PHILOSOPHY

Doing philosophy means reasoning about questions that are of basic importance to the human experience—questions like, What is a good life? What is reality? How are knowledge and understanding possible? What should we believe? What norms should govern our societies, our relationships, and our activities? Philosophers critically analyze ideas and practices that often are assumed without reflection. Wesleyan’s philosophy faculty draws on multiple traditions of inquiry, offering a wide variety of perspectives and methods for addressing these questions.

FACULTY

Stephen Angle
BA, Yale University; PHD, University of Michigan
Mansfield Freeman Professor of East Asian Studies; Professor of Philosophy; Professor, East Asian Studies

Lori Gruen
BA, University of Colorado Boulder; PHD, University of Colorado Boulder
William Griffin Professor of Philosophy; Professor of Philosophy; Professor, Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies; Professor, Science in Society; Coordinator, Animal Studies

Steven W. Horst
BA, Boston University; PHD, University of Notre Dame
Professor of Philosophy; Professor, Science in Society; Coordinator, Christianity Studies

Tushar Irani
BA, Colgate University; PHD, Northwestern University
Associate Professor of Letters; Associate Professor of Philosophy

Axelle Karera
BA, York University; PHD, Pennsylvania State University
Assistant Professor of Philosophy; Visiting Assistant Professor, African American Studies; Andrew W. Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow, Center for the Humanities

Joseph T. Rouse
BA, Oberlin College; MA, Northwestern University; MAA, Wesleyan University; PHD, Northwestern University
Hedding Professor of Moral Science; Professor of Philosophy; Professor of Science in Society; Professor, Environmental Studies

Sanford Shieh
AB, Cornell University; BA, Cornell University; BA, Oxford University; PHD, Harvard University
Associate Professor of Philosophy

Elise Springer
BA, Wesleyan University; MA, University of Connecticut; PHD, University of Connecticut
Associate Professor of Philosophy; Chair, Philosophy; Associate Professor, Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies

AFFILIATED FACULTY

Manfred Ma
Visiting Scholar in Philosophy

Daniel Smyth
BA, University of Chicago; MA, University of Chicago; PHD, University of Chicago
Assistant Professor of Letters; Assistant Professor, Philosophy

VISITING FACULTY

Alex Feldman
BA, Brown University; MA, Pennsylvania State University; PHD, Pennsylvania State University
Visiting Assistant Professor of Philosophy

Kathryn Gillespie
PHD, University of Washington
Postdoctoral Fellow in Animal Studies

Sharisse Leigh Kanet
BA, Wesleyan University; MA, CUNY Queens College
Visiting Instructor in Philosophy

EMERITI

L. Kent Bendall
MAA, Wesleyan University
Professor of Philosophy, Emeritus

Brian C. Fay
BA, Loyola Marymount Uni; DPHIL, Oxford University; MA, Oxford University; MAA, Wesleyan University
William Griffin Professor of Philosophy, Emeritus

Victor Gourevitch
BA, University of Wisconsin; MAA, Wesleyan University; PHD, University of Chicago
William Griffin Professor of Philosophy, Emeritus

DEPARTMENTAL ADVISING EXPERTS

All departmental faculty

PHIL111 Introduction to Critical Philosophy of Race
This first-year seminar (FYS) course will examine contemporary figures in the emerging field of critical philosophy of race. We will attempt to examine what contributions (if any) the critical philosophy of race has provided not only to philosophy as a discipline but also to more traditional and established modes of thinking race and racism. We will do so by exploring issues such as the differences between critical philosophy of race and critical race theory, as well as the historical role of race and racism in philosophical thinking, and by attending to the major debates currently held in this emerging tradition.
Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-PHIL
Identical With: AFAM111
Prereq: None
PHIL112 Virtue and Vice in History, Literature, and Philosophy
Beginning with Aristotle and Confucius and reading our way through significant texts of Christianity, humanism, postmodernism, and contemporary cultural productions, we will explore the ethics, power, and politics intersecting in the idea of virtue.
Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-COL
Identical With: COL228, CHUM228, HIST140
Prereq: None

PHIL115 What Do Animals Think?
Do animals think? Can they reason? Do they form intentions or have beliefs? Might they act ethically? What do other animals know? How can we know what they might know, and what can exploring the minds of other animals tell us about our own minds? In this course we will attempt to answer these questions by adopting a largely comparative perspective and examine philosophical, scientific, psychological, and popular writing about minds. We will watch films about animals doing amazing things; examine evidence for mindedness and reasoning in social species; and explore the ethical implications of this research.
Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-PHIL
Prereq: None

PHIL118 Reproduction in the 21st Century
This course will cover basic human reproductive biology, new and future reproductive and contraceptive technologies, and the ethics raised by reproductive issues.
Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: NSM-BIOL
Identical With: FGSS118, BIOL118, SISP118
Prereq: None

PHIL154 What Is Rationality?
What does it mean to be rational? Although this question has traditionally been the province of philosophy, reference to reason and rationality is also pervasive in the modern social and behavioral sciences. Humans are rational creatures—or, if they are not in practice, they should be. This course takes an expansive view of rationality and its history, tracing how the concept has changed over time, and critically examining its significance in the sciences and broader culture today. From the role of reason in human flourishing and civic discourse in the ancient world, to early modern conceptions of logic as “the art of thinking,” to Cold War attempts to build machines that might reason more reliably than frail humans, this exploration of reasoning and rationality explores several interlocking themes: the relationship between reason and other facets of the mind, especially emotion; conceptions of reason as an evaluative vs. a calculating faculty; the role of reason in human judgment; the relationship between rationality and rules; the relationship between choosing rationally and choosing ethically; and the fraught history of attempts to formulate universally valid principles of rationality.
Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-HIST
Identical With: HIST283, SISP283
Prereq: None

PHIL160 Philosophy and the Movies: The Past on Film
This course examines how films represent the past and how they can help us understand crucial questions in the philosophy of history. We begin with three weeks on documentary cinema. How do documentary films achieve “the reality effect”? How has the contemporary documentary’s use of reenactment changed our expectations of nonfiction film? Much of the course is devoted to classic narrative films that help us critically engage questions about the depiction of the past. We think about those films in relation to texts in this history of philosophy and contemporary film theory.
Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-FILM
Identical With: FILM360, HIST129
Prereq: None

PHIL201 Philosophical Classics I: Ancient Western Philosophy
This course provides an overview of the development of Ancient Greek and Roman philosophy, from its inception in the 6th century BCE through to Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, the Epicureans, and the Stoics. In exploring this material, we will touch on all or nearly all of the central concerns of the Western philosophical tradition: metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, politics, aesthetics, religion, and logic. Our focus in class will be on the close analysis of primary texts. Students must be willing to engage with readings that are fascinating but at the same time dense, difficult, and perplexing. The course requires no prior experience in philosophy and should be of equal interest to students who are pursuing or intend to pursue other majors.
Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-PHIL
Identical With: CCIV217, COL359
Prereq: None

PHIL202 Philosophical Classics II: Early Modern Philosophy from Descartes Through Kant
Can we ever hope to attain certain knowledge of the external world? Can we know ourselves? How is our mind related to our body? Are our senses more reliable than our intellect? Or is it the other way round? Can we have science without a belief in God? These are some of the questions that excited the philosophical imagination of the major intellectual figures of the early modern period, an era of unparalleled collaboration between science and philosophy. In this course we will examine how the Scientific Revolution encouraged philosophers toward radical innovation in epistemology and philosophy of mind, laying the foundations for our own modern conceptions of natural law, scientific explanation, consciousness and self-consciousness, knowledge and belief. We will be reading, analyzing, and arguing with some of the most influential works in the history of Western philosophy, including Descartes’ MEDITATIONS, Locke’s ESSAY CONCERNING HUMAN UNDERSTANDING, Berkeley’s TREATISE ON HUMAN KNOWLEDGE, Hume’s ENQUIRY CONCERNING HUMAN UNDERSTANDING, and Kant’s CRITIQUE OF PURE REASON.
Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-PHIL
Identical With: COL360
Prereq: None

PHIL205 Classical Chinese Philosophy
Topics in this critical examination of issues debated by the early Confucian, Daoist, and Mohist philosophers will include the nature of normative authority and value, the importance of ritual, and the relation between personal and social goods.
Offering: Host
Grading: OPT
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-PHIL
PHIL207 Live Like a Philosopher
Philosophy in the ancient world was viewed not simply as a discipline or body of doctrine but as a way of life. In this project-based learning course, we will study and put into practice the theoretical views of four schools of ancient philosophy in the Greek and Roman world: Platonist, Aristotelian, Epicurean, and Stoic. After some preliminary work introducing ourselves to each of these schools, the majority of this course will be divided into four units. In each unit, students will "live like a philosopher" by incorporating the thought of each school into their daily lives. The aims of this course are to test the viability of these philosophical theories, consider how they may be put into practice, and explore how they may illuminate for us what it means to lead a well-lived life.
Offering: Host
Grading: C+/U
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-PHIL
Prereq: None

PHIL211 Critical Philosophy of Race
This course will examine contemporary figures in the emerging field of critical philosophy of race. We will attempt to examine what contributions (if any) the critical philosophy of race has provided not only to philosophy as a discipline, but also to more traditional and established modes of thinking race and racism. We will do so by exploring issues such as the differences between critical philosophy of race and critical race theory, as well as the historical role of race and racism in philosophical thinking, and by attending to the major debates currently held in this emerging tradition.
Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-PHIL
Prereq: None
Identical With: AFAM211

PHIL212 Introduction to Ethics
This course will begin with some ancient questions about values. We find that two ancient approaches to living (Platonic-Stoic and Aristotelian) differ radically over how much experience or society can teach us about what is good. Yet both insist that moral life is essentially connected to individual happiness.

Turning next to modern ideas of moral action (Kantian and utilitarian), we find that they both emphasize a potential gulf between individual happiness and moral rightness. Yet, like the ancients, they disagree over whether morality's basic insights derive from experience.

The last third of the course explores more recent preoccupations with ideas about moral difference, moral change, and the relation between morality and power. Especially since Marx and Nietzsche, moral theory faces a sustained challenge from social theorists who argue moral norms and judgments serve hidden ideological purposes. Some have sought to repair universal ethics by giving an account of progress or the overcoming of bias, while others have argued for plural or relative ethics. Ecological critics have challenged moral theorists to overcome their preoccupation with exclusively human interests and ideals. What kinds of moral reflection might be adequate to problems of global interdependence?

Students will come to understand the distinctive insights and arguments behind all of the positions considered, to recognize more and less cogent lines of response to them, and to shape their own patterns of moral reasoning through careful reflection.
Offering: Host
Grading: A-F

Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-PHIL
Identical With: ENVS212
Prereq: None

PHIL213F Introduction to Existentialism (FYS)
This course is an introduction to existentialism. "Existentialism" is both a philosophical tradition and a term that is central to the intellectual history of western thought. The term was explicitly adopted self-descriptively by Jean-Paul Sartre, and was widely disseminated both by his own literary and philosophical contributions and those of his intellectual interlocutors--notably Simone de Beauvoir, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Albert Camus. Existentialism became identified with a cultural movement that flourished in Europe in the 1940s and 1950s. In this course, we will begin by exploring the root and intellectual origins of this tradition through the work of philosophers and authors like Friedrich Nietzsche, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, and Soren Kierkegaard. We will spend a considerable time on some of this philosophical tradition's central tenets like “freedom,” “the absurd,” “existence precedes essence,” “facticity,” “authenticity,” and “despair.” Because existentialism also resonated widely with anti-colonial thinkers across the globe, we will end the course by reading important figures in this movement like Frantz Fanon, Richard Wright, and James Baldwin, in order to understand the ways in which existentialism gradually became an intellectual and political tool of contestation against racism and imperialism.
Offering: Host
Grading: OPT
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-PHIL
Prereq: None

PHIL214 Reasoning About Justice
This course introduces students to the disciplined study of philosophy through reflection on justice and the grounding and authority of claims invoking justice. The central theme of the course is that conceptions of justice and its authority cannot be understood or established in isolation. The meaning and authority of claims about justice and injustice can only be established through inferential relations to other philosophical issues, for example, concerning reason, knowledge, reality, agency, and identity. These issues will be explored through reflective engagement with classic treatments of these issues by Plato, Hobbes, Kant, and more contemporary philosophical work. The contemporary readings include discussions of distributive justice (concerning access to resources and opportunities); the interplay between gender, race, and conceptions of justice; and whether justice and injustice can be assessed comparatively without reference to a comprehensive, ideal social order.
Offering: Host
Grading: OPT
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-PHIL
Prereq: None

PHIL215 Humans, Animals, and Nature
A variety of important issues are central to understanding the complexity of relationships between humans, nonhumans, and the rest of nature. The goals of the course are to help students to think critically, to read carefully, to argue well, and to defend their own reasoned views about the moral relations between humans, animals, and nature.
Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-PHIL
Identical With: ENVS215
Prereq: None
PHIL216 Women, Animals, and Nature
This course will focus on the gendered aspects of human relations with the rest of the natural world. We will explore ecofeminist analyses and challenge popular views about women’s special relation to nature. This course will also provide the analytical tools necessary to understand and analyze the roles that actual women (modified by race, class, and sexuality) play in reconceptualizing and reshaping relationships to other animals and the more-than-human world.
Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-PHIL
Identical With: ENVS214, FGSS214
Prereq: None

PHIL217 Bioethics and Social Justice
"Health has replaced salvation," wrote the 19th-century philosopher of medicine José Miguel Guardia. This course will examine the increasing importance that health, medicine, biotechnology, and health care systems have taken in contemporary societies. Dramatic changes in medicine allow us to prolong life and treat disease in previously unimaginable ways, even as these same changes open the door to new forms of exploitation, violence, racism, and oppression in the name of medicine itself. Our goal will be to grasp the ethical and philosophical significance of these contradictions. We will begin by examining some of the most prominent medical abuses of the 20th-century, including the Tuskegee syphilis trials and the lingering effects of eugenics and Social Darwinism. Then we will consider the mainstream response in U.S. ethics to these abuses—the creation and institutionalization of the discipline of bioethics—and the critics of this response. From there, we will reflect on the limits of the bioethics approach in light of the current global crises of health, life, and medicine. Readings will include selections from philosophers of biotechnology (including Continental approaches, such as Canguilhem, Foucault, and Fanon), the history of medicine, the social sciences, and current journalism.
Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-PHIL
Identical With: SISP217
Prereq: None

PHIL218 Personal Identity and Choice
This course explores philosophical reflections on the problem of personal identity and its relationship to matters of choice and freedom. How do certain experiences and thoughts and physical materials compose oneself? Am I the same person over time even through complete transformations of experience, thought, and material? Can I choose which elements of my existence to count as essential? Some argue the concept of a unified and enduring self partakes of illusion; at the other extreme, some argue for the permanent integrity of individual souls. Regarding choice and freedom, we find a related debate, ranging from those who deny free will altogether to those who define humanity’s essence in terms of choice and agency. Might we coherently say that some human selves can have more integrity and others less? What gives a measure of meaningful coherence to a person’s life? Similarly, can we distinguish some choices as more free than others? What makes for meaningful choice? Besides serving as an introduction to philosophical reasoning, the course will draw interdisciplinary connections on themes such as social identities, religious experience, political freedom, and legal responsibility.
Offering: Host
Grading: OPT
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-PHIL
Prereq: None

PHIL219 Evil, Responsibility, and Forgiveness
The problem of evil has long occupied an important position in the history of philosophy. In light, however, of the horrific events of the 20th-century, philosophers and other writers of the past hundred years have begun to ask whether it is time to rethink our own understanding of evil. Is it possible to understand genocide, colonialism, and systematic racism through existing conceptions of evil, responsibility, and forgiveness, conceptions drawn largely from religion and the law? What happens to our understanding of evil when, as Hannah Arendt famously suggested with her notion of the "banality of evil," mass murder is detached from wicked intentions and is made routine, mundane, even cliché? What happens to our understanding of responsibility when, on the one hand, a whole society, not just an individual, is implicated in a crime—and when, on the other hand, responsibility cannot be confined to geographical or national borders? What happens to our understanding of forgiveness when the very possibility or desirability of such an act becomes eminently questionable? In this course, we will draw from continental philosophy, critical philosophy of race, literature, and film. Readings may include selections from Emmanuel Levinas, Hannah Arendt, Frantz Fanon, Aimé Césaire, Primo Levi, Jacques Derrida, and Susan Neiman.
Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-PHIL
Prereq: None

PHIL221 Philosophy as a Way of Life
For many philosophers, East and West, philosophy has been more than an effort to answer fundamental questions. It has been an activity aimed at changing one’s orientation to the world and, thus, how one lives one’s life. We will explore Chinese, Greco-Roman, and contemporary versions of the idea that philosophy should be seen as a way of life. How does philosophical reasoning interact with lived practice? How do metaphysical views lead to ethical commitments? Despite their differences, Confucians, Christians, Aristotelians, and Stoics all agreed that philosophy should aim at making us better people. Can such an idea still get traction in today’s world?
Offering: Host
Grading: Cr/U
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-PHIL
Prereq: None

PHIL222 Global Philosophy
Philosophy is not now, nor has it ever been, narrowly confined to one culture, tradition, or civilization. As European and then American power reached around the world in recent centuries, so too have Euro-American philosophical traditions acquired a global audience, but other philosophical traditions did not disappear. These other ways of approaching philosophy have been re-emerging or reconstituting themselves—sometimes drawing on and sometimes contesting assumptions from the Euro-American traditions—in what can loosely be called our post-colonial world. This course asks what “philosophy” means in these different contexts and explores how philosophy was and is done within various traditions. In addition, we probe and assess distinct approaches to making philosophy more global, which at the very least must mean more cognizant of the presence of multiple ways of doing philosophy.
Offering: Host
Grading: OPT
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-PHIL
Identical With: CEAS252
Prereq: None

PHIL224 A History of Civil Disobedience
This course will explore some classic readings on civil disobedience and nonviolent political resistance in literature, history, and philosophy. We will
examine connections between some key moments in the history of intellectual thought in fifth-/fourth-century BCE Athens and the 19th/20th century. The lives of Socrates, Gandhi, and Martin Luther King Jr. will be the focus of our study, though we will also read works of Greek tragedy (Sophocles), comedy (Aristophanes), and history (Thucydides), and various different political tracts on civil disobedience from the modern period, including writings by Percy Shelley, Henry David Thoreau, Leo Tolstoy, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Doris Stevens, Rabindranath Tagore, George Orwell, and John Rawls. The course will conclude by examining the use and relevance of nonviolent political action in the 21st century.

Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-COL
Identical With: COL109
Prereq: None

PHIL231 Reason and Paradox
This course is an introduction to philosophy, logic, and conceptual issues underlying the foundations of the natural and social sciences. We will examine and analyze a range of patterns of reasoning that lead to surprising, even alarming, conclusions. These go from fallacious arguments whose mistakes can be clearly pinpointed, to conceptual puzzles whose resolution leads to insights about reasoning, to four genuine paradoxes for which there are no clear solutions at all. Most of these paradoxes have been known since antiquity: Zeno’s Paradox, about the concepts of space, time, and motion; the Liar Paradox, about the notions of truth and reference; the Sorites Paradox, about the notion of vagueness; and a surprise paradox to be announced in class. The analysis of fallacies and puzzles leads to the study of deductive logic. On the basis of a working knowledge of logic, we will be in a position to see how the paradoxes challenge both the fundamental assumptions that we make in thinking about the world and the very assumptions that underlie rational thought itself.

Offering: Host
Grading: OPT
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: NSM-PHIL
Prereq: None

PHIL232 Beginning Philosophy
This introduction to philosophy for first-year students includes close study and discussion of some major classical texts, as well as some contemporary works.

Offering: Host
Grading: OPT
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-PHIL
Prereq: None

PHIL232F Beginning Philosophy (FYS)
This introduction to philosophy for first-year students includes close study and discussion of some major classical texts, as well as some contemporary works.

Offering: Host
Grading: OPT
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-PHIL
Prereq: None

PHIL250 History of Political Philosophy
This course is a critical historical introduction to some of the central questions in political philosophy. We will begin by examining various arguments for and against the legitimacy of the state. We will then proceed to examine classic responses to the anarchist challenge. We will read a variety of positions including the liberal positions of Rousseau, Locke, Jefferson, and Mill; the communist position as expressed by Marx and Engels; and contemporary philosophical responses by Nozick, Rawls, and Sandel. Central to all of the views we will study are the concepts of equality, liberty, and justice. We will see that how these concepts are interpreted varies considerably among political philosophers. Although the bulk of the course will be devoted to analyzing classical and contemporary philosophical positions, we will spend time discussing how such positions inform contemporary controversies and current public policy debates.

Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-PHIL
Prereq: None

PHIL251 Classical Chinese Philosophy: Chinese Lab
This 0.5 credit course is conducted in Chinese and designed to supplement the standard English-language Classical Chinese Philosophy (PHIL205) course. Students must have taken PHIL205 in the past or be enrolled in it simultaneously. The course will have two main foci: introducing students to modern and contemporary Chinese-language debates about Chinese philosophy and exploring in greater depth the meaning of key passages from the classical works students are reading in translation in PHIL205.

Both advanced learners of Chinese (fourth-year level or above) and native speakers are welcome. Familiarity with classical Chinese is desirable but not required. Assignments will include presentations in Chinese and some written work in English; evaluation will be tailored to each student’s language background. If you are unsure whether your language background is sufficient for the course, please contact the instructor.

Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: Cr/U
Credits: 0.50
Gen Ed Area: HA-CEAS
Identical With: CHIN351
Prereq: None

PHIL254 The Rationalist Tradition in Early Modern European Philosophy
This course offers an intermediate-level survey of the Rationalist tradition in Early Modern European Philosophy. Broadly speaking, Rationalism (with a capital ‘R’) is the view that human reason can deliver insight into significant philosophical truths, without relying on sense experience. We will explore varieties of this methodological commitment in connection with several core topics - including the existence of God, the nature of the human mind (or soul), its relation to the body, and the possibility of empirical knowledge. We will read texts by René Descartes, Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia, Margaret Cavendish, Baruch Spinoza, G.W. Leibniz, and Emilie Du Châtelet.

Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: OPT
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-CEAS
Identical With: COL283
Prereq: None

PHIL255 Moral Psychology: Care of the Soul
Moral psychology is the study of our minds that is aimed at an understanding of how we develop, grow, and flourish as moral beings. In this course we will examine historical and contemporary texts from philosophy, psychology, and spiritual writings that deal with the nature of the good life for human beings, the development of virtues, and the cultivation of ethical understanding and moral sensibilities. Emphasis will be both on careful understanding of the texts and on the attempt to relate the theories discussed to our own moral lives. Class will meet on Monday and Wednesday in lecture/discussion format. Each student must also be enrolled in one discussion section. Discussion sections will be focused on specific interests in or approaches to moral psychology such as clinical therapy, philosophical analysis, or spirituality in a particular religious tradition. The particular offerings of discussion section topics will vary from year
to year. Each discussion section will have a distinctive set of additional readings and exercises.

Offering: Host
Grading: Cr/U
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-PHIL
Prereq: None

PHIL256 Existentialism
This course is an introduction to 20th-century French existentialism. "Existentialism" is both a philosophical tradition and a term that is central to the intellectual history of Western thought. The term was explicitly adopted as a self-description by Jean-Paul Sartre and was widely disseminated both by his own literary and philosophical contributions and those of his associates—namely Simone de Beauvoir, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Albert Camus. Existentialism became identified with a cultural movement that flourished in Europe in the 1940s and '50s. It also resonated widely with anti-colonial thinkers across the globe. Thus, through the work of Frantz Fanon, Richard Wright, and Sartre's own intellectual engagement with colonialism and oppression, we will also explore the ways in which existentialism gradually became an intellectual and political tool for contestation against racism and European imperialism.

Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-PHIL
Identical With: COL253
Prereq: None

PHIL258 Post-Kantian European Philosophy
In this study of 19th- and 20th-century philosophy in Europe (primarily France and Germany), special attention will be devoted to the interpretation of modern science, its significance for understanding the world as distinctly modern, and ourselves and the world as natural (or as transcending nature). Related topics include the scope and limits of reason, the role of subjectivity in the constitution of meaning, the place of ethics and politics in a science-centered culture, and the problems of comprehending historical change. Philosophers to be read include Kant, Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, Husserl, Heidegger, Weber, Marcuse, Habermas, and Foucault. The course is designed to introduce students to a very difficult but widely influential philosophical tradition and will emphasize close reading and comparative interpretation and assessment of texts and reasoning. This course meets the Social, Cultural, and Critical Theory Certificate's requirement in philosophical origins of theory.

Offering: Host
Grading: OPT
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-PHIL
Identical With: SISP281
Prereq: None

PHIL259 Neo-Confucian Chinese Philosophy
This course will present critical discussion of issues central to Neo-Confucian (11th–19th centuries CE) philosophers that in many cases are still central in Chinese thought today. Topics will include the relation between knowledge and action, Neo-Confucian conceptions of idealism and materialism, and the connection between Neo-Confucian philosophy and spirituality.

Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-PHIL
Identical With: CEAS256, RELI206
Prereq: None

PHIL262 Phenomenology, Existentialism, and Poststructuralism
This course critically examines the philosophical treatment of meaning, interpretation, subjectivity, language, and history within the tradition that extends from Husserl's program of phenomenology, through Heidegger's and Merleau-Ponty's criticisms and existential revisions of phenomenology, to the antiphenomenological projects of Foucault and Derrida.

Offering: Host
Grading: OPT
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-PHIL
Prereq: PHIL202, PHIL211, PHIL212, PHIL217, PHIL219, OR PHIL278

PHIL263 Modern Chinese Philosophy
We will critically examine Chinese philosophical discourse from the late 19th century to the present, including liberalism, Marxism, and Neo-Confucianism. Topics will include interaction with the West, human rights, the roles of traditions and traditional values, and the modern relevance of the ideal of sagehood.

Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-PHIL
Identical With: CEAS264
Prereq: None

PHIL265 Postanalytic Philosophy: Science and Metaphysics
The analytic movement in early 20th-century philosophy distinguished the domain of philosophy from that of empirical science. The sciences were empirical disciplines seeking facts, whereas philosophy primarily involved the analysis of linguistic meaning, often using the resources provided by formal logic. Criticisms of this conception of philosophy and its relation to the sciences have shaped much of the subsequent development of anglophone philosophy. This course will examine closely some of the most influential later criticisms of the early analytic movement and the resulting reconceptions of philosophy as a discipline. The central themes of the course cut across the fields of epistemology, metaphysics, and the philosophy of language and mind. Special attention will be given to philosophy's relation to the empirical sciences, since this has been a prominent issue raised by the criticisms of the early analytic movement. Among the philosophers most prominently considered are Quine, Sellars, Davidson, Putnam, Dennett, Kripke, Brandom, and Haugeland.

Offering: Host
Grading: OPT
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-PHIL
Prereq: None

PHIL266 History and Limits of Aesthetic Theory
This class will engage significant contributions to Aesthetic Theory in the West from antiquity to the modern period along three dimensions: theoretical, critical, and historical. From a theoretical standpoint, we will address perennial questions in aesthetics, such as what makes something a work of art in the first place, what it means for art to be "beautiful" or otherwise "successful," how differences in media condition and contribute to artistic meaning, what genera are and how they evolve, whether and how art can be ethically or politically significant, why we care about fiction, why and how we "enjoy" tragic plays or horror films, and how artistic tradition can (and should) inform individual works. From a critical standpoint, we will consider how works of art contemporaneous with each theoretical account either reinforce or challenge its specific proposals. And from a historical standpoint, we will seek to understand how aesthetic theories both respond to the specificities of their own epoch and situate themselves relative to the artistic and aesthetic traditions of their predecessors. Readings will include texts by Aristotle, Hume, Kant, Lessing, and Hegel.

Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: OPT
PHIL268 The Ethics of Captivity
There are a variety of forms of captivity and a wide array of individuals who are kept in captivity. In this course, we will explore the conditions of captivity (including prisons, zoos, laboratories, and sanctuaries) and explore the variety of ethical and political issues that captivity raises for humans and other animals.
Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-PHIL
Prereq: None

PHIL269 Modern Aesthetic Theory
As a philosophical discipline, aesthetic theory initially coalesced around a cluster of related issues concerning the nature of beauty and the norms governing its production, appreciation, and authoritative assessment. Beginning in the nineteenth century, however, both art and aesthetics undergo a conspicuous yet enigmatic shift, signaled by (among other things) Hegel’s declaration that “art, in its highest vocation, is and remains for us a thing of the past.” Rather suddenly, classical accounts of beauty, genius, aesthetic experience, and critical taste are beset by anxieties about the autonomy and significance of aesthetic praxis in human life and, subsequently, by a series of challenges to the tenability of traditional aesthetic categories—author, text, tradition, meaning and interpretation, disinterested pleasure, originality, etc. Our aim in this course is to track these conceptual shifts and to interrogate the rationale behind them. (This course complements, but does not presuppose COL 266: History and Limits of Aesthetic Theory.)
Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: OPT
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-COL
Identical With: COL269
Prereq: None

PHIL270 Environmental Philosophy
How should we understand our relation to the more-than-human world? What does it mean to act responsibly within our ecological situation? This course will cover conceptual questions about nature, ecology, and value, and practical questions about how to respond to climate change, habitat loss, resource depletion, and other ecological problems. In particular, we will challenge the temptation to idealize “pure” nature as distinct from the site of human practices. As a result, we must consider the complex interrelationships between ecological concerns and concerns about social justice.
Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-PHIL
Identical With: ENVS270
Prereq: None

PHIL271 Moral Responsibility: Doubt, Debate, and Dialogue
This intermediate philosophy course will investigate conflicting ideas about moral responsibility and develop skills in understanding and critiquing the arguments associated with each view.
Key themes include: (1.) For what can we hold people responsible? For their intentions? For consequences? For their character? For other implications of their action? (2.) How much do concepts of moral responsibility reflect particular (and questionable) cultural ideals? (3.) Can we hold someone morally responsible even when there is a good causal explanation for their conduct?
(4.) What is our aim and purpose in holding ourselves and others responsible, and how else might such purposes be achieved?
Offering: Host
Grading: OPT
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-PHIL
Prereq: [PHIL212 or ENVS212] OR [PHIL215 or ENVS215] OR PHIL217 OR PHIL218

PHIL272 Human Rights Across Cultures
Are human rights universal? Do cultural differences matter to judgments about human rights? We will look at the current international human rights institutional framework and at theoretical perspectives from Europe and America, China, and the Islamic world. We will look primarily at philosophical materials but will also pay some attention to the premises of international legal documents like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and to the assumptions behind activist organizations such as Amnesty International.
Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-PHIL
Identical With: CEAS262
Prereq: None

PHIL275 Calderwood Seminar in Public Writing: Writing for Social Justice
One of the greatest strengths of learning philosophy is that it helps you to become a better thinker and a clearer communicator. Of course, as we get deeper into philosophical studies, we end up thinking with and communicating to a smaller group of specialists. Fortunately, there are an increasing number of philosophers who also use their training in philosophy to write for broader audiences. In this course, Professor Gruen will share what she has learned about public writing and help you develop your skills for communicating publicly about pressing issues of social justice. We will read, discuss, and, most importantly write on topics including those: on race, on animals, on immigration, on prisons, on climate change, on reproductive justice, and other topics chosen by the class.
Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-PHIL
Identical With: COL275
Prereq: None

PHIL276 Virtue Ethics: Traditional, Comparative, and Contemporary Approaches
This course provides an overview and evaluation of various virtue-based approaches to ethics in the Western and Eastern traditions. In the first part of the course, we will get a basic sense for the structure and distinctive features of ancient virtue-based ethical theories. In the second part of the course, we will follow the trajectory of these approaches through to their revival in the late 20th century in the contemporary virtue ethics movement.
Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-PHIL
Identical With: COL275
Prereq: None

PHIL277 Feminist Philosophy and Moral Theory (FGSS Gateway)
This course explores the dialogue between feminist concerns and moral theory. It will explore not only how moral theory might support certain central feminist insights and aims but also why some feminists cast doubt on the project of “doing moral theory.” Does the language of existing philosophical moral theories (reason, fairness, equality, utility, human nature, rights) sufficiently allow articulation of feminist problems? If not, how can feminist moral theorists move us beyond the grip of familiar gender-loaded oppositions? After surveying a
range of perspectives on feminism and philosophy, we will give a deep reading to three book-length developments of feminist ethics: one from a Kantian perspective, one focused on care, and one focused on virtue ethics. As a gateway course for the FGSS program, this course serves to introduce critical thinking about the construction of gender and the intersection of gender with race, ethnoicity, class, and sexuality.

Offering: Host
Grading: OPT
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-PHIL
Identical With: FGSS277
Prereq: None

PHIL278 Political Philosophy
Political philosophy addresses fundamental questions about the basis and purpose of human association and community. What is the role of justice in human affairs, and what makes a set of social arrangements just? What is political freedom, and is it compatible with equality? What is the source of our ideas about law and punishment? What are the conditions of the legitimate exercise of power? We will cover three basic units: (I) Ancient, (II) Early Modern, and (III) Revolution and Radicalism. In the first, we will discuss early Greek conceptions of justice and political organization. Next, we will look at the period from roughly 1500-1780, when new ideas about political power, human nature, equality, and natural law emerge. Here we will focus on the work of Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau. Finally, in the third unit, we will consider the way in which the three major revolutions at the end of the eighteenth century—in the U.S., France, and Haiti—constitute a horizon for contemporary political thought. These revolutions hold out the promise of an unfinished “social revolution” in class organization (Marx), but also of liberation from racism, patriarchy, and other forms of oppression.

Offering: Host
Grading: OPT
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-PHIL
Prereq: None

PHIL279 Freedom and Moral Agency
How can we be free? Is freedom merely the absence of constraint, or does it require its own rules and principles? How does individual freedom connect to our ideas of political self-determination and history? This course examines Kant’s ethical theory and places it within the broader context of his views on politics, religion, and the philosophy of history.

Offering: Host
Grading: OPT
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-PHIL
Prereq: None

PHIL282 Reason and Revelation: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion
Throughout the medieval period in Europe, philosophy and theology were thought to be compatible, if not completely coextensive. With the dawning of modernity, however, a distinction of mutual suspicion began to emerge between the secular and sacred disciplines. Broadly speaking, “philosophy of religion” is the effort to evaluate the claims of revelation and reason in terms of one another, revealing either consonance or dissonance between the two. We will examine some of the major texts within this field, whose authors include deep skeptics, committed Christians, committed anti-Christians, secular and nonsecular Jews, feminists, ethicists, idealists, empiricists, and Romantics. Themes to be explored include proofs of God’s existence—along with refutations of those proofs and rebuttals to those refutations—the problem of evil, religious ethics, religious experience, the possibility of a universal religion, and the relationships between monotheism, race, ecology, and gender.

Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: A-F

PHIL283 Animal Law and Policy
This course will provide an interdisciplinary and in-depth survey of the growing and dynamic field of animal law. We will address the historical status of animals in the law, how our society views animals, the capacities of animals, how ethics relates to animal treatment, how animals are currently utilized in society, the current application of animal protection laws (including their limitations and efforts to strengthen them), as well emerging efforts to re-classify some animals within our legal system. We will consider how legal systems, specific cases, legislation, and cultural values have affected and continue to affect the evolution of this field. Because this is a field where new developments occur regularly, we will incorporate developments and new legal issues as they arise.

Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-PHIL
Prereq: None

PHIL284 African American Philosophy
This course will examine the philosophical questions that have been of particular interest to African American philosophers. We will explore the domains of knowledge in which African American philosophers and thinkers have felt compelled to intervene. We will approach these questions by engaging with canonical historical figures such as Du Bois, Douglass, and Cooper, and then we will assess the extent to which contemporary African American philosophers have remained (and continue to be) concerned with the same questions, albeit with different discursive methodologies. The purpose of this course is to trace the philosophical articulation of race, racism, identity, politics of freedom, and subject formation in the history of African American philosophical thought.

Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-PHIL
Identical With: AFAM284
Prereq: None

PHIL286 Philosophy of Mind
This class is a philosophical investigation into the nature of the mind. We will explore such questions such: What kinds of beings are capable of having mental states? Can non-human animals or computers think and feel? What is it to be conscious, and can the subjective, first-personal experience of consciousness be adequately captured by a scientific theory? How do our minds represent the world? By what mechanism do our thoughts, feelings, and desires get linked up to the things around us? We will ask these questions with the goal of shedding light on our nature as thinking, feeling beings, and on the relation of our inner lives to the physical world.

Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-PHIL
Identical With: SISP286
Prereq: None

PHIL287 Philosophy of Science
This course is a fast-moving introduction to some central topics in the philosophy of science, aimed at students with some college-level study of at least one natural science. Topics include the norms of scientific understanding or explanation; the relation between finished theories or explanations and ongoing research; the recognition and dissemination of discoveries; the justification of scientific claims; conceptual and technical (revolutionary) change in the science;
the significance of instrumentation, experiment, and artifice in science; the places of laws, models, and causal relations in scientific understanding; and whether various sciences differ fundamentally in their aims, methods, and achievements. Considerable attention will be given to examples of scientific practice, both historical and contemporary.

Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: OPT
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-SISP
Identical With: SISP202
Prereq: None

PHIL288 Sciences as Social and Cultural Practices
Philosophers long construed scientific knowledge as achieved and assessed by individual knowers, but recent work has recognized a greater epistemic role for scientific communities, disciplines, or practices and has taken seriously the social and cultural context of scientific research. This course surveys some of the social, cultural, and political aspects of the sciences that have been most important for scholars in science studies, including differences between experimental, field, and theoretical science; the role of disciplines and other institutions in the sciences; interactions between science and its various publics; the politics of scientific expertise and science policy; the globalization of science; the social dimensions of scientific normativity, from metrology to conceptions of objectivity; race and gender in science; and conceptual exchanges between sciences and other discursive practices. The concept of the social will also receive critical attention in its purported contrasts to what is individual, natural, rational, or cultural.

Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: OPT
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-SISP
Identical With: ENV5205, SISP205
Prereq: None

PHIL289 Philosophy of Language
This course is a study of recent attempts by philosophers to explain the nature of language and thought. The focus of the course will be on one or more of the following topics: reference, sense, analyticity, necessity, a priori truth.

Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-PHIL
Prereq: PHIL201 OR PHIL203 OR PHIL231

PHIL290 Philosophical Logic
This course will study the philosophical and conceptual foundations of deductive reasoning, developing into an exact theory of the fundamental principles of such reasoning. A subsidiary aim is to equip the student with the necessary background for reading contemporary philosophical texts.

Offering: Host
Grading: OPT
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: NSM-PHIL
Prereq: PHIL231 OR PHIL230

PHIL291 Reason and Its Limits
This course offers a close study of Immanuel Kant’s magnum opus, the Critique of Pure Reason, supplemented by related writings by Kant and some secondary literature. Kant observes that the history of philosophy is rife with disagreements, even though philosophers purport to traffic in necessary truths disclosed by reason alone. This scandalous fractiousness calls into question reason’s ability to offer substantive insights into necessary truths. Kant’s “critique” aims to vindicate reason by distinguishing, in a principled manner, the sorts of things we can know with certainty from those that lie beyond the limits of human understanding. His central thesis, “transcendental idealism,” holds that “reason has insight only into what it produces after its own plan” (Bxiii). In other words, we can indeed be certain of key structural features of reality such as its spatiotemporality and causal interconnectedness—but only because those features are, in some crucial sense, mind-dependent. This class will explore in detail the arguments for these claims as well as prominent interpretations of their philosophical upshot.

Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-PHIL
Identical With: COL292
Prereq: None

PHIL292 Theory of Knowledge
This course will examine a subset of the following topics: the analysis of the nature of knowledge, skepticism, responses to skepticism, knowledge and truth, knowledge and virtue.

Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-PHIL
Prereq: [PHIL202 or COL360] OR [PHIL201 or COL359 or CCIV217] OR PHIL231

PHIL293 Metaphysics
An advanced introduction to some central topics in traditional and contemporary metaphysics, topics may include time, universals, causation, freedom of will, modality, realism, and idealism.

Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-PHIL
Prereq: None

PHIL294 Heidegger and the Being Question
Martin Heidegger argued in BEING AND TIME that philosophy has only one question at its heart, the question of the sense of being, even though that question has been trivialized or obscured by the philosophical tradition. This course will explore this question; its relation to more traditional topics in metaphysics, epistemology; and the philosophy of mind, language, and science; and its implications for how philosophy should be done, to what ends. Our primary readings will be BEING AND TIME and various secondary literature, but the aim will be to formulate, pose, and address the question of what it means to be, rather than to interpret or assess Heidegger’s own views about this question.

Offering: Host
Grading: OPT
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-PHIL
Prereq: None

PHIL303 Plato’s REPUBLIC
"The safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato." This declaration, famously made by Alfred North Whitehead in the early 20th century, seems especially true of Plato’s Republic. No other work in the Western tradition can lay claim to setting the tone so influentially for the development of philosophy as a discipline. Almost every branch of philosophical thought we are familiar with today—on matters of ethics, politics, moral psychology, epistemology, metaphysics, and aesthetics—receives a major formulation in this text. This seminar will be devoted to a close reading of each of the 10 books of The Republic alongside various perspectives that have been taken on this magisterial work in contemporary philosophy, journalism, and literature. We will focus on The Republic primarily as a work of moral psychology by investigating the topical question of the dialogue: Why is it better to live justly rather than unjustly? For Plato, a just life is one
governed by the pursuit of wisdom or learning, and this he believes will also be
a psychologically healthy one. By contrast, a life governed by the indiscriminate
pursuit of power—the life of a tyrant—is psychologically corrupted. These are
bold claims. What is Plato’s argument for them? In raising this question, we will
consider the political project Plato embarks upon in the Republic in constructing
a just society, as well as connected issues he raises in the dialogue concerning
the nature of human motivation, the distinction between belief and knowledge,
the distinction between appearance and reality, the importance of a proper
education to the human good, and the role of art and beauty in furthering
the common good. Alongside Plato, we will read various works of secondary
literature, journalistic pieces, and works of fiction this semester, all inspired by
The Republic.
Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-PHIL
Identical With: CCIV257, COL341
Prereq: None

PHIL 305 Plato’s Moral Psychology
The PHAEDRUS, usually considered among the last of Plato’s dialogues, is
one of the philosophical and literary masterpieces in his corpus. It is also
a veritable digest of Platonic theory, covering topics in moral psychology,
metaphysics, epistemology, and aesthetics. Virtually every major doctrine
commonly attributed to Plato can be found in the dialogue, including his theory
of forms, his doctrine of recollection, his views on the immortality of the soul,
and his tripartite account of human psychology. The structure of the PHAEDRUS
famously falls into two parts: the first containing three speeches on love, or
erōs; the second containing a discussion between Socrates and Phaedrus on
the difference between good and bad discourse. Since antiquity, readers of
this dialogue have puzzled over the connection between these two parts of the
work and their respective themes. What is the relationship exactly between love
discourse? We will explore this question in this seminar through a close
investigation of Plato’s moral psychology in the PHAEDRUS, focusing on his views
on the role of human motivation in argument and the connection between this
topic and other topics in the dialogue. In the process, we will consider the place
of the PHAEDRUS both in the context of Plato’s views on rhetoric elsewhere (in
works such as the GORGIAS) and in the context of various historical debates that
were occurring in 4th- and 5th-century Greece regarding the art of argument.
Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-PHIL
Identical With: COL330
Prereq: None

PHIL 309 Seminar in 19th-Century Philosophy
The late 18th to early 19th century was one of the most exciting, revolutionary,
and difficult periods in the history of philosophy. Among the prominent
philosophers working in this period, Hume, Kant, Goethe, the post-Kantian
German idealists, and Hegel have traditionally been grouped together under
the label “idealists” in virtue of their rejection of objective, mind-independent
sources of ideas, and emphasis on phenomenal experience as a source of
knowledge. Rather than gain a superficial overview of the developments in this
historical period, we will try to delve deeply into the philosophical conceptions of
nature, naturalism, and natural philosophy that originated out of philosophical
reflections on the empirical sciences and scientific method of the day. Topics will
include Hume’s skeptical doubts about causation and induction as providing a
 catalyst for Kant’s thesis of subjective idealism in the PROLEGOMENA; Kant on
the purposiveness of organic nature; late 18th- to early 19th-century empirical
theories of life and nature, beginning with Enlightenment theories of matter,
life, and generation in the age of Goethe (1749–1832); and application of
Goethe’s empirical and scientific method in his botanical writings and theory
of metamorphosis of plants. Goethe’s natural philosophy will provide the key
background to examining how German idealists’ romantic conception of life and
nature peacefully coexist with materialist proposals. Our investigation of 19th-
century natural philosophy will conclude with an examination of the concept of
life and nature in Hegel’s natural philosophy.
Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-PHIL
Prereq: [PHIL202 or COL360] OR [PHIL252 or COL252]

PHIL 310 Concepts of Matter: A Brief Philosophical History of the Concept of
Matter
In this course, we will explore changing notions of matter in Western thought
from classical Greek thought through the quantum revolution in physics,
and philosophical debates about their implications. We will begin with views
of matter in Plato, Aristotle, and the ancient atomists and how they were
interrelated with views of human beings: the devaluation of matter and the body
in Platonist and Gnostic thought, the perhaps surprisingly positive attitude taken
toward death without a hope of continued existence by the materialist Lucretius,
and the appropriation of Aristotle’s hylomorphic philosophy into Christian
theology and scholastic science in the late middle ages. We will then look at the
emergence of a conception of “material substance” in the 17th century,
examining the differences between the mathematical formulations of Galileo
and Descartes and those of atomists such as Gassendi. The remainder of the
section will focus on the rise of materialism and reactions against it: Descartes
and Hobbes on the question of whether human beings are merely machines,
the Newton-Leibniz debate about the activity of God in nature, Laplace’s demon
and the deterministic interpretation of classical mechanics, and the 19th-
century reactions of romanticism and spiritualism. Finally, we will examine
the radical and counterintuitive changes in the notion of matter occasioned
by quantum mechanics, as well as interpretations that put consciousness
and subjectivity back into the collapse of the wave function. We will consider
whether contemporary physics really has the kind of notion of “material
substance” needed for a traditional form of materialism before concluding with
readings from philosophers and physicists in the recent revivals of dualism and
panpsychism.
Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-PHIL
Identical With: CHUM313
Prereq: None

PHIL 311 Spinoza’s ETHICS
This course is devoted to close reading of one of the philosophical masterpieces
of the Western tradition. The ETHICS is of genuine contemporary interest,
with its metaphysics that combine materialism with theism, its philosophical
psychology that anticipates Freud, and its attempt to reconcile human freedom
with a belief in scientific explanation. This is a difficult, vast, profound work that
requires and will repay close study.
Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-PHIL
Identical With: COL311
Prereq: None

PHIL 313 Kantian Epistemology
This seminar provides an intensive look at Immanuel Kant’s first Critique,
one of the most groundbreaking works in all of modern philosophy. We will
alternate between close readings of Kant’s arguments in the CRITIQUE OF PURE
REASON and broader comparative discussion of contemporary philosophical
debates that have been shaped by Kant’s theory of knowledge. Themes will
include the difference between human and animal perception, conceptual and nonconceptual content, the nature of human discursivity, and the relation between everyday cognition and scientific knowledge.

Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-PHIL
Prereq: None

PHIL331 American Pragmatist Philosophy: Purposes, Meanings, and Truths
This course sketches and evaluates an American tradition of more or less overtly pragmatist thinkers in philosophy and the human sciences, stretching roughly from Emerson and Peirce at the beginning; through William James, George Herbert Mead, and John Dewey in the heyday of the pragmatist public intellectual; to recent and current writers as diverse as Cornell West, Robert Brandom, Richard Rorty, Ian Hacking, and Ruth Millikan. These thinkers offer variations on the premise that all meanings gesture not only backward to facts and things but also forward to the practical circumstances and purposes of interpreters. As purposes shift, so do meanings, and as meanings shift, so does truth—for whether we accept a claim as true depends above all else on its meaning. Pragmatist theories have been subjected to frequent caricature as implying that ideas can mean whatever we take them to mean or that what is true varies according to what each individual finds convenient and expedient to believe. What does it mean, then, to retain a sense of respect for truth? While some pragmatist accounts do explicitly deflate the importance of the concept of truth, others claim not only to respect truth but to offer an account of truth that allows us to inquire more clearly into the evolving but real meaning of moral judgments, religious and aesthetic claims, psychological attributes, and other deeply contested candidates for human belief.

Offering: Host
Grading: OPT
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-PHIL
Prereq: None

PHIL337 Comparative Philosophy
This seminar will explore the substantive and methodological issues that arise when one takes seriously the idea that philosophy has been, and continues to be, practiced within multiple traditions of inquiry, in many different ways, and in many different languages. We will examine and critique some of the ways in which "comparison" has been used, as well as examine arguments that comparison across traditions is, in fact, impossible. Although most of our attention will be focused on written academic research, we will also attend to the challenges and benefits of interacting directly with philosophers in other countries and cultures.

Offering: Cross-listing
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-CHUM
Identical With: CHUM368, CEAS258
Prereq: None

PHIL338 Comparative Political Philosophy
Undertaking "comparative philosophy" means to do philosophy by drawing on multiple philosophical traditions. In this course, we will study key topics in political philosophy, such as the justification of political authority, the legitimacy of public critique of social rituals, and the scope of liberty and rights-from both modern Western and contemporary East Asian perspectives. We will examine potential obstacles to comparative theorizing, as well as benefits that can arise both for currently dominant traditions (e.g., Western liberalism) and for alternatives to liberalism such as Chinese and Korean Confucianism.

Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-PHIL
Prereq: None

PHIL347 Ethics, Ecology, and Moral Change
People commonly recognize that in facing global climate crises, we need to change our habits and practices. Yet our activities are bound up with our perceptions and with our embodied experience of value and possibility. This seminar dives into recent attempts to radically rework our ways of understanding and inhabiting the world. As the flip-side of environmental alienation is alienation from our embodiment, our sessions will incorporate movement and other challenges to sedentary classroom habits.

Given an account of thinking and action as always actively embodied and embedded in our surroundings, we will consider the hypothesis that shifts in action emerge together with shifts in perception. Radical accounts of metaphor and its uptake will help us develop accounts of perceptual change. Our readings will follow a variety of metaphorical directions, including animism and animacies, affordance and hyperobject, process and intra-action, native and other, inflammation and balance, dwelling and death, consumption and sustainability. How -- and with what risks and unexpected outcomes -- can these patterns of recognition help in orienting us to the challenges of environmental interdependence and volatility?

This course benefits from collaborative visits with philosopher-dancer Jill Sigman, via Wesleyan’s Creative Campus Initiative. Sigman will co- shape discussion and activities during at least two of our sessions.

Offering: Host
Grading: OPT
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-PHIL
Identical With: ENVS347
Prereq: None

PHIL353 Blackness in the Anthropocene
To deny the "unprecedented" geological impact of humans' force on nature is now practically untenable. Theorists in the humanities, nonetheless, remain unimpressed with what this "new era" has afforded us in terms of critical potential. From accusations that what we now call the "Anthropocene" has merely established a hegemony of brute facts at the expense of critique, to concerns about the multiple ways in which the term continues to obscure catastrophic socio-ecological relations, it is fair to say that the scenes of the "Anthropocene" are still contested terrains. The aim of this course is to investigate the Anthropocene's many forms of socio-political erasures and theoretical "blind-sights." We will examine the ways in which Anthropocenean discourses have been powerful at disavowing racial antagonism in our current ecological crisis. More specifically, in this course, will study the ecological negative effects on black communities around the globe with the aim to questions the shortcomings of ethics in Anthropocenean times. We will explore questions like "who are recognizable/legitimate victims in environmental disasters," "do events like hurricane Katrina or the migration crisis teach us anything about our human condition," and "what is the 'post' in post-humanism." We will read philosophical works ranging from Immanuel Kant and Baruch Spinoza to Rosi Braidotti and Karen Barad.

Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-PHIL
Prereq: None

PHIL354 Hope and Hopelessness in an Age of Mass Incarceration
The United States incarcerates more people than any other country in the world. Over 2 million people are caught in the criminal justice system today. A disproportionate number of those incarcerated are people of color, particularly
black, Latino/a, and indigenous men. Women, too, are a growing part of the prison population, as are queer, transgender, and gender-nonconforming people. Young people, particularly impoverished black youth, are funneled into correctional supervision through the school-to-prison pipeline. For many people in the country today, avoiding prison seems hopeless.

This interdisciplinary course, grounded on philosophical reflections on hope, liberty, respect, and exclusion, will critically explore the moral, psychological, ethical, social, and political issues raised by mass incarceration in the United States. We will be particularly interested in whether and under what conditions hope is possible for those marginalized under the carceral system.

Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-CHUM
Identical With: CHUM354
Prereq: None

PHIL355 Necropolitics and Black "Fugitive" Politics
In his important essay interrogating the (im)posibility of black sociality, Fred Moten attempts to find an order of black social life which would unfold in the very confrontation between black (social) death and the law. However, as he argues, this form of black life would be "reducible neither to simple interdiction nor bare transgression." The form of black life that interests Moten is essentially one of "fugitivity." In a recent response to Moten's text, David Marriott worries that "by writing blackness as ceaseless fugitivity," Moten advances "a position in which blackness is only black when it exceeds its racial disavowal" and therefore blackness "can only be recognized as black in so far as it escapes the racism of its history." In this course, we will trace and follow the implications of Moten's intervention. More specifically, we will explore what forms and figures of sovereignty an aesthetics and politics of fugitive subjectivity could yield given that "black life" remains arguably the most precarious form of living under various contemporary "necropolitical" apparatuses of sanctioned racial exclusion, control, persecution and—in worse cases—genocide. Key figures will include Frantz Fanon, Achille Mbembe, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Jared Sexton, David Marriott, Fred Moten, Christina Sharpe, Saidiya Hartman, Alexander G. Weheliye, Elizabeth Povinelli, and Gayatri Spivak.

Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-CHUM
Identical With: CHUM323
Prereq: None

PHIL357 Animal Minds
Can animals reason? Do they form intentions, do they have beliefs, might they act ethically? What do other animals know? How can we know what they might know, and what can exploring the minds of other animals tell us about our own minds? In this course we will attempt to answer these questions by adopting a largely comparative perspective and examining philosophical, scientific, psychological, and popular writing about minds. We will examine evidence for mindedness and reasoning in social species. We will also explore the ethical implications of this research.

Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-PHIL
Prereq: None

PHIL359 Michel Foucault: Power and Its Products
Is power productive of reality? What does Michel Foucault (1926-1984) mean when he famously declares that power is not just prohibitive, but productive? Foucault's work has been enormously influential in the fields of philosophy, social theory, history, anthropology, queer theory, and feminist theory, among others. The primary topic of Foucault's work is the way in which we have come to categorize not only our world but ourselves and in particular to categorize ourselves in terms of madness, criminality, disease, and sexuality. Foucault, however, is interested in more than these categories themselves: he aims to investigate the conditions through which these categories come to be seen as capable of capturing truths about ourselves. This investigation leads him, in the mature phase of his work that begins in the 1970s, to the problem of power, which is best thought of as a set of relations and not as a thing or a possession. Foucault takes power relations to be (a) implied in relations of knowledge and (b) to be "productive," in a certain sense, of social reality. In this course, we will try to clarify the relationship between power, the production of the social, and knowledge in Foucault's work.

On the one hand, to call power productive opens the door to a major reconsideration of the basic problems of social and political philosophy, which can no longer be assured of having a timeless set of basic questions or objects (the state, the citizen-subject). On the other hand, there is a risk in this approach of ascribing almost magical qualities to power and of reifying it. Since his death, Foucault's thought has often been taken to end up in a curious impasse, caught between extreme activism that accepts no system of power as established and cynicism that sees co-optation everywhere and resistance as futile. What are the political implications of Foucault's shifting conception of power? What follows for our understanding of ourselves? What is really at stake in the ways that we classify and categorize ourselves today?

Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-PHIL
Prereq: None

PHIL360 Continental Philosophy's Others
This seminar will attend to some of the ways in which philosophers of race, Subaltern thinkers, and "postcolonial" philosophers have engaged with the European philosophical archive (more specifically in this case, deconstruction and contemporary French theory). The aim of this course is to focus on some aspects of the debates that emerged from the confrontation between voices intervening from the "margins" of mainstream continental thought and discourses traditionally perceived to be at the center of knowledge production and/or epistemological practices. We will attempt to assess when, where, and how these "philosophies from the borderlands" have had important bearings on contemporary debates in political philosophy and social theory. We will assess both individuals and collective forms of criticism, not only on geographic frontiers but also on liminal and alternative spaces within the same geographic and institutional location, such as the American academy.

Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: SBS-PHIL
Prereq: None

PHIL362 Origins of the Human Mind
Since classical antiquity, philosophers have often characterized human beings by way of contrasts between ourselves and nonhuman animals, particularly in terms of mental abilities humans possess and nonhuman animals (putatively) lack, such as reasoning and language. Only recently, however, have the sciences—particularly evolutionary biology, cognitive psychology, anthropology, and cognitive ethology—begun to offer the tools needed to characterize differences in the cognitive toolkits of different species and to attempt to piece together hypotheses about how human minds differ so greatly from those of our nearest relatives, the great apes, in spite of our genetic similarity and the comparatively brief period since the time of our last common ancestors. In this course, we will read several recent works by philosophers and scientists presenting theories of the evolution of distinctively human cognition.
PHIL 385 Understanding Life and Mind

This advanced seminar explores the philosophical significance of recent developments in evolutionary, developmental, and genomic biology for philosophical and scientific conceptions of mind and language. After initial treatment of preparatory topics such as naturalism and reductionism, the course takes up four primary themes: organism/environment entanglement; relations between genetics, epigenetics, and genomics; developmentalist challenges to orthodox neo-Darwinist conceptions of evolution; and evolutionary approaches to understanding mind and language, especially those that emphasize niche construction and the co-evolution of language and homo sapiens.

Offering: Host
Grading: OPT
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-PHIL
Prereq: None

PHIL 388 Topics in Philosophy of Language

Advanced topics in philosophy of language.

Offering: Host
Grading: OPT
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-PHIL
Prereq: PHIL 293 or [PHIL 202 or COL 360]

PHIL 390 Topics in Metaphysics

This course explores recent discussions in metaphysics. Topics change from year to year. The topic of Spring 2018 is the metaphysics and philosophy of logic of the classical American pragmatists: Peirce, James, Royce, and Lewis.

Offering: Host
Grading: A-F
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: HA-PHIL
Prereq: [PHIL 231 AND (PHIL 201 or COL 359 or CCIV 217)] OR (PHIL 231 AND PHIL 293) OR [PHIL 202 or COL 360] OR PHIL 231 AND PHIL 292

PHIL 401 Individual Tutorial, Undergraduate

Topic to be arranged in consultation with the tutor.

Offering: Host
Grading: OPT

PHIL 402 Individual Tutorial, Undergraduate

Topic to be arranged in consultation with the tutor.

Offering: Host
Grading: OPT
PHIL403 Department/Program Project or Essay
Project to be arranged in consultation with the tutor.
Offering: Host
Grading: A-F

PHIL404 Department/Program Project or Essay
Project to be arranged in consultation with the tutor.
Offering: Host
Grading: A-F

PHIL407 Senior Tutorial (downgraded thesis)
Downgraded Senior Thesis Tutorial - Project to be arranged in consultation with the tutor. Only enrolled in through the Honors Coordinator.
Offering: Host
Grading: A-F

PHIL408 Senior Tutorial (downgraded thesis)
Downgraded Senior Thesis Tutorial - Project to be arranged in consultation with the tutor. Only enrolled in through the Honors Coordinator.
Offering: Host
Grading: A-F

PHIL409 Senior Thesis Tutorial
Topic to be arranged in consultation with the tutor.
Offering: Host
Grading: OPT

PHIL410 Senior Thesis Tutorial
Topic to be arranged in consultation with the tutor.
Offering: Host
Grading: OPT

PHIL411 Group Tutorial, Undergraduate
Topic to be arranged in consultation with the tutor.
Offering: Host
Grading: OPT

PHIL412 Group Tutorial, Undergraduate
Topic to be arranged in consultation with the tutor.
Offering: Host
Grading: OPT

PHIL419 Student Forum
Student-run group tutorial, sponsored by a faculty member and approved by the chair of a department or program.
Offering: Host
Grading: Cr/U

PHIL420 Student Forum
Student-run group tutorial, sponsored by a faculty member and approved by the chair of a department or program.
Offering: Host
Grading: Cr/U

PHIL420A Student Forum
Student-run group tutorial, sponsored by a faculty member and approved by the chair of a department or program.
Offering: Crosslisting
Grading: Cr/U

PHIL465 Education in the Field, Undergraduate
Students must consult with the department and class dean in advance of undertaking education in the field for approval of the nature of the responsibilities and method of evaluation.
Offering: Host
Grading: OPT

PHIL470 Independent Study, Undergraduate
Credit may be earned for an independent study during a summer or authorized leave of absence provided that (1) plans have been approved in advance, and (2) all specified requirements have been satisfied.
Offering: Host
Grading: OPT
Credits: 1.00
Gen Ed Area: None
Prereq: None

PHIL491 Teaching Apprentice Tutorial
The teaching apprentice program offers undergraduate students the opportunity to assist in teaching a faculty member’s course for academic credit.
Offering: Host
Grading: OPT

PHIL492 Teaching Apprentice Tutorial
The teaching apprentice program offers undergraduate students the opportunity to assist in teaching a faculty member’s course for academic credit.
Offering: Host
Grading: OPT