Requirements: Philosophy

Humanities

The great philosophers seek to answer the most basic questions about the world and our place in it. Can we distinguish between what is real and what is unreal? What is freedom? What is knowledge? What is understanding? What is wisdom? What are the roles of reason, perception, intuition and emotion in shaping our relations with the world and with each other? What does it mean to be human? What does it mean to be non-human? What is life? What is the value of art? What are we to think about religion?

Many philosophical questions are inescapable. How is one to live one's life? What are good and bad, right and wrong, virtue and vice? How do we acquire obligations? How are we to make moral decisions? In every life, such questions arise and everyone assumes one answer or another. To attempt to articulate your answer and to search for better answers is to become a philosopher.

Original works of the great classical and contemporary philosophers from different traditions are used in all courses. Texts are analyzed critically in order to understand what is being said and judge their merit. In class discussion and written work, we raise questions, develop additional ideas, and construct new arguments. Classes in philosophy are generally small and usually emphasize discussion and dialogue. Students are encouraged to engage in critical thought and to come to their own conclusions.

The Kenyon College faculty voted to change from Kenyon units to semester hours. This change will go into effect for all students who start at the College in the fall of 2024. Both systems will be used throughout the course catalog with the Kenyon units being listed first.

The Curriculum

Nearly all courses are designed to be of interest and accessible to both majors and non-majors. Regardless of background, students should normally take the introductory course, PHIL 100, before they take any other philosophy course at Kenyon. Each member of the philosophy faculty offers a section of the course, which serves as an introduction to the subject through the reading of original works by major philosophers. Classroom discussion is emphasized, focusing on interpretation of the texts and consideration of the philosophical issues they raise. We assign several short papers and give a final examination. Other courses especially recommended for first-year students are PHIL 105 and 115.

Courses that may be taken without prerequisites:

PHIL 105: Introduction to Logic
PHIL 110: Introduction to Ethics
PHIL 115: Practical Issues in Ethics
PHIL 190: The Anthropocene as a Philosophical Problem
PHIL 200: Ancient Philosophy
PHIL 208: Contemporary Political Philosophy
PHIL 210: Modern Philosophy
PHIL 212: Early Chinese Philosophy
PHIL 225: Existentialism
PHIL 235: Philosophy of Law
PHIL 240: Philosophy of Religion
PHIL 270: Political Philosophy
PHIL 275: Moral Psychology

Intermediate-level courses include:

PHIL 201: Symbolic Logic
PHIL 245: Philosophy of Natural Science
PHIL 270: Political Philosophy
PHIL 291: Special Topic

More advanced courses include:

PHIL 310: Heidegger's Ontology
PHIL 340: Sartre and Merleau-Ponty
PHIL 345: Kant

Although the following seminars are primarily for majors, they may be of interest to other advanced students as well:

PHIL 400: Ethics Seminar
PHIL 405: Epistemology Seminar
PHIL 410: Metaphysics Seminar

Requirements for the Major

Students have to take at least ten philosophy courses to complete the philosophy major.

Majors must take both:

PHIL 200: Ancient Philosophy
PHIL 210: Modern Philosophy

Students must take one logic course:

PHIL 105: Introduction to Logic or
PHIL 201: Symbolic Logic

To meet the distribution requirement within the philosophy major, the major must take one course from at least four out of the following five divisions:

Ethics
Epistemology
Metaphysics
Great thinkers
Philosophical schools and periods

Majors must take one 400-level seminar. This course can count toward the above distribution requirement:

PHIL 400: Ethics Seminar
PHIL 405: Epistemology Seminar
PHIL 410: Metaphysics Seminar

Majors must take at least one elective within the department. This includes any of the above courses, but also "Introduction to Philosophy," special topics courses and an Individual Study.

Majors must complete the Senior Capstone. Part of the Senior Capstone is the Senior Conference. In order to prepare for the Senior Conference, majors must take:

PHIL 450: Senior Philosophy Workshop

Course-Planning Tips

PHIL 100 is normally the first course majors take, but it is not mandatory.

The following courses should normally be taken as early as possible:

PHIL 105: Introduction to Logic or PHIL 201: Symbolic Logic
PHIL 110: Introduction to Ethics
PHIL 200: Ancient Philosophy
PHIL 210: Modern Philosophy

The following advanced seminars should normally begin no earlier than the second semester of the junior year:

PHIL 400: Ethics Seminar
PHIL 405: Epistemology Seminar
PHIL 410: Metaphysics Seminar

Students who expect to do graduate work in philosophy are strongly encouraged to take PHIL 201.

Senior Capstone (Non-Honors or Honors)

The Senior Capstone consists of:

a comprehensive essay examination in ancient philosophy and a comprehensive essay examination in modern philosophy.
the Senior Conference which takes place over a weekend early in the spring semester. Students will present a paper at the conference that is prepared in PHIL 450 (Senior Philosophy Workshop), comment on their peers' papers and respond to faculty questions.

Honors

Central to the Honors Program is a series of two related courses culminating in a thesis at the end of the senior year. The first, PHIL 497, enables the student to pursue the search for and development of a suitable topic. By the second semester of the senior year, the student should have the background necessary for writing an honors thesis in

PHIL 498. Students interested in the Honors Program should submit a written request to the chair of the department before the second semester of their junior year.

In the second semester of their junior year, honors candidates submit a thesis proposal for approval. Upon departmental approval, honors candidates will register for two 0.25-unit/2 semester hour courses to be taken senior year, PHIL 497 (fall) and PHIL 498 (spring). Honors candidates write complete drafts of their theses in PHIL 497 and refine and defend their theses in PHIL 498.

Course Requirements for Honors

Honors candidates must complete:

PHIL 200: Ancient Philosophy
PHIL 210: Modern Philosophy
PHIL 201: Symbolic Logic
PHIL 400: Ethics Seminar
PHIL 405: Epistemology Seminar
PHIL 410: Metaphysics Seminar
At least one course from the great thinkers category.
At least one course from philosophical schools and period category.
At least one elective course from the above distribution lists. This can include "Introduction to Philosophy," special topics courses and an Individual Study.
PHIL 497: Senior Honors (fall semester, senior year)
PHIL 498: Senior Honors (spring semester, senior year)
An honors thesis and pass the oral examination.

Honors Thesis and Oral Examination

Upon completion of the thesis, the honors candidate stands for an oral examination, conducted by an outside examiner and the candidate's thesis advisor, in the presence of the entire department.

Divisional Approval

The candidate must meet the requirements of the College and of the Humanities Division for admission to and retention in the Honors Program.

Requirements for the Minor

The minor in philosophy consists of five courses in the department. Students are allowed to take any five philosophy courses to complete the minor, the only stipulation being that no more than two can be 100-level courses.

Graduate School Considerations

Philosophy majors interested in attending graduate school are strongly encouraged to select PHIL 201 to satisfy the logic requirement, and to select PHIL 400, 405 and 410 to satisfy the core-area course requirements. Such students also should consult with a faculty member as early as possible.

Off-Campus Studies

Philosophy majors who wish to do so are generally able to participate in off-campus study programs, particularly if they begin their major programs as sophomores.

Transfer Credit Policy

Students who want to transfer credit to count toward the philosophy major or minor must petition the department with a copy of the syllabus of the course. The department will determine credit on a case-by-case basis.

Courses in Philosophy

Introduction to Philosophy
PHIL 100 Credits: 0.5/4
The primary aim of this course is to acquaint the student with the spirit, methods and problems of philosophy. Students will explore the range of issues in which philosophical inquiry is possible and to which it is relevant. Major works of important philosophers, both ancient and modern, will be used to introduce topics in metaphysics, theory of knowledge, ethics and other traditional areas of philosophical concern. No prerequisite. Offered every semester.

Introduction to Logic
PHIL 105 Credits: 0.5/4
This course is an examination of the informal reasoning used in everyday life as well as in academic contexts. We will aim to both describe and understand that reasoning, on the one hand, and improve our competence in reasoning, on the other. We will explore the nature of explanation and causation, and we will discuss ways of articulating our reasoning patterns that make their nature clear. Thus we aim both to improve critical thinking and reading skills, and to understand in a deeper way the role that those skills play in human life. This counts towards the logic requirement for the major and minor. No prerequisite. Offered every year.

Introduction to Ethics
PHIL 110 Credits: 0.5/4
The central question in ethics is "How should I live my life?" This course explores this question by examining major ethical traditions such as honor ethics, Stoicism, Aristotelian virtue ethics, sentimentalism, utilitarianism, Kant's practical philosophy, Nietzsche's critique of morality, Buddhist ethics and feminist ethics. The emphasis is on classical texts, as well as their connections with our contemporary life. This course is suitable for first-year students. This counts toward the ethics requirement for the major. No prerequisite. Offered every year.

Practical Issues in Ethics
PHIL 115 Credits: 0.5/4
This course examines moral issues we encounter in our private, as well as public, lives from a philosophical point of view. We discuss various ethical approaches such as Kantianism, utilitarianism and value pluralism through analyzing issues such as abortion, capital punishment, euthanasia, the moral status of nonhuman animals, the environment, climate change, war, world poverty, inequality and the ecology of rural life. There is a strong emphasis on discussion and we use diverse methods such as Brandeis Brief and moral heuristics. This course is suitable for first-year students. This counts toward the ethics requirement for the major. No prerequisite. Offered every year.

Art, Perception and Philosophy
PHIL 130 Credits: 0.5/4
This course examines the experience of looking at art and images. For instance, how is looking at a painting different from looking at a photograph or watching a film or, for that matter, just looking at the world? What is the role of art and images in our lives? Does it change how we see? Does it replace how we naturally see? Classic works by Gombrich, Panofsky, Arnheim and others address the topic. This seminar focuses on careful reading, short papers and oral presentations. This counts toward the epistemology requirement for the major. No prerequisites. First-years only.

The Anthropocene as a Philosophical Problem
PHIL 190 Credits: 0.5/4
This course is a philosophical introduction to the environmental humanities, taking the concept of the Anthropocene as our point of departure. We are especially interested in critical examinations of the following concepts and topics: the meanings of ahumana and anaturea, big history, religion in human evolution, global environmental history, how humans are connected to nature and nonhuman animals, the pastoral ideal and technology, rituals and place, ecology and production of space, environmental justice and the environmentalism of the poor. We also explore how traditional disciplines in the humanities, especially philosophy and religion, might be rethought in light of these new intellectual developments. Scholars we read include Hannah

Arendt, Robert Bellah, Rachel Carson, William Cronon, Cora Diamond, Ian Hacking, Donna Haraway, David Harvey, Martin Heidegger, Carolyn Merchant, Ramachandra Guha, A.N. Whitehead and Ludwig Wittgenstein, as well as thinkers from Chinese philosophical tradition. This counts toward the metaphysics requirement for the major. ENVS 112 is recommended. No prerequisite.

Ancient Philosophy
PHIL 200 Credits: 0.5/4
Ancient Greek philosophy is not only the basis of the Western and the Arabic philosophical traditions, it is central for understanding Western culture in general, including literature, science, religion, or values. In this course, we examine some of the seminal texts of Greek philosophy, focusing on the work of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. But we also examine the work of the pre-Socratics (such as Heraclitus, Zeno and Democritus) and the Sophists (such as Protagoras and Gorgias). This is required for the major. PHIL 100 is recommended. No prerequisite. Offered every year.

Symbolic Logic
PHIL 201 Credits: 0.5/4
There are many different ways to get someone to do what you want. These include threatening violence, lying, conditioning, bribery, begging and providing an argument. An "argument" (in logic) is an appeal to evidence in the support of a conclusion. (It should not be confused with the ordinary usage of the term "argument," which means quarrel.) An argument — unlike the other methods of persuasion — is an appeal to what is rational in the person to whom one is speaking. It is the only method that respects the other person's ability to think. An argument does this in two ways. First, an argument is an attempt to show that the evidence supports the conclusion. Second, an argument is the only method that invites the other person to assess whether the evidence in fact does support the conclusion. An argument invites a conversation. Logic is the study of what makes some arguments successful and some not. We will develop a procedure for assessing whether an argument is good (i.e., valid). We will examine the uses and the limits of this method. This counts toward the logic requirement for the major. No prerequisite. Offered every year.

Faith and Reason: Medieval Philosophy
PHIL 205 Credits: 0.5/4
Philosophically speaking, the period between the 11th and 16th centuries was a remarkably fertile one that both warrants and rewards close study. In this course we will examine some of the major thinkers and themes from the Jewish, Muslim and Christian medieval traditions, with an emphasis on understanding how the medieval synthesized the wisdom of the ancients of Aristotle with their dominant religious concerns. Particular attention is paid to the major epistemological and metaphysical topics pursued during this period. This counts toward the

philosophical schools and periods requirement for the major. No prerequisite. Offered every third year.

Contemporary Political Philosophy
PHIL 208 Credits: 0.5/4
This course is a study of major works in political philosophy since about 1950. Topics will include: the nature and legitimacy of modern political institutions; modern forms of power, oppression and alienation; and the often-conflicting demands of liberty, equality, rights and recognition. We will explore these topics through the writings of Oakeshott, Rawls, Nozick, Taylor, Geuss, Habermas and Foucault. This counts toward the ethics requirement for the major. No prerequisite. Offered every third year.

Feminist Philosophy
PHIL 209 Credits: 0.5/4
This course will offer a first introduction to feminist philosophy. As such, the course will first offer a brief introduction to the disciplines of feminist theory and philosophy in general, but will then focus on three specific areas. Specifically, the course will emphasize: 1) feminist metaphysics (i.e., how gender might relate to one's essence, and thus to questions of endurance through chance, etc.), 2) feminist epistemology (i.e., ways in which gender may influence how the world is known) and 3) feminist ethics (i.e., how gender can and perhaps should inform ethical theory). The course will focus on significant primary texts from authors who work within feminist philosophy. These works will be read towards the goal of determining how traditional philosophical questions are informed and enriched when they are considered in light of a Feminist philosophical approach. This counts toward the philosophical schools and periods requirement for the major. No prerequisite.

Modern Philosophy
PHIL 210 Credits: 0.5/4
This course examines 17th- through 18th-century philosophy. Major figures to be studied include Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Locke, Berkeley, Hume and Kant. We will stress metaphysical and epistemological issues throughout. It wouldn't be unfair to say that Descartes sets the agenda by creating a certain conception of the mind and the nature of knowledge, while each of the subsequent figures works out various implications of that conception. As such, the course content takes something of a narrative form, where we start with a certain optimism about knowledge and work our way into a deepening skepticism, only to be rescued at the end (by a rescuer whose price may not be worth paying). This course is required for the major. PHIL 200 is recommended but any previous philosophy course is acceptable. No prerequisite. Offered every year.

Early Chinese Philosophy

PHIL 212 Credits: 0.5/4
This course is a survey of early Chinese philosophy (in translation). We focus on the major thinkers of the classical period of Chinese philosophy (550–221 BC), such as Confucius, Mozi, Mencius, Laozi, Zhuangzi, Xunzi and Han Feizi. The emphasis is on ethics, moral psychology and political philosophy. This counts toward the philosophical schools and periods requirement for the major. PHIL 100 is recommended. No prerequisite. Offered every other year.

German Idealism
PHIL 214 Credits: 0.5/4
In this course we will study the major philosophers of post-Kantian German Idealism: Schiller, Hölderlin;, Jacobi, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel. Our emphasis will be on Fichte and Hegel. Questions addressed will include the following: In what way are the philosophical systems of the German Idealists systems of freedom? How do the theories of freedom developed by the German Idealists relate to their accounts of the mind? How do the German Idealists understand the development or the history of the mind (both in the individual and in human kind)? What is the idealism in German Idealism? This counts toward the philosophical schools and periods requirement for the major. PHIL 210 recommended. No prerequisite. Offered every other year.

Nineteenth-Century Philosophy
PHIL 215 Credits: 0.5/4
This course traces the development of philosophy from Hegel to Nietzsche. The philosophers we will discuss ask the following main questions: given Kant's critique of metaphysics, can we still aspire to knowledge of the Absolute, and if so, by what method? What is the relation between appearance and reality (the thing in itself)? How does philosophy relate to religion and art? In the study of philosophy, to what extend do we have to take into account the history of philosophy? The readings will be from Hegel's "Phenomenology of Spirit" and his "Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion," Feuerbach's "Essence of Christianity," Schopenhauer's " World as Will and Representation," and Nietzsche's "Birth of Tragedy" and "Genealogy of Morals." This counts toward the philosophical schools and periods requirement for the major. PHIL 200 or 210 recommended. No prerequisite.

Classical Pragmatism
PHIL 220 Credits: 0.5/4
Pragmatism is the only major philosophical tradition on the world stage originating in the United States. And it is the only tradition of philosophy since Kant that is respected and taken seriously in both the Anglo-American philosophical tradition and the continental philosophical tradition. Many movements claim their origins in American pragmatism — these include verificationism, Husserlian phenomenology, Quinean naturalism, and some trends in postmodernism, cybernetics, vagueness logic, semiotics, the dominant trend in American educational philosophy, Italian fascism, American experimental psychology and Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolence. We will examine that tradition by reading the major works of Peirce, James, Dewey

and their critics. This counts toward the philosophical schools and periods requirement for the major. No prerequisite. Offered every third year.

Existentialism
PHIL 225 Credits: 0.5/4
Existentialism is one of the most influential philosophical movements in modern culture. Unlike other recent philosophies, its impact extends far beyond the cloistered walls of academia into literature (Beckett, Kafka, Ionesco), art (Giacometti, Bacon, Dadaism), theology (Tillich, Rahner, Buber) and psychology. Existentialism is at once an expression of humanity's continual struggle with the perennial problems of philosophy (knowledge, truth, meaning, value) and a particularly modern response to the social and spiritual conditions of our times (alienation, anomie, meaninglessness). In this course we will study existentialism in its complete form as a cultural and philosophical movement. After uncovering the historical context from which this movement emerged, we will view the "existential" paintings of de Chirico and Munch; read the fiction of Kafka, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy and Beckett; and closely study the thought of Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger and Sartre. Among the topics we shall examine are alienation, authenticity, self-knowledge, belief in God, the nature of value and the meaning of life. This counts toward the philosophical schools and periods requirement for the major. PHIL 100 or RLST 101 is recommended. No prerequisite. Offered every year.

Philosophy of Law
PHIL 235 Credits: 0.5/4
This course examines fundamental philosophical issues related to law. Some of the questions include: What kind of thing is a law? Is it possible to know with certainty what the law is in advance? Where does law get its authority from? What kind of authority does the legal system have? Can there be immoral laws? Can there be unenforced laws? Can there be contradictory laws in a single legal system? What is a legal right? Is objectivity in judging a case really possible? Is it desirable? Does law by its very nature favor politically powerful groups over weak ones? We will examine these and related questions by studying five influential traditions of legal philosophy (also know as Jurisprudence): Natural Law Theory, Legal Positivism, Legal Realism, Judicial Process Theory and Critical Legal Theory. This counts toward the ethics requirement for the major. No prerequisite.

Philosophy of Religion
PHIL 240 Credits: 0.5/4
This course presents an inquiry into the nature of claims associated with religious traditions and the validity, if any, of such claims in the contemporary context. Topics to be studied include modern critiques of religious claims, proofs and practices as irrational and/or related to oppression; the classical "proofs" of the existence of God; the relation between religion and science, including questions about the nature of religious language and how religious claims might be verified; the religious (and secular) understanding of suffering, death, and evil; the

possibility of justifying religious claims on the basis of religious experiences; and the question of how religious claims might be understood as valid, given the differing claims of different religions. This counts toward the metaphysical requirement for the major. No prerequisite. Offered every other year.

Philosophy of Natural Science
PHIL 245 Credits: 0.5/4
One of the greatest human achievements is scientific knowledge. But what is scientific knowledge? Is it different from other kinds of knowledge? Should we take scientific claims as literally true or as useful fictions? What status should we accord scientific work? We will examine the answers to these questions offered by the Logical Positivists, the Popperians, Kuhn, Quine, Lakatos and Boyd. On the way, we will consider the issues surrounding induction, explanation, theoretical entities, laws, observation, reductionism and so on. No formal background in the natural sciences is assumed. This counts toward the epistemology requirement for the major. No prerequisite. Offered every third year.

Philosophy of Mathematics
PHIL 248 Credits: 0.5/4
This is a team-taught course on philosophical issues in mathematics. We ask questions like "What is a number?", "What constitutes a mathematical proof?" and "How can we be certain of mathematical knowledge?" We look at the question of how something as abstract as mathematics can have any use or connection to reality. This course counts toward the epistemology requirement for the major. Permission of instructor is required. Contact either Professor Milnikel or Professor Richeimer. Prerequisite: PHIL 201 or some coursework in mathematics.

Existential Themes in Film, Art and Literature
PHIL 250 Credits: 0.5/4
This course is a seminar focused on salient existential themes as explored in film, art and literature. This is not a course in the philosophy of film, art and literature, but rather a course in which we try to philosophize through the viewing of films and works of art, and through reading and discussing works of literature. Works of art are capable of conveying aspects of issues that discursive texts cannot, especially intimate human issues. The course will center on fundamental and perennial existential human concerns that have been explored throughout history but especially in the last two centuries: alienation, the “death of God” / the absence of God, nihilism and the threat of “meaninglessness,” the quest for authenticity in mass society, the prospects of love and hope in the modern world. We will view films directed by Charlie Chaplin, Godfrey Reggio, Louis Malle, Werner Herzog, Terry Gilliam, Martin Scorsese, Ingmar Bergman, Sidney Lumet, Akira Kurosawa, Mia Hansen-Love and others. No prerequisite.

Philosophy of Language
PHIL 255 Credits: 0.5/4
Language plays a central role in our life. But how does language work? For instance, how does communication take place in our everyday life? How should we interpret literary or religious texts? What is the relationship between language, thought and the world? How do we "do things with words"? We examine these issues through the writings of Frege, Russell, Wittgenstein, Quine, Davidson, Austin, Grice, Lewis and Brandom. This counts toward the metaphysics requirement for the major. Offered occasionally.

Philosophy of Mind and Brain
PHIL 260 Credits: 0.5/4
Mentality is not like much else in the universe. Mentality (or mind) is quite peculiar. The human brain (unlike other physical things) has the power to think. We have thoughts. Yet what are thoughts? Thoughts don't seem to be physical. For instance, unlike physical objects, thoughts don't have any weight. One does not gain weight by having new thoughts or lose weight by forgetting them. Unlike physical objects, thoughts have no shape. The thought of a circle is not circular. Yet thoughts have power. When we explain human behavior, we do so by saying that the person has certain thoughts; i.e., they have certain beliefs and certain desires. Those beliefs and desires (those thoughts) caused the person to act the way he did. The view that there are thoughts, that thoughts are in minds, that thoughts cause behavior, is the ordinary everyday view of the world. It is called folk psychology (i.e., the psychology of ordinary folk). Folk psychology seems obviously true. But is it true? And if it is true, can we describe it in a clear way? Does contemporary research in psychology support or undermine folk psychology? We will see that what seems so obvious is in fact quite controversial. Many psychologists and philosophers think something is wrong with folk psychology. We will examine some of those debates. This counts toward the metaphysics requirement for the major. No prerequisite. Offered every third year.

Philosophy of Perception
PHIL 262 Credits: 0.5/4
We all depend on perception to live our lives. It is so much part of our lives that it is taken for granted and seems not worth noticing. Yet perception is not well understood. When one examines the differences in perception among humans, what one takes for granted becomes problematic. When one includes animal perception and robotic perception, perception becomes mysterious. We will examine various ways of understanding perception: biological, computational, ecological, cultural and rational. In so doing, we hope to gain some insight into a process that makes up much of our lives and provides the basis for much of what we know. This counts toward the epistemology requirement for the major. No prerequisite. Sophomore standing. Offered every third year.

Mind, Perception and Film

PHIL 263 Credits: 0.5/4
This is not a course on film history, film theory or aesthetics. Nor is this a course using film to illustrate philosophical ideas. Rather this course treats film as a phenomenon in its own right. Film has its own properties. Those properties are in some ways similar and in some ways dissimilar from human experience. For instance, film has its own temporal and spatial structure. That temporal-spatial structure is seemingly quite different from the temporal-spatial structure of how we ordinarily experience the world. Yet humans can easily understand film and be moved by film. Film is both of this world and otherworldly. We will explore a broad range of questions on the nature of film and what the magic of film teaches us about who we are. This counts toward the epistemology requirement for the major. No prerequisite. Offered occasionally.

Political Philosophy
PHIL 270 Credits: 0.5/4
In this course we will study the history of political philosophy (with a focus on the period from about 1600 to about 1850). The course will address the following questions: What is the origin of civil society and government? What role does consent play in establishing government? Are there any natural rights, or do rights depend on the conventions of civil society? Does the civil law depend on the natural law? What is the relation between the constraints of law and liberty? Are there economic preconditions for liberty? Our readings will be mostly from Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Hume, Kant, Hegel and Marx. This counts toward the ethics requirement for the major. No prerequisite. Offered every other year.

Moral Psychology
PHIL 275 Credits: 0.5/4
This course examines concepts and issues at the intersection between moral philosophy and psychology or theory of human nature. We discuss philosophical ideas regarding the nature of action, agency, practical reasoning, moral heuristics and moral freedom. We examine these issues through the writings of Aristotle, Spinoza, Nietzsche, Murdoch, Frankfurt, as well as novels by Jane Austen and Tolstoy. This counts toward the ethics requirement for the major. No prerequisite. Offered occasionally.

Hannah Arendt
PHIL 285 Credits: 0.5/4
This is an introduction to Hannah Arendt, one of the most important, interesting and controversial political thinkers of our time. Fearless in her thinking, she “thinks without banisters,” one of the reasons she does not take her ideas as final or conclusive; she would be the first to acknowledge that she might not get it right sometimes. She follows no party lines; she is neither a liberal nor a conservative – in fact, no existing ideological label applies to her. This is why she is often misunderstood and misused by people from all kinds of political ideologies. If you are satisfied with none of the existing mainstream political ideologies and want to explore and imagine new possibilities, this course is for you. It is a “practical introduction” to

Arendt. Students try to learn to think like Arendt by thinking with and against her, engaging in what she calls “exercises in political thought.” This also means trying to think about what she has tried to think about and beyond – namely, the political experiences in her time and ours. In this process, the course introduces and critically examines the key concepts invented by Arendt to make sense of modern political experiences: vita activa (labor, work and action); life of the mind (thinking, willing and judging); Earth, world (worldliness or amor mundi); natality; plurality; public happiness; non-sovereign freedom: and responsibility. Some examples. We try to think about the Afghanistan Papers in light of Arendt’s 1969 essay “Lying in Politics: Reflections on The Pentagon Papers.” If we think like Arendt, we learn to connect this phenomenon and other political phenomena, such as the disappearance of epistemic authority in journalism and the elitist bureaucratization of politics (the rule of no-one). We think about the pandemic in light of Arendt’s thoughts about the ideology that the government must take human life in its biological sense as having the highest value. She was the first to think about this modern political phenomenon before it was eventually named “biopolitics” by Foucault and Agamben. Other modern political experiences and phenomena to think about include antisemitism, imperialism, globalism (neoliberalism), populism, race-thinking and racism, authoritarianism, fascism, totalitarianism and republicanism, the Holocaust, revolution, civil disobedience, violence and refugees. We try to explore the possibility of an Arendtian defense of something that might be called “democratic constitutionalism” or “constitutional populism.” Finally, the course is also a “philosophical introduction” to Arendt that explores how she – like several other Jewish philosophers, such as Strauss and Levinas, who also studied with Husserl and Heidegger – developed her new thinking as she worked out an ethical and political critique of Heidegger. We look at Arendt critically from the perspective of Strauss and Levinas, who have given different critiques of Heidegger. The counts toward the great thinkers requirement for the major. No prerequisite.

The Somerville School of Philosophy
PHIL 290 Credits: 0.5/4
This course introduces one of the most original visions of philosophy, articulated by a group of four women, all of them associated with Somerville College (the first women’s college at Oxford University): Elizabeth Anscombe (1919-2001), Iris Murdoch (1919-1999), Mary Midgley (1919-2018) and Philippa Foot (1920-2010). A consensus recently has emerged that they should be recognized among the most important and original philosophers of the 20th century. There are two group biographies of these four: “The Women Are Up to Something: How Elizabeth Anscombe, Philippa Foot, Mary Midgley and Iris Murdoch Revolutionized Ethics” (Oxford University Press, 2021) and “Metaphysical Animals: How Four Women Brought Philosophy Back to Life” (Doubleday, 2022). “The Somerville School of Philosophy” refers to these four and to those they have influenced, such as Cora Diamond, Michael Thompson, Raimond Gaita, Peter Winch, Martha Nussbaum, John McDowell and Bernard Williams, and those who share their vision and style of philosophizing, such as Wittgenstein, Simone Weil, Stanley Cavell, Levinas and many ancient philosophers and religious thinkers. Some of the latter are the sources from which the Somervilleans draw their inspiration, such as Wittgenstein, Thomas Aquinas, Simone Weil, and Daoism and Buddhism. The course focuses on the four

Somervilleans' work in ethics, philosophy of language, philosophy of action, theory of human nature, philosophy of literature and their arguments that these subfields are intimately connected to ethics. Readings include some of those who have influenced the four. The course explores how the Somervilleans have articulated an original and unique vision of ethics. The field today is dominated by "ethical theory," which isolates ethics from not only other subfields of philosophy, but also the humanities in general. But the Somerville school holds that ethics is first philosophy, that it has no subject matter because everything is "ethical" and cannot be considered in isolation from other parts of philosophy or other parts of the humanities, such as history, religion, literature and the arts. This counts toward the philosophical schools and periods requirement for the major. No prerequisite.

Nietzsche's Philosophy
PHIL 300 Credits: 0.5/4
Nietzsche is a disturbing presence in the modern world. In a series of beautifully written books that are at once profound, elusive, enigmatic and shocking, Nietzsche does nothing less than challenge our most precious and fundamental beliefs: the idea of truth, the existence of God, the objectivity of moral values and the intrinsic value of the human being. As a critic of both the Western metaphysical tradition and the Judeo-Christian religion, Nietzsche may well be the most controversial thinker in the entire history of philosophy. In this seminar we will submit some of Nietzsche's most important books to a close, critical reading in an effort to come to terms, so far as this is possible, with his mature thought. We will examine his most famous yet perplexing views &emdash; the death of God, will to power, the Übermensch;, nihilism, perspectivism, the eternal recurrence &emdash; as they are developed in "Untimely Meditations," "Twilight of Idols," "Genealogy of Morals," "Beyond Good and Evil," and selections from "Will to Power." This counts toward the great thinkers requirement for the major. Prerequisite: any philosophy course or permission of the instructor. Offered every third year.

Kierkegaard on Being Human
PHIL 305 Credits: 0.5/4
Often regarded as the originator of existential inquiry, Søren; Kierkegaard (1813–1855) wrote captivating poetic and philosophical literature concerning human existence. Taking the human hunger for meaning as his point of departure, Kierkegaard examined the rational and emotional depths of human life in its aesthetic, moral, and religious modes of expression. In this course we will read a large part of what Kierkegaard called "my authorship" in order to understand his way of doing philosophy and to examine his portrayal of the spiritual landscape. Kierkegaard's probings into the value dimensions of life — for example, happiness, pleasure, boredom, despair, choice, duty, commitment, anxiety, guilt, remorse, hope, faith, love — encourage his readers to think about their own lives and their relations with others. In examining Kierkegaard's ideas, therefore, the student should expect to be challenged personally as well as intellectually. This counts toward the great thinkers requirement for the major. Prerequisite: any philosophy course or permission of instructor. Offered every third year.

Zen Buddhist Philosophy: The Kyoto School
PHIL 320 Credits: 0.5/4
Japan was closed off to the West for 200 years until Commodore Perry arrived in the bay of Tokyo with his smoke-spewing "black ships" and convinced the Tokugawa government to trade with the West. In less than 50 years, Japan transformed itself from a feudal society into a thoroughly modern one and is now a leading world power. But for all of its modernity, Japan remains largely inscrutable to Western eyes and its philosophy even more so. Western categories do not seem to apply very easily to Japanese culture. The distinction between religion and philosophy, for instance, is not as clearly demarcated in Japan as it is in the West. It is only recently, within the last 60 years, that Western philosophers have taken a serious interest in Japanese thought, and this is mostly due to the efforts that Japanese thinkers themselves have made to communicate with the West, especially the philosophers associated with the so-called "Kyoto School." The Kyoto School of Japanese philosophy gives the West a way into the East like none other. They thrust Japanese philosophical and religious thought onto the world stage, revealing an East Asian perspective to the outside world, as well as to the Japanese themselves. They self-consciously attempted to articulate the distinctiveness of the Japanese mind-set in particular, and the Eastern way of thinking generally. The Kyoto School is distinguished for being open to dialogue with European thought, especially continental philosophy (Husserl, Heidegger, Kierkegaard, Hegel, Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy), and for philosophizing from a Buddhist perspective (most from Zen, some from Shin or Pure Land perspectives). This course is an exploration of several key philosophical issues and concepts in the contexts of several key members of the Kyoto School. Some of the themes we will explore are: knowledge and rationality alternative understandings of what is real and the question of cultural relativism mind and self-hood concepts of the good human responsibility, and the relationship between philosophy, religion and science. We will study the work of Nishida Kitar (1870–1945), Nishitani Keiji (1900–1990), Ueda Shizuteru (1926–present), as well as that of Suzuki Teitar Daisetz (1894–1966) and Abe Masao (1915– 2006), two philosophers associated but not formally connected to the Kyoto School. In order to gain access to and truly appreciate the nature of Japanese philosophy and the unique contribution that Kyoto School philosophy has made, we will begin the course by exploring Japanese history and culture and then turn to a consideration of some of the Western philosophers that members of the Kyoto school have found profitable for establishing a cross-cultural dialogue. Recommended for students with a background in philosophy, religious studies or Asian studies or with permission of the instructor. This counts toward the philosophical schools and periods requirement for the major. No prerequisite.

Sartre and Merleau-Ponty
PHIL 340 Credits: 0.5/4
The two most important philosophers in post-World War II France were Jean-Paul Sartre and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. They initiated a debate that was and still is immensely influential both in and out of academia. Sartre worked out the implications of a consciousness-centered methodological individualism. The result was a new analysis of human freedom that equated

freedom with "consciousness-raising." This had a tremendous influence on the political left, feminist thought, existentialism, postmodernism and many forms of psychotherapy. Merleau-Ponty challenged Sartre's mind's-eye view with a brain-body's eye view of human behavior. Such a view replaced consciousness as guiding human behavior with an account of how any embodied functional system can self-adapt to its environment. Merleau-Ponty's account was not limited to human behavior but was generalizable to a range of self-maintaining systems. Merleau-Ponty explored this primarily in terms of the psychology of perception, in neuroscience and in an analysis of film as a psychological phenomenon. This counts toward the great thinkers requirement for the major. Prerequisite: any philosophy course or permission of instructor.

Kant's Theoretical Philosophy
PHIL 345 Credits: 0.5/4
In this course, we will study Kant's major work in theoretical philosophy, the "Critique of Pure Reason." We shall examine how Kant establishes that our empirical knowledge has conditions (a priori intuitions and a priori concepts) which cannot be derived from experience, and that these conditions of our empirical knowledge are also the conditions of our having any experience at all. We will pay particular attention to the way in which the "Critique of Pure Reason" revolutionizes the reflection on knowledge found in the work of Kant's rationalist, empiricist and skeptical predecessors. This counts toward the great thinkers requirement for the major. PHIL 210 is recommended. No prerequisite. Offered every other year.

Kant's Practical Philosophy
PHIL 348 Credits: 0.5/4
This course is a comprehensive study of Kant's practical philosophy. For Kant the subject matter of practical philosophy is freedom. Kant asks: Under what conditions can we be free? We will examine Kant's claims that freedom is realized in morality and in law-governed political society, and that freedom must be autonomy. We shall also pay attention to Kant's accounts of moral religion and of human history as the development of freedom. The readings will be from the "Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals," the "Critique of Practical Reason," the "Metaphysics of Morals," the "Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone," the essays on history and the lectures on pedagogy. This counts toward the great thinkers requirement for the major. No prerequisite. Offered every other year.

Neurophilosophy of Consciousness
PHIL 395D Credits: 0.5/4
This course is the same as NEUR 395D. This course must be taken as PHIL 395D to count towards the humanities diversification requirement. In the last 20 or so years, a formal collaboration has developed between the disciplines of neuroscience and philosophy. The interaction has led to dramatic changes in both disciplines. It turned out that philosophers have made a number of assumptions that do not withstand empirical scrutiny given the new

experimental techniques of neuroscience. And it turned out that neuroscientists through this collaboration were able to identify conceptual errors in their discipline. The success of this interaction has led to a new thinking, particularly, in the study of consciousness. In this course, we will be examining this collaborative literature. We will be reading only primary sources. Students will be expected to participate in the current debate. Students must have a major background in either philosophy or neuroscience. This counts toward the metaphysics requirement for the major. No prerequisite. Junior standing. Permission of instructor required.

Ethics Seminar
PHIL 400 Credits: 0.5/4
This seminar examines important topics in normative ethics as well as meta-ethics; it emphasizes 20th-century philosophers. We discuss contemporary normative ethical theories such as ethical naturalism (Foot and Thompson), Neo-Kantianism (Korsgaard), agent-based virtue ethics (Zagzebski and Slote), utilitarianism (Smart and Singer) and critique of modern moral philosophy (Anscombe, MacIntyre, Taylor and Williams). We also discuss meta-ethical issues such as moral realism, relativism, the sources of normativity, the concept of virtue and the possibility of moral understanding. This counts toward the ethics requirement for the major. No prerequisite. Philosophy major, junior standing. Offered in a three-year rotation with PHIL 405 and 410.

Epistemology Seminar
PHIL 405 Credits: 0.5/4
This is an advanced course on the central debates in epistemology: internalism versus externalism, foundationalism versus coherentism, naturalism versus antinaturalism. We examine these issues through the writings of Quine, Rorty, Putnam, Stroud, Dretske, Wittgenstein and others. This counts toward the epistemology requirement for the major. No prerequisite. Philosophy major, junior standing. Offered in a three-year rotation with PHIL 400 and 410.

Metaphysics Seminar
PHIL 410 Credits: 0.5/4
The content of this course varies but includes such topics as the nature and scope of reality, causality, space, time, existence, free will, necessity, and the relations of logic and language to the world. Traditional topics such as the problems of substance and of universals may be discussed. Much of the reading will be from contemporary sources. This counts toward the metaphysics requirement for the major. No prerequisite. Philosophy major, junior standing. Offered in a three-year rotation with PHIL 400 and PHIL 405.

Senior Philosophy Workshop
PHIL 450 Credits: 0.5/4

In this course, all senior philosophy majors spend the fall semester revising a previous paper that they present to the department at the spring Symposium. Work includes oral presentations to the class and rewrites. Each student is also graded on written and oral critiques of their colleagues' papers. In this way, they conceptualize their work as a collaborative enterprise, and they learn about the philosophical topics their fellow classmates have been studying. Students also include general instruction on the use of resources, oral presentations, and the practice of responding to audience questions. This is a capstone experience for senior philosophy majors.

Individual Study
PHIL 493 Credits: 0.25-0.5/2-4
Individual studies are offered to those students who are highly motivated in a specific area of inquiry and who are judged responsible and capable enough to work independently. Such courses might be research oriented, but more usually are readings-oriented, allowing students to delve in greater depth into topics that interest them or which overlap or supplement other courses of the philosophy department. Students must seek permission of the instructor and department chair before enrolling. They are urged to do this in the semester prior to the one in which they hope to be enrolled. Individual study is at the discretion of the instructor, and schedules may limit such an addition. An individual study cannot duplicate a course or area being concurrently offered. Exceptions to this rule are at the discretion of the instructor and chair. Individual study is usually considered an advanced course. Required work should be viewed as on a par with a seminar or a 300- or 400-level course. The instructor and student(s) should establish and agree upon the extent and nature of the work expected. The work may take one of the following forms: several short papers, one long paper, one in-depth project, a lengthy general outline and annotated bibliography, public presentation(s), etc. An individual study can apply to the major or to the minor with permission of the department. Individual studies may be taken for either 0.25 or 0.50 credits. This decision must be agreed upon with the instructor. The student(s) and instructor will meet on a regular basis. The frequency of contact hours is to be determined by the instructor in consultation with the student. Because students must enroll for individual studies by the end of the seventh class day of each semester, they should begin discussion of the proposed individual study preferably the semester before, so that there is time to devise the proposal and seek departmental approval before the established deadline.

Senior Honors
PHIL 497 Credits: 0.25/2
Candidates for honors work in philosophy do extensive, independent research with an adviser from the department. This research culminates in a major essay (around 50 pages) that they defend to an outside examiner during the spring semester of their senior year. Honors projects take more than a year to complete, so anyone wishing to pursue honors in philosophy, must begin the process during their junior year. To pursue honors, students must submit a request during the fall of their junior year, and then submit a thesis proposal for departmental approval during the spring of their junior year. Upon departmental approval, honors candidates will

register for two 0.25 unit courses to be taken during their senior year, PHIL 497 (fall) and PHIL 498 (spring). In PHIL 497, students do the substantial portion of their writing and research. In PHIL 498, students complete their research projects, and then defend their work to an outside examiner. As philosophy honors projects are very demanding, only philosophy majors with a 3.5 average in philosophy and a 3.33 overall GPA are eligible to submit proposals. Permissions of instructor and department chair required.

Senior Honors
PHIL 498 Credits: 0.25/2
Prerequisite: permission of instructor and department chair.

Fundamentals of Logic
PHIL 95 Credits: 0.25/2
Logic is ultimately about peace. Once a society or culture has agreed upon styles of reasoning or argument forms, that society or culture has a way to resolve arguments without force or violence. But logic is also about equality, respect, and human dignity. When authority figures, like professors or politicians, use reason to generate and defend their conclusions, they are sending the message to their audiences that, instead of it being okay to overtake or compel those audiences with power, these audiences should be appealed to with reason. In other words, people have free, creative minds of their own. They have the ability to disagree with what other people say. An authority figure might try to compel someone with less power to think something by overpowering them. Doing that treats the other person's mind as an object that can be affected by some physical force. But when a person with authority decides to appeal to the less powerful person with reason, it's like saying, "You're free

thinker, someone with their own recalcitrant ideas, you have a mind that my physical power might not be able to change. So I'm going to have to try another tack." Deciding to reason with someone, instead of overpowering them, is a way of affording that person dignity, recognizing their personhood (i.e. their non-objecthood). Said in a more ethical and less metaphysical way, when one person is more powerful than another, but decides to use logic or reason to change that other person's mind, that decision is a decision not to hurt that person. It's good.

Equally important is the fact that logic is useful. Students who study logic become quick, careful, and exacting thinkers. Though the actual content of this logic course may never find its way into your everyday decisions, logical training, like athletic conditioning, works in the background to make you a sharper, faster thinker. For this reason, logic is valued in almost every industry. But logic is especially valued in philosophy, where our goal is to construct arguments that are recognized as reasonable by populations with many different backgrounds.

But what is logic? What is reason? What does it mean to say a conclusion "follows from" a premise? In this introductory survey course, each unit explores a different form of reasoning, a

different “logic.” We will study (fallacious) informal reasoning, Aristotle’s categorical reasoning, a bit of

modern propositional logic, pictorial reasoning, the probability calculus, statistical reasoning, scientific reasoning, and analogical reasoning in case law. Throughout the semester, we will rely upon the concept of validity to distinguish good arguments from bad arguments, and we will pay special

attention to the role that semantics seem to play in this seemingly syntactical measure. We will wonder whether it is possible, in the end, to distinguish syntax (form) from semantics (content). And we will consider whether our aim should be to identify one best logic or to accept the possibility that there are many appropriate ways to reason.