and if so, how can it be respected? What problems and ambiguities arise in attempting to live in an environmentally responsible fashion? How can we adjudicate conflicts between social and environmental values?

PHI 337: INTRODUCTION TO LEGAL PHILOSOPHY

Sections 001-002: How should a judge decide what the law says in a particular case? What is "law" anyway? What is the relationship between law and morality? In this class we will explore these and other questions in the philosophy of law.

PHI 340: INTRODUCTION TO FEMINISM AND PHILOSOPHY

UK Core Requirement Community, Culture, and Citizenship in US

Section 001: What is sex? What is gender? We will examine sex and gender as they are lived through and embodied. The thesis of this course is that on the one hand, who we are depends on culture and society, on the other hand, these identities are our own and reflect who we truly are. We will consider whether sex and gender are natural, social, or a mix of the two, and ask about gender- and sex-based power and oppression.

PHI 343: ASIAN PHILOSOPHY

UK Core Requirement Global Dynamic

Section 001: What is the ultimate meaning and purpose of human life? Is life defined primarily by purpose or friendship? Is the meaning of life more or less than the practice of releasing the hold things have on us? Does a human life differ meaningfully from a cicada life? How can the Asian philosophical theme of “letting be” (in Chinese, wu-wei, lit. “in the absence of/without doing or exertion”) help us to understand the Western concept of anxiety and discuss the implications for friendship and duty? (CORE: Global Dynamics)

PHI 350: METAPHYSICS AND EPISTEMOLOGY

Section 001: An examination of fundamental issues in metaphysics and epistemology, such as causation, the nature of space and time, personal identity, free will, the existence of God, the nature and types of knowledge, the character of human existence, skepticism, and rationality. This course is a Graduation Composition and Communication Requirement (GCCR) course in certain programs, and hence is not likely to be eligible for automatic transfer credit to UK.

PHI 360: HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY OF ECOLOGY

Section 001: What do concepts like nature, balance, and ecosystem mean, and how has ecology shaped our understanding of the human and non-human world? This course explores the history of ecology from early naturalists like Thoreau and Darwin to contemporary systems and socio-ecological approaches. Students examine how cultural assumptions shape scientific ideas about resilience, how Indigenous, feminist, and postcolonial perspectives challenge dominant ecological paradigms, and how philosophical analysis of ecological concepts can underpin ethical, sustainable environmental practices. Through readings, discussion, and short writing, we'll trace changing ideas about interdependence and the human-nature relationships in this course.

PHI 375: PHILOSOPHY OF COGNITIVE SCIENCE

Section 001: If AI can play chess, paint portraits, and give us advice, does it have a mind or just mimic one? What is intelligence—and how do we determine what has it? Are we just biological computers or something more? This introduction to the philosophy of cognitive science asks how thought occurs—whether in neurons or in code—and considers what our answers reveal about the nature of mind and, ultimately, ourselves.

PHI 380: DEATH, DYING, AND THE QUALITY OF LIFE

UK Core Requirement Intellectual Inquiry in the Humanities

Sections 001-002: A philosophical and interdisciplinary investigation of a cluster of prominent issues about the meaning of life and death, caring for dying persons, and the quality of life of the terminally ill. Among topics included are: death definitions and criteria; allowing to die vs. killing; euthanasia and suicide; life prolongation, ethics of care of the terminally ill; and rights of the dying.

Section 003: What is it to die and why does it matter? This course explores death, dying, and what it means to live in full awareness of mortality. We begin with classical and contemporary debates about the nature of death and the possibility of an afterlife. We then turn to ethical questions about killing, suicide, and the treatment of the dead. Finally, we consider death's role in shaping meaning, value, and the good life. Students will leave with a deeper understanding of death and a more deliberate sense of how to live.

PHI 393: PHILOSOPHY OF FILM

Section 001: Beyond the screen lies the theory. Instead of using philosophy to explain film, we'll use film to rewrite philosophy. This course explores the aesthetics of cinema not as a set of static rules, but as an ever-evolving discourse that creates its own language and critiques its own history. From the formal constraints of montage to the possibilities of the depth-of-field shot, you will learn to analyze how films generate new theoretical understandings at every turn. A practical filmmaking component will put your theories to the test in a collaborative, hands-on workshop.

PHI 503: TOPICS IN ANCIENT PHILOSOPHY

Section 001: Ancient philosophers had a great deal to say about the nature of virtue and what constitutes a good human life. We will examine some of the major answers to these questions from Plato and Aristotle, through the Hellenistic era (Stoicism and Epicureanism), to late antiquity (Neoplatonism and early Christian thought). We will pay particular attention to the implications of the various ethical systems we examine for social ethics, including issues such as slavery, the equality of the sexes, the status of children, and care for the sick and the poor.

PHI 535: SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Section 001: Social contract theory is a core aspect of social and political self-understanding throughout Mediterranean and European history. But what does it tell us about ourselves? Is the state of nature safely behind us, in the past, or is it a fear we have about our present? Does this approach to political self-understanding harbor a political agenda of its own? What are some alternative rationales for the state and its moral legitimacy? Designed for philosophers, policy makers, pre-law students, and citizens in general. (Meets with PS 420)

PHI 565: PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE

Section 001: How is it that we're able to represent the world with words? And how are we able to communicate so much more than what they literally mean? This course traces contemporary philosophy of language from its origins in Frege and Russell through later debates about reference, meaning, communication, and truth. We'll ask how names and descriptions hook on to the world. (Including fictional names, which don't seem to have anything to hook on to.) And we'll ask what's going on when we imply, hint, or otherwise "say" things without really saying them.

PHI 575: PHILOSOPHY OF MIND

Section 001: An examination of problems current in the philosophy of mind, such as the concept of person, the relation of mind and body, the relation of minds and machines, knowledge of other minds, and the roles of dispositions and volitions in human action. Attention will be given to the philosophical analysis of such psychological categories as consciousness, feeling, emotion, perception, imagination, thinking and will. Satisfies contemporary: M&E requirement