

Philosophy

Website: philosophy.sewanee.edu

The Department of Philosophy operates under the assumption that students can best learn philosophy by associating with those who have already made progress in their philosophical journeys (such as the view of Confucius and Plato, among others). All of us enjoy opportunities to discuss with students their academic as well as personal concerns. We all welcome the chance to work closely with students. We are available most afternoons in our offices, and we organize informal gatherings at our homes from time to time. Formal lectures by outside speakers or members of the department provide additional opportunities for intellectual development from time to time.

The Department of Philosophy offers students an approach to philosophical thinking that is both historical and critical. We believe that our students must become acquainted with the fundamental ideas and arguments of philosophers that have importantly shaped and challenged western and non-western civilizations. We attempt to show that the intellectual movements and changes in the history of philosophy arise out of perceived dilemmas and crises within the established social, scientific, and religious traditions. This historical approach to teaching philosophy presupposes that various reflective traditions do have important things to say about the basic concerns of all human beings; for example, we think that Confucius, Socrates and Augustine deal with issues that are relevant to us today.

On the other hand, our courses are designed to help students think critically for themselves, to defend their own beliefs, and to appreciate the value of alternative beliefs. We endeavor to acquaint our students with diverse points of view, which will enable them, if they are so inclined, to form positions quite different from our own positions. Yet while we foster an atmosphere of tolerance, we do not encourage students to think that it really does not matter what beliefs they hold or whether they can defend their beliefs. Here again, we see our program as affirming one of the essential ideals of a liberal arts education--the encouragement of independent thought developed within an atmosphere of respect for and openness to views of others.

Faculty

Professors Conn (Chair), Peterman, Peters

Assistant Professors Hopwood, Moser

Major

Courses below the 300 level have no prerequisite. 100- and 200-level courses are offered every semester and are the normal prerequisite for courses numbered 300 and above.

Requirements for the Major in Philosophy

The major requires successful completion of the following:

Course Requirements ¹

PHIL 203	Ancient Philosophy from Homer to Augustine	4
PHIL 204	Modern Philosophy	4
PHIL 190 or PHIL 312	Informal Logic and Critical Thinking or Modern Logic	4
Select at least three seminars from the following: ²		12
PHIL 306	Epistemology	
PHIL 307	Political Philosophy	
PHIL 308	Metaphysics	
PHIL 309	Ethics	
PHIL 337	Philosophy of Science	
Select four additional courses in philosophy (PHIL)		16
Total Semester Hours		40

Additional Requirements

A comprehensive examination ³

¹ Any course not taken to satisfy a degree requirement may be taken on a pass/fail basis.

² Complete during junior and senior years, with any two of these seminars satisfying the writing-intensive requirement in the major. Although they remain open to non-majors, the seminars are designed for majors, and the prerequisite for these courses is at least one 200-level course in philosophy (PHIL).

³ Students must complete a comprehensive examination with written and oral components.

Honors

The normal minimum requirements for honors in philosophy are: either an A- average in all work in the department or a pass with distinction on the comprehensive examination; an A- on the senior research paper.

Minor

Requirements for the Minor in Philosophy

The minor requires successful completion of the following:

Course Requirements

Select four courses in philosophy (PHIL)	16
Select one additional course in philosophy (PHIL) numbered 300 or above	4
Total Semester Hours	20

Courses

Philosophy Courses

PHIL 101 Topics in Philosophy (4)

Topics and themes in philosophy related to central questions of philosophy: Is there a meaning to human life? What can we know? What is the nature of reality? And how should we live? These questions are addressed through a rigorous examination of philosophical texts, works of literature, films, and contemporary issues.

PHIL 190 Informal Logic and Critical Thinking (4)

An introductory study of classical logic, symbolic logic, and informal reasoning. Not open for credit to students who have received credit for PHIL 201.

PHIL 203 Ancient Philosophy from Homer to Augustine (4)

An examination of ancient thought from Homer to Augustine, involving the study of major works of ancient philosophy in the context of their historical, cultural and religious setting. Special attention is given to how ancient thinkers understood human happiness, the place of human life in the order of the universe, the nature of reality, and the limits of human knowledge and reason. Primary emphasis is on the evaluation of these thinkers' views.

PHIL 204 Modern Philosophy (4)

An examination of the philosophical revolution that accompanied the rise of modern science and its distinctive set of philosophical problems. The following problems will be emphasized: the nature of knowledge and perception, the existence and nature of God, the existence of material world, the nature of linguistic meaning, the mind-body relationship, and the nature of personal identity.

PHIL 210 Philosophical Issues in Christianity (4)

An examination of recent philosophical work on a number of doctrines that are central to traditional Christian theology. Topics include, among others, the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Atonement, and the Resurrection, as well as the nature of God's goodness and its compatibility with the traditional doctrine of Hell, and the ethics of love. Not open for credit to students who have completed PHIL 213 or PHIL 313.

PHIL 215 Chinese Philosophy (4)

An examination of philosophical texts of classical Confucianism and Taoism. Emphasis will be given to the cultural context of these texts and to the evaluation of the worldview they articulate.

PHIL 220 The Self (4)

An analysis of the major turning points in the development of the concept of the self in Western philosophical thought. The point of the analysis is to elucidate our contemporary conception and the problems with it in order to point to a solution to these problems. In so doing, possible answers to the questions of the nature of rationality, knowledge, faith, and the meaning of life will be proposed.

PHIL 222 Contemporary Moral Issues (4)

A philosophical examination of moral issues in contemporary life, such as abortion, euthanasia, sexual morality, capital punishment, environmental pollution, world hunger, and nuclear disarmament. Class lectures and discussions will help clarify the nature of each issue and examine the various arguments that have been advanced.

PHIL 223 Philosophy of Art (4)

An investigation of artistic judgment, creation, and the work of art itself. Based on readings of works by such authors as Kant, Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Derrida, students consider art in its various manifestations, including painting, sculpture, architecture, music, dance, literature, and film.

PHIL 224 Philosophy of Film (4)

An examination of film as a philosophical mode of expression. While sometimes treated as merely a popular medium, film requires the same attentive “close reading” as that devoted to written texts. This course examines how film “works”—that is, how its technological specificity affects how we understand and interpret its meaning philosophically. To address this issue, the course examines a combination of films, theoretical texts, and critical articles concerned with technique, genre, or individual films. Thematically, the course explores questions that bear on ethics, identity, and community.

PHIL 226 Philosophical Issues in Daoism (4)

An introduction to the classical texts of philosophical Daoism, *Zhuangzi*, and *Daodejing*, and to the classical and contemporary philosophical debates and controversies these texts have generated.

PHIL 230 Environmental Ethics (4)

Examines a wide range of controversial issues concerning the moral responsibilities of human beings toward the natural environment with special attention to competing philosophical theories on the moral status of non-human species and natural ecosystems.

PHIL 232 Business Ethics (4)

An examination of the moral dimensions of business activity, especially within the context of a democratic society. Topics may include social and economic justice, the nature of corporations, corporate accountability, social responsibility, the morality of hiring and firing, employee rights and duties, advertising, product safety, obligations to the environment, and international business.

PHIL 235 Medical Ethics (4)

A survey of moral issues surrounding the practice of medicine. Special emphasis will be placed on the role of both implicit and explicit ethical assumptions in determining what is to count as an ethical issue. Topics will include human genome research, abortion, the practitioner/patient relationship, the distribution of care, institutional effects on practice, decision to terminate life, and the use of animals and fetal tissue in experimental research.

PHIL 240 Controversies in Feminist Ethics (4)

An examination of the debates and issues that are central to feminist ethics. Topics covered include some of the following feminist challenges to traditional Western ethical theories: that traditional ethical theories have overlooked the significance of the emotions for moral reasoning and justification, that traditional theories have incorrectly emphasized justice, universality, and impartiality rather than care and attachments to particular individuals, and that Western ethics includes problematic assumptions about the atomistic nature of human beings. The course also explores the contemporary debates surrounding applied issues of particular interest to feminist authors, such as filial obligations, marriage, sexuality, abortion, prostitution, and pornography.

PHIL 252 Existentialism (4)

A survey of existentialism as a philosophic movement conducted through a study of its origins in Kierkegaard and Nietzsche and its contemporary expression in the writings of such thinkers as Heidegger and Sartre.

PHIL 255 Existentialism in Film (4)

This course examines the distinctive ways in which films by figures such as Ingmar Bergman, Akira Kurasawa, Terence Malick, and Woody Allen illustrate, examine, and attempt to resolve a variety of philosophical problems. Special attention is given to themes and problems arising in the thought of existentialist philosophers such as Friedrich Nietzsche, Sren Kierkegaard, and Jean Paul Sartre. Emphasis is on interpreting films in their relation to philosophical texts, on understanding the particular strengths and limits with which films represent such problems, and on the critical insights that films can offer about how to resolve philosophical issues.

PHIL 302 Medieval Philosophy (4)

An examination of some of the major philosophical texts of the medieval period from Augustine to Aquinas, including representative works from the medieval Christian, Jewish, and Islamic traditions. This course ends with a reading of Alasdair MacIntyre's work, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Inquiry*, to raise the question of the validity of these medieval philosophical traditions in the pluralistic, post-modern world. *Prerequisite: One course in philosophy at the 100- or 200-level (excluding PHIL 201).*

PHIL 306 Epistemology (4)

An analysis of the philosophical problem of the nature of knowledge with specific emphasis on the problem of skepticism and solutions to that problem. *Open only to students pursuing majors in philosophy. Prerequisite: One 200-level philosophy course.*

PHIL 307 Political Philosophy (4)

A consideration of the nature and justification of political institutions through an examination of historically classic as well as contemporary sources. Special attention is given to debates concerning the proper expression of distributive justice, and to the nature and scope of political rights and liberties. *Prerequisite: One 200-level philosophy course.*

PHIL 308 Metaphysics (4)

This historically oriented program of reading and discussion focuses on the basic issues and fundamental problems of metaphysics. Particular attention is paid to the place of metaphysics in traditional philosophical thought and to its contemporary status and significance. *Open only to students pursuing majors in philosophy. Prerequisite: One 200-level philosophy course.*

PHIL 309 Ethics (4)

This course focuses on such approaches as Virtue Theory, Deontology, and Consequentialism, their source in classical texts, their treatment of such issues as the nature of value, the justification of action, and the psychology of moral choice, as well as on critiques of these approaches. Not open for credit to students who have previously taken PHIL 202. *Prerequisite: One 200-level philosophy course.*

PHIL 310 Faith in Philosophy and Literature (4)

A critical reading of selected philosophical and literary works which explore the nature and significance of religious faith. This course will consider how literary narrative and philosophical analysis function distinctively in the dialogue of faith and reason. Major figures will include Pascal, Hume, Kierkegaard, Walker Percy, Flannery O'Connor, and C.S. Lewis. The class will be conducted as a seminar with in-class presentations and a semester-long project.

PHIL 311 American Philosophy (4)

A study of the transcendentalism of Emerson and Thoreau and the pragmatism of Pierce, James, and Dewey with focus on the relationship between theories of reality and theories of value. *Prerequisite: One course in philosophy at the 100- or 200-level (excluding PHIL 201).*

PHIL 312 Modern Logic (4)

The aim of this course is to provide students with a working knowledge of modern logic through an examination of three increasingly powerful methods of representing the logical structure of ordinary language arguments. Emphasis on developing strategies for proving validity and invalidity.

PHIL 315 Reason, Desire, and the Good (4)

This course investigates the nature of moral reasoning through work of some of the central figures in contemporary moral philosophy. Special attention is given to the relation between reason and moral obligation, the problem of moral skepticism, and the ethical significance of love. Readings are focused on debates between contemporary philosophers including Bernard Williams, Philippa Foot, Christina Korsgaard, and Iris Murdoch, with attention to the historical origins of these debates in the works of Plato, Aristotle, Hume, and Kant. *Prerequisite: One course in philosophy.*

PHIL 319 Nineteenth-Century Philosophy (4)

A survey of the major philosophers and movements from Kant to the beginning of the twentieth century. Some of the philosophies to be covered include Absolute Idealism, Marxism, existentialism, British liberalism, and pragmatism. Special attention will be given to Hegel, Mill, Nietzsche, and William James.

PHIL 320 Twentieth-Century Philosophy (4)

This course will examine the development of Analytic Philosophy, which dominated academic philosophy in England and the United States for most of the twentieth century. Special attention focuses on Russell's and Moore's rejection of nineteenth-century idealism, American pragmatism, logical positivism, and ordinary language philosophy. Some of the recent post-modern critiques of analytic philosophy will also be considered. *Prerequisite: One course in philosophy at the 100- or 200-level (excluding PHIL 201).*

PHIL 321 Philosophy of Law (4)

An examination of philosophical issues surrounding the nature of law and legal reasoning. Topics to include the following: the conditions of legal validity and the viability of natural law theory; the nature of legal normativity and its relation to other public manifestations of normativity (such as morality, religion, and etiquette); the limits and conditions of human liberty; the Constitutional status of rights to privacy; and the moral and legal justification of punishment. Not open for credit to students who have completed PHIL 221.

PHIL 322 20th Century Continental Philosophy (4)

A survey of some of the main figures and texts in twentieth-century European thought. The class is based on questions concerning the relationship between self and other, and includes readings by such figures as Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Albert Camus, Primo Levi, Emmanuel Levinas, Simone Weil, and Jacques Derrida. Novels and plays are read alongside philosophical texts, with attention given to the way in which similar themes are articulated in these different styles of writing. *Prerequisite: One course in philosophy.*

PHIL 323 Contemporary Problems in Philosophical Theology (4)

A critical examination of selected writings of contemporary philosophers on key issues in philosophical theology. Special emphasis will be given to current philosophical discussion of doctrines and problems of traditional Christian thought. *Prerequisite: One course in philosophy at the 100- or 200-level (excluding PHIL 201).*

PHIL 325 Plato (4)

A study of selected Platonic dialogue—especially the early and middle dialogues—together with the ethics of Socrates and the theories of knowledge, reality, and value developed by Plato. *Prerequisite: One course in philosophy at the 100- or 200-level (excluding PHIL 201).*

PHIL 337 Philosophy of Science (4)

A philosophical examination of the goals and methods of the natural sciences. Special attention is given to contemporary debates surrounding the following questions: How do we distinguish between science and non-science? What is the nature of scientific inference? How are scientific theories related to observational data? Are all natural sciences reducible to physics? What is the ontological status of unobservable, theoretical entities? How should we understand the relation between science and religion?. *Prerequisite: One 200-level philosophy course.*

PHIL 340 Kierkegaard (4)

An examination of the philosophy of Soren Kierkegaard through a close reading of such primary texts as *Either/Or*, *The Sickness Unto Death*, *Philosophical Fragments*, *Concluding Unscientific PostScript*, and *The Concept of Anxiety*. Prominent themes may include, among other things, Kierkegaard's conception of the self and the various types of despair that constitute a misrelation of the self; his conception of the differing aesthetic, ethical and religious spheres of existence; his critiques of modern philosophy and the modern church; and his understanding of the significance of various philosophical and religious beliefs and activities for living well. *Prerequisite: One course in philosophy at the 100- or 200-level (excluding PHIL 201).*

PHIL 350 Aristotle (4)

A study of the components and the coherence of Aristotle's general understanding of being, philosophy of nature, conception of truth, and theory of man and the state. *Prerequisite: One course in philosophy at the 100- or 200-level (excluding PHIL 201).*

PHIL 403 Whitehead (4)

The metaphysics of Alfred North Whitehead, studied both in its historical development and in its systematic expression in *Process and Reality*. *Prerequisite: One course in philosophy at the 100- or 200-level (excluding PHIL 201).*

PHIL 411 Wittgenstein (4)

An examination and evaluation of Wittgenstein's philosophical views through a close reading of various writings from *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* to *Philosophical Investigations*. *Prerequisite: One course in philosophy at the 100- or 200-level (excluding PHIL 201).*

PHIL 415 Nietzsche (4)

Examines selected writings from *The Birth of Tragedy* to *The Will to Power*. Emphasis is given to close reading of texts and critical evaluation of their main ideas. *Prerequisite: One course in philosophy at the 100- or 200-level (excluding PHIL 201).*

PHIL 426 Topics in Contemporary Philosophy (4)

An examination of contemporary debate on a selected topic such as ethical relativism, the relation of mind to body, or the nature of free will. *Prerequisite: One course in philosophy at the 100- or 200-level (excluding PHIL 201).*

PHIL 444 Independent Study (2 or 4)

An opportunity for advanced students to pursue topics of special interest. *Prerequisite: Professor consent and prerequisite override required.*

PHIL 492 Plato, Aristotle, and the Legacy of Ancient Philosophy (2)

Plato and Aristotle, as well as Hellenistic thinkers of the Epicurean, Stoic, and Neoplatonist schools, searchingly examined questions about human knowledge, existence, reason, and the nature of the mind and soul. This course provides a critical overview of the evolution of their debate. Selected extracts from the writings of the philosophers concerned, including Plato, Aristotle, Seneca, Cicero, and Lucretius, constitute the backbone of this course. This course is only available through the European Studies Program.