PHIL-UA 1; Central Problems; M/W 9:30-10:45; Jim Pryor

This course is an introduction to the methods of contemporary philosophy, concentrating on the following questions: The Problem of Other Minds: How can we tell whether animals and future computers have minds, or whether they’re instead just mindless automata? How can we tell that other people have minds? The Mind/Body Problem: What is the relation between your mind and your body? Are they made up of different stuffs? If a computer duplicates the neural structure of your brain, will it have the same thoughts and self-awareness that you have? Life and Death: what does it mean to die? Why is death bad? Do you have an immortal soul which is able to survive the death of your body? Personal Identity: What makes you the person you are? Why would a clone of you have to be a different person than you are yourself? If we perfectly recorded all the neural patterns in your brain right now, could we use that recording to "bring you back" after a fatal accident?

You must sign up for one of the following recitation times:
Wednesdays, 4:55-6:10;
Thursdays, 9:30-10:45; 11-12:15; 4:55-6:10

PHIL-UA 4; Life and Death; M/W 4:55-6:10; TBA

An introduction to philosophy through the study of issues bearing on life and death. Topics may include the definition and value of life; grounds for creating, preserving, and taking life; personal identity; ideas of death and immortality; abortion and euthanasia. Gives training in philosophical argument and writing.

PHIL-UA 5; Minds and Machines; M/W 9:30-10:45; TBA

An introduction to philosophy through the study of issues in cognitive science. Topics may include the conflict between computational and biological approaches to the mind; whether a machine could think; the reduction of the mind to the brain; connectionism and neural nets. Gives training in philosophical argument and writing.

PHIL-UA 7; Consciousness; T/R 3:30-4:45; Ned Block

The philosophy and science of consciousness. Topics covered will include: The concept of a neural basis of consciousness and how we could discover what it is; whether there are different kinds of consciousness; the relation between consciousness and attention, cognitive accessibility, intentionality and agency; the function of consciousness; the unity of consciousness; whether the representational contents of perception are just colors, shapes and textures or include “rich”
properties such as facial expressions and causation. The course will also cover some theories of consciousness such as mind/body dualism, behaviorism, functionalism, physicalism and theories of consciousness as representation. Among the topics discussed will be some famous thought experiments, such as whether there could be an inverted spectrum and whether Wittgenstein’s views of the mind make room for an inverted spectrum; zombie thought experiments; Jackson’s example of the scientist raised in a black and white environment who sees red for the first time and learns something about color vision that she could not find out from textbooks. Readings from philosophers such as Thomas Nagel and David Chalmers and neuroscientists such as Victor Lamme and Stanislas Dehaene.

You must sign up for one of the following recitation times:
Fridays, 9:30-10:45; 11-12:15; 12:30-1:45; 2-3:15;

**PHIL-UA 20; History of Ancient Philosophy; T/R 9:30-10:45; Jessica Moss**

An introduction to Ancient Greek and Roman Philosophy. We will study the PreSocratics, Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics, the Epicureans, and the Sceptics, exploring their answers to questions about the nature of reality, the nature and possibility of knowledge, and how one should live.

You must sign up for one of the following recitation times:
Fridays, 9:30-10:45; 11-12:15;
Mondays, 12:30-1:45; 2-3:15;

*Prerequisite: One Introductory Course*

**PHIL-UA 30; Kant; T/R 4:55-6:10; Béatrice Longuenesse**

No philosopher has been more influential than Immanuel Kant in shaping the questions of philosophy from the eighteenth century to present times. His influence is felt in all areas of contemporary philosophy, especially epistemology, moral philosophy and philosophy of mind. In this course we will do a close reading of Kant’s most important work, the Critique of Pure Reason, as well as of selections from some of his related writings. Topics discussed in those texts include: the relations between mind and world; knowledge and justification; the nature of space and time; causation; self-consciousness and self-knowledge; freedom and causal determinism.


Other selections from Kant and secondary sources will be available on Blackboard.

You must sign up for one of the following recitation times:
Fridays, 12:30-1:45;
Mondays, 4:55-6:10;

*Prerequisite: One Introductory Course*
PHIL-UA 36; Existentialism and Phenomenology; T/R 3:30-4:45; John Richardson

The course will study major texts from the existential and phenomenological movements, beginning with their ‘founders’ Kierkegaard and Husserl, and then examining the fusion of these movements in Heidegger and Sartre, as well as in Beauvoir, Merleau-Ponty, and Levinas.

You must sign up for one of the following recitation times:
Fridays, 11-12:15; 12:30-1:45;
Mondays, 11-12:15; 3:30-4:15;

Prerequisite: One Introductory Course

PHIL-UA 41; The Nature of Values; M/W 12:30-1:45; Sharon Street

This course’s central question is how to understand the nature of value, especially moral value, in a way that coheres with our best scientific understanding of the world. If a stranger risks his life to save a child who has fallen into the path of an oncoming subway train, we think his action has great value. But what is it for an action (or an object, character trait, or way of life) to have value? And how does the existence of value “fit,” if at all, into our picture of the world as described by science? Are there objective truths about what’s good and bad, moral and immoral? Or is value always “subjective,” in the eye of the beholder? Is it possible to understand purported evaluative truths such as “the good is what promotes happiness” on the model of scientific truths such as “water is H2O”? Or is the subject matter of evaluative discourse utterly different from that of scientific discourse? Are statements about right and wrong capable of being true or false, or are they nothing but sophisticated ways of saying “boo” and “hooray” to conduct we disapprove or approve of? This course will provide a survey of the leading philosophical views on these questions. Readings will include works by Moore, Ayer, Mackie, Railton, Sturgeon, Gibbard, Nagel, Korsgaard, and others.

You must sign up for one of the following recitation times:
Wednesdays, 4:55-6:10;
Fridays, 11:00-12:15;

Prerequisite: One Introductory Course

PHIL-UA 50; Medical Ethics; T/R 8:00-9:15; TBA

Examines moral issues in medical practice and research. Topics include euthanasia and quality of life; deception, hope, and paternalism; malpractice and unpredictability; patient rights, virtues, and vices; animal, fetal, and clinical research; criteria for rationing medical care; ethical principles, professional codes, and case analysis (for example, Quinlan, Willowbrook, Baby Jane Doe).
PHIL-UA 53; Ethics and the Environment; M/W 2-3:15; Duncan Purves

This course introduces philosophical ethics through an engagement with environmental issues of population growth and resource use, sustainability, non-human animal welfare, biodiversity loss, environmental justice, and global climate change. No prior experience with philosophy is required. The two main goals of the course are to provide students with a more sophisticated conceptual vocabulary to make and evaluate ethical arguments across domains and to engage students’ ethical reasoning and reflection on environmental issues in particular.

You must sign up for one of the following recitation times: Tuesdays, 12:30-1:45; 3:30-4:45;

PHIL-UA 70-001; Logic; M/W 6:20-7:35; TBA

An introduction to the basic techniques of sentential and predicate logic. Students learn how to put arguments from ordinary language into symbols, how to construct derivations within a formal system, and how to ascertain validity using truth tables or models.

PHIL-UA 70-002; Logic; T/R; 11:10-12:15; TBA

An introduction to the basic techniques of sentential and predicate logic. Students learn how to put arguments from ordinary language into symbols, how to construct derivations within a formal system, and how to ascertain validity using truth tables or models.

PHIL-UA 70-003; Logic; T/R 8:00-9:15; Kevin Coffey

This course is an introduction to logic, pre-supposing no prior background in either philosophy or logic. Its aim is to introduce you to the techniques of formal reasoning, and to illustrate how those methods can be used to evaluate everyday cases of ordinary reasoning.

PHIL-UA 74; Modal Logic; M/W 4:55-6:10; Marko Malink

This course will provide an introduction to modal logic. The focus of the course will be on formal results, but these will be motivated by considering applications in metaphysics, in epistemology and economic theory, and in the theory of provability.

We will begin with basic methods and results related to standard possible world semantics for modal logic, covering elementary correspondence theory and proving soundness and completeness for the most commonly used normal modal propositional logics. We will then study transformations between frames and models in the propositional case, before closing the first half of the course by introducing quantified modal logic. In the second half of the course, three applications will motivate three generalizations of the semantics considered in the first half. First, the metaphysical question of whether existence is a necessary matter will be used to motivate the study of variable-domain semantics for quantified modal logic. Second, we will introduce the basics of propositional epistemic logic, commonly used to describe the knowledge and belief of agents in both epistemology and economic theory. Considering one facet of the problem of "logical omniscience" will motivate a move
from relational semantics to more general neighborhood semantics. Finally, time permitting, the application of modal logic to the theory of provability will lead us, via incompleteness, to general frame semantics.

You must sign up for one of the following recitation times:
Thursdays, 4:55-6:10;
Fridays, 9:30-1:45;

Prerequisite: Logic (PHIL-UA 70)

PHIL-UA 76; Epistemology; M/W 11:00-12:15; Jane Friedman

Considers questions such as the following: Can I have knowledge of anything outside my own mind? for example, physical objects or other minds? Or is the skeptic's attack on my commonplace claims to know unanswerable? Does the fact that there is widespread disagreement about many important issues (religion, morality, politics) require us to abandon our beliefs on these issues? Or can we rationally maintain a view while recognizing that other, perhaps equally knowledgeable and intelligent people disagree with us?

You must sign up for one of the following recitation times:
Thursdays, 12:30-1:45; 4:55-6:10;

Prerequisite: One Introductory Course

PHIL-UA 80; Philosophy of Mind; T/R 11:00-12:15; Jessie Munton

In this course we will explore the nature of the mind, and the relations between the mind and the brain, the mind and the world, and the mind and action, examining questions such as: What is it to have a mind? How is having a mind different from having a brain (if at all)? Can computers have minds? Can non-human animals have minds? What is it to have a thought, and how do thoughts come to be about the world? What is the connection between thought and behavior?

Prerequisite: One Introductory Course

PHIL-UA 101; Topics in the History of Philosophy T/R 2:00-3:15; Julia Borcherding

Careful study of a few topics in the history of philosophy—either one philosopher’s treatment of several philosophical problems, or several philosophers’ treatments of one or two closely related problems. Examples: selected topics in Aristotle, theories of causation in early modern philosophy, and Kant’s reaction to Hume.

Prerequisite: History of Ancient Philosophy (PHIL-UA 20) or History of Modern Philosophy (PHIL-UA 21).
PHIL-UA 102; Topics in Ethics and Political Philosophy; M/W 11:00-12:15; Anthony Appiah

Honor is widely regarded as an archaic value and yet it still plays a powerful role, for example, in our political rhetoric and in the military. But it is also especially interesting as a challenge for the law, because it is, among other things, a normative system that competes with the law for allegiance. It is a familiar idea that morality can come into conflict with law, raising questions about civil disobedience. Here people often decide that a person may reasonably conclude that a non-legal normative system, morality, requires them to reject the demands of the law. But the analogous thought about honor, though widely accepted in practice, is less widely discussed. People will often do what honor requires even when it is illegal. And many people regard the decision to do so as reasonable. In the first part of the course we will map the contours of honor and try to develop a systematic account of what it is. This will involve historical, anthropological, and psychological inquiries. Beginning with the role of honor in the heroic cultures of the ancient Mediterranean world, we’ll go on to discuss its significance in a number of African societies, foot binding and women’s honor in China. We’ll learn in these cases how honor is related to social identity—class, age, gender, ethnicity, nationality—and can be both individual and collective. Individual honor makes different demands on men and women, young and old, high and low, slave and free. We’ll then discuss socio-psychological approaches, and, building on this body of information we’ll be able to explore critically the outlines of a theory of honor. The basic thought will be that honor codes assign differential rights to respect to individuals and groups of different identities and determine what it takes to keep those rights and what leads people or groups to lose them. These codes work by drawing on a basic feature of normal human psychology, which makes people care about whether they receive the forms of respect they believe are due to them. In the later part of the course we’ll look more specifically at two cases—dueling and honor-killing—where legal regulation was for long periods relatively unsuccessful; and then discuss, briefly, at the end, ways in which honor can serve the laws purposes, as it does, for example, because the threat of loss of honor and the experience of shame are among the more powerful disincentives to criminal behavior.

Prerequisite: Ethics (PHIL-UA 40), The Nature of Values (PHIL-UA 41), or Political Philosophy (PHIL-UA 45)

PHIL-UA 103; Topics in Metaphysics and Epistemology; T/R 2-3:15; Peter Unger

Though there will be many shorter selections read and discussed, as well, this course will be primarily concerned with what’s presented in Professor Unger’s most recent book, Empty Ideas: A Critique of Analytic Philosophy. This book discloses how terribly little has ever been accomplished in the core of academic philosophy – in metaphysics, and in the most metaphysical parts of, or aspects of, epistemology, philosophy of language and philosophy of mind. What’s more, it exposes how terribly little has been even attempted on that most central philosophical front in the last half-century, or more. For philosophical sophisticates, this will seem shocking: Most academic philosophers are under the impression that, with the work of such brilliant thinkers as Saul Kripke, David Lewis and Hilary Putnam, mainstream philosophy has made some real contributions to our understanding of how things are, in certain quite deep and general
respects, with concrete reality - with the likes of water and gold, and tables and chairs, and sentient beings, too. But, as Empty Ideas explains, that’s all just an illusion, pretty easily recognized as such, when, as the book tries to make happen, philosophical sophisticates are awakened from their dogmatic slumbers. As Professor Unger greatly hopes, you will greatly enjoy being awakened from any and all of your own dogmatic slumbers, whatever yours may be.

Prerequisite: Epistemology (PHIL-UA 76) or Metaphysics (PHIL-UA 78) or Philosophy of Science (PHIL-UA 90)

PHIL-UA 104; Topics in Language & Mind; T/R 12:30-1:45; Cian Dorr

Conditionals

This course will be denoted entirely to conditionals: paradigmatically, sentences formed using the word ‘if’. As we will see, this seemingly narrow topic has turned out to be a philosophical goldmine. Theories about conditionals draw on, and shed light on, a wide variety of other topics, many going far beyond the philosophy of language: the notion of meaning; the division of labor between semantics and pragmatics; the goals of logic; the metaphysics of propositions and possible worlds; chance and determinism; context-sensitivity; vagueness; probability and degrees of belief; rationality and knowledge.

Prerequisite: Logic (PHIL-UA 70) and one of the following: Philosophy of Mind (PHIL-UA 80) or Philosophy of Language (PHIL-UA 85)

PHIL-UA 201; Honors Seminar; Wednesday 2-4; Stephen Schiffer

A seminar taken in fall of senior year. Students begin developing their thesis projects by presentations in the seminar, which is led by a faculty member. Students also begin to meet individually with a separate faculty adviser. See the description of the honors program in the “Program” section.

PHIL-UA 201-002; Advanced Seminar; Monday 1-3; Thomas Barrett

This seminar will cover a selection of topics currently under active discussion in philosophy. It is designed to expose future honors students to possible topics for an honors thesis, but it is not limited to those planning to enter the honors program. The seminar is open to all philosophy majors with a grade-point average of 3.65 or higher in philosophy and overall. It has a prerequisite of two prior courses numbered higher than PHIL-UA 7.

Prerequisite: Two prior courses numbered higher than PHIL-UA 7. Email philosophy.advisor@nyu.edu for enrollment permission.

Cross-listed Courses:

PHIL-UA 123; Readings in Chinese Philosophy
PHIL-UA 145; Tpcs: European Political Thought; Wednesday, 2-4; Tamsin Shaw

European Political Thought since Rousseau

We will examine the development of political thought in Europe from the second half of the eighteenth century to the start of the twentieth. We will look at the Kantian, Hegelian and Marxist developments in this tradition. We will discuss the important role played by differing conceptions of freedom, human nature, and history, in shaping the political thought of the period. And we will address issues concerning autonomy and authority, the nature of the state, and the limits to state power.