

2015-2016 Philosophy Course Descriptions

PHL 100 Introduction to Philosophy. Reflection and critical thinking centered on some of the basic problems and questions in philosophy, such as: What is the nature of ultimate reality? How do we know that what we believe is true? Is there more to our mind than just our physical brain? Do we really have free will? Can the existence of God be proven or disproven? What makes a choice good or evil? 4 Semester Hours.

PHL 105 Philosophy and Film. A survey of basic problems in philosophy, e.g., the nature of ultimate reality, the problem of knowledge, human nature and the self, freedom and determinism, the existence of God, good and evil and the meaning of life. This course provides the student with an introduction to philosophy that uses movies to illustrate key concepts relevant to the philosophical problems covered in the course. 4 Semester Hours.

PHL 120H Contemporary Moral Problems. This course explores some of the major moral issues confronting contemporary society. Following a brief review of ethical theory, topics discussed may include abortion, physician-assisted suicide, war and pacifism, capital punishment, sexual ethics, legal regulation of drugs, affirmative action, civil disobedience, surrogate parenting, cloning and genetic engineering, global poverty, and environmental ethics. 4 Semester Hours.

PHL 199 Special Topics in Philosophy. See All-University 199 course description.

PHL 210 Logic. An introduction to the art of correct reasoning, including an introduction to symbolic logic as well as treatment of such topics as: the nature of argument, induction, deduction, validity, soundness, aspects of language which tend to interfere with logical thought, definition, role of emotion, types of disagreement, and fallacies. Special emphasis is placed upon recognizing and overcoming hindrances to critical thinking and upon recognizing misleading, fallacious or irrational appeals that attempt to manipulate our beliefs and actions. 4 Semester Hours.

PHL 220H Ancient Greek Philosophy. Socrates, Plato and Aristotle form the core of this introduction to the early history of Western philosophy. Other areas covered may include Pre-Socratics such as Pythagoras and Zeno, later Greek and Roman philosophies such as Stoicism and Skepticism, and early Christian and Medieval philosophies influenced by Greek ideas. Ancient philosophies from other cultures may be presented as points of comparison. 4 Semester Hours.

PHL 230 Modern Philosophy. An introduction to Western philosophy beginning with the Renaissance, with an emphasis on the Enlightenment and Modern eras in Europe from the 17th to the early 19th centuries. The course will include study of important thinkers such as Descartes, Hobbes, Locke, Hume and Kant. Some more recent philosophical developments may also be covered. 4 Semester Hours.

PHL 240H Existentialism. This course provides an overview of a major philosophical movement which grew out of modern philosophy and laid the groundwork for post-modernism. Historical precedents, central themes and key figures of the existentialist movement are discussed. The course will read and discuss excerpts from the main works of five existential philosophers: Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Sartre and Camus. Attention will also be given to instances of existentialist thought in modern film, literature, art and architecture. 4 Semester Hours.

PHL 250 Philosophy of Religion. This course examines standard attempts to establish the rationality of belief in God and the challenges raised to those attempts by the evil in the world. Also to be considered are issues such as what God is like and how God is related to our lives and the limitations of this world. 4 Semester Hours.

PHL 260 Aesthetics. An examination of our aesthetic responses to both the natural world and works of art, including painting, architecture, literature, music and film. Topics discussed may include the nature of the creative process, what counts as art, criteria for judging artworks, the relationship between art and morality/politics, and the aesthetic status of forgeries. 4 Semester Hours.

PHL 270 Ethics. An examination of ethical theories about what makes certain actions right or wrong, good or evil, virtuous or vicious, and what constitutes good character and a well-lived life. Some application of ethical theory to practical moral problems will also be included. 4 Semester Hours.

PHL 280H Bio-Medical Ethics. Following a brief review of ethical theory, class discussion will focus on ethically complex issues involved in current medical practice. Topics may include research ethics, end-of-life decision-making, abortion, environmental issues, genetic testing and engineering, the just distribution of medical resources, and the responsibilities of healthcare providers concerning confidentiality, truth-telling, and informed consent. 4 Semester Hours.

PHL 290 Environmental Ethics. This course introduces students to ethical issues associated with the relationship between humans and the natural world. Do animals have rights? Do trees? What about entire ecosystems? Can traditional human-centered systems of ethics adequately answer such questions or is a more radical approach to environmental ethics required? Depending upon student interests, the course may offer opportunities for reflective wilderness experiences and/or service learning. 4 Semester Hours.

PHL 291 The Wilderness. This course will focus on the nature and value of the wilderness. Is there an ethical obligation to preserve wilderness areas? How can humans visit and use wilderness areas responsibly? Students will participate in an extended trip to a wilderness area and will engage in service learning, discussion, and reflection activities exploring the nature and value of the wilderness and problems associated with wilderness preservation. Prerequisite: permission of instructor. 1 Semester Hour.

PHL 299 Special Topics in Philosophy. See All-University 299 course description.

PHL 330 Theory of Knowledge. A survey of classical and current attempts to define knowledge and to determine what we know (if anything). Epistemological assumptions are near the heart of any theoretical endeavor, and understanding most of the current philosophical literature (and much of the more theoretical literature in other disciplines) is greatly enhanced by familiarity with the central issues considered in this course. 4 Semester Hours.

PHL 340 Philosophy of Science. A survey of the range of assumptions that lie behind any work in the sciences and consideration of the numerous second-level questions which are raised by actual scientific practice. Particular attention is given to the nature of science (as opposed to pseudo-science), the nature of scientific explanation, the nature of scientific progress (and retrogression) and the extent to which scientists should think themselves committed to the truth of their theories. 4 Semester Hours.

PHL 360 Philosophy of Mind/Artificial Intelligence. This course examines contemporary philosophical theories of the mind. The course includes such topics as the mind/body problem, the problem of consciousness and the problem of mental representation. Special attention is paid to the question of artificial intelligence and to the relation of cognitive psychology, neuroscience, and computer science to the philosophy of mind. 4 Semester Hours.

PHL 370 Special Studies in Philosophy. An intensive study of some major philosophy or philosophical issue. May be repeated for different philosophers or issues. Prerequisite: One other PHL course or permission of instructor. 4 Semester Hours.

PHL 399 Special Topics in Philosophy. See All-University 399 course description.

PHL 410 Independent Study. Advanced research in philosophy. Primarily for philosophy majors at the junior or senior level. Students may repeat for different topics. Prerequisite: Permission of instructor. Credit variable, 1-4 Semester Hours.

PHL 420 Research Portfolio. Primarily for philosophy majors at the senior level. The completion and presentation of the Research Portfolio culminates the research requirement for the philosophy major. 1 Semester Hour.

PHL 494 Honors Thesis/Project. See All-University 494 course description.