Phil 0001:
Introduction to Philosophy

The major types of philosophical thought and the central problems of philosophy are presented through study of some classic texts of the great philosophers. Offered each term. (May be used to satisfy the second half of the college writing requirement by students with credit for ENG 1.)

Phil 0003-01:
Language and Mind
Stephen White

It seems plausible, even inevitable, in an age of science, that the mind will be shown to be part of the brain or that mental states like pain will turn out to be brain states. But such identifications raise difficult problems philosophically. When we identify water with H2O, the microphysical properties explain and make intelligible its macro-level behavior (for example, why water is a liquid at room temperature and freezes at 32oF). But could neurophysiology make it intelligible why, from the subjective point of view, pain feels the way it does or why red objects look the way they do and not some other way (for example the way green objects look)?

This version of the mind-body problem raises the question whether there could be an objective science of consciousness or conscious experience. More generally, the question is how we should think of the relation between the objective conception of the world and such apparently subjective phenomena as freedom, personal identity, reasons, and value. One striking disanalogy between the case of consciousness and the case of water is the extent to which the former concept is embedded in our most fundamental evaluative beliefs and practices. Creatures with consciousness seem to be the locus of rights (e.g., the right not to be caused unnecessary pain) that impose corresponding, and possibly quite demanding, obligations on us. In this general form in which normative issues figure importantly, the question how the subjective and objective are related lends itself to exploration through literature, drama, film, and art. In this course, we will watch a number of short films and film clips to make the connection between the more technical side of the mind-body problem and its personal and normative significance.

In addition to such qualitative mental states as pain, we have mental states that present or represent the world as being a certain way—for example, perceptual states that present the world in one’s immediate vicinity as containing other people engaged in a philosophical discussion, etc. We say such states have content or representational content. But what is the connection between such representational content and the linguistic content of a sentence such as “I am surrounded by people talking philosophy”? Linguistic content, which is the topic of the second half of the course, has normally been thought to be a matter of rules (of syntax and semantics) and causal connections between words and the world. However, arguments by Saul Kripke derived from the work of Ludwig Wittgenstein suggest that this conception is inadequate.
What we would have to add to such a conception is a major question of the second half of the course, and it has an important bearing on the question whether there is representational content that is nonlinguistic—i.e., whether there is such a thing as nonconceptual content (in one sense of that term). Films will be particularly relevant in connection with the idea (derived from Heidegger) of an implicit background to our practices of representation—something that itself can never be represented explicitly. We will be interested in a range of things that it seems cannot be represented directly, and we will explore them in connection with clips from films by Tarkovsky, Ridley Scott, and Zhang Yimou.

**Phil 0016-01:**
**Philosophy of Religion**
Elizabeth Lemons

(Cross-listed as PHIL 16.) Introduction to the philosophical analysis of major religious concepts, such as God, human nature, freedom of will, immortality, and the problem of evil, through a study of representative types of religious philosophies.

**Phil 0024-01:**
**Introduction to Ethics**
David Denby

At this moment, like every other, you're faced with a question: What should I do?

People often say that, in general, what you should do is help others. But then they would, wouldn't they? Perhaps what you really should do is always act in your own self-interest. Perhaps that is what everyone else is already doing anyway (despite what they say).

Some people say that you should promote the values of your community or society. But some societies have vile values. Indeed, don't the values of our society need at least a little adjustment? Anyway, why should the fact that a society is yours mean that you should promote its values, especially if doing so is contrary to your self-interest?

Some people say that you should act according to God's will. But what does God will, exactly? And surely we should obey Him only if He is good and commands us to do what is right. Yet that seems to mean that morality is independent of Him.

Some philosophers have argued that whether you should do an action depends entirely on its consequences (compared to those of its alternatives). But should you really ignore the past? Doesn't just punishment, for instance, depend on whether the person is actually guilty -- a fact about the past?

Other philosophers have focused instead on the motives behind an action, in particular on whether you're acting out of respect for others (and yourself). Still others have argued that whether you should do an action depends on a combination of these and perhaps other factors. But each of these suggestions faces problems: What on earth is "respecting others"? What is it to "combine" the various factors? Self-interest then? Maybe, but even self-interest is a tricky notion. Something is not in your self-interest simply
because you want it, as every smoker knows. And maybe our interests, or at least the best means for achieving them, are mutually interdependent: perhaps the best way for you to get what you want depends on what I do and vice versa.

We will discuss all this in this course. After a brief introductory discussion of logic and the nature of ethical theory we will spend most of the semester critically evaluating a number of normative ethical theories. These will include various forms of Relativism, religiously-based theories, Utilitarianism, Kantianism, Egoism and Social Contract theories. We will also discuss self-interest, values, and other matters. Finally, we will discuss how to apply what we've learned to an issue of contemporary moral concern – probably abortion.

**Phil 0025:**
**Intro to Food Ethics**  
Sigrún Svavarsdóttir

In this course, we will wrestle with ethical questions concerning food production and food distribution. There is no prerequisite other than a commitment to approaching these questions in an open-minded and intellectually responsible manner. Although the readings will be mostly drawn from the philosophical literature, the intent is to reach students across the university, interested in ethical questions concerning how food is produced and distributed. The course satisfies the introductory course requirement of the Minor in Food Systems and Nutrition.

Food is central to our lives. Are we to live, we will have to eat. There is no way around that. However, access to food varies. Whereas some have ample choices regarding what to consume, others have poor access to life-sustaining nutrition. Is it morally obscene that some people sit down at fancy restaurants for a $100 meal, while others starve? How ought we to respond to problems of starvation and poor nutrition within our own society and across the globe?

Our current methods of food production have an environmental impact that will shape the lives of future generations. Does this pose ethical strictures on how food is produced today? Do we have obligations to people who are not yet alive? Are there ethical strictures on how to till the land or otherwise treat inanimate nature? What gives something a moral claim to be treated one way or another? Does it have to be a human being? Does it have to be a rational or a sentient being?

**Phil 0033:**
**Logic**  
Susan Russinoff

How can one tell whether a deductive argument succeeds in establishing its conclusion? What distinguishes good deductive arguments from bad ones? Questions such as these will be addressed in this course. We will discuss what a formal language is, how arguments in English are to be expressed in various formal languages, and what is gained from so expressing them. We will cover sentential logic, first-order predicate logic, identity theory, definite descriptions, and metatheory. Satisfies MATH requirement.
Phil 0038:
Rational Choice
Patrick Forber

Decision making and strategic interaction are activities we engage in everyday. But do we make the right decisions? Do we adopt the most advantageous strategies? This course will approach these questions by using a set of formal methods for analyzing decisions and strategies: decision theory and game theory. We will cover the basic formal frameworks of probability and game theory and their application to problems in decision making and strategic thinking, tackling a number of troublesome paradoxes that emerge. We will also look at promising applications of game theory to understanding evolution in both biological and cultural domains.

Phil 0039:
Knowing and Being
David Denby

This is a lower-level introduction to epistemology and metaphysics that presupposes no previous acquaintance with philosophy.

The aims are threefold: to provide a sufficient grounding in philosophical methodology and basic techniques to tackle higher-level courses; to introduce some of the classic problems of epistemology and metaphysics and the main lines of response; and to provide a forum for real philosophical debate -- maybe we’ll even solve some of the problems!

The epistemological issues to be covered may include the analysis of knowledge, a priori knowledge, epistemic justification, reliabilism, foundationalism and coherentism, and skepticism. The metaphysical issues may include identity and change, properties, causation, and modality and essence. And the general issues will include at least the nature, purpose and evaluation of arguments, conceptual analyses, and philosophical theories.

The approach will be problem-centered rather than historical and the choice of readings is skewed towards contemporary discussions, though there will be other readings too, drawn from throughout the history of philosophy. There is one textbook – M. Steup: An Introduction to Contemporary Epistemology (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1996) – and a course-packet of readings. Some of the readings in epistemology can also be found in L. Pojman: The Theory of Knowledge: Classical and Contemporary Readings (Belmont, CA.: Wadworth, 1993), and those in metaphysics in van Inwagen and Zimmerman: Metaphysics the Big Questions (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999).

Phil 0042:
Western Political Thought ii
Robert Devigne

(Cross-listed as PHIL 42.) Central concepts of modern political thought. The views of those writers who challenged the dominance of Christianity: Machiavelli, Descartes, Hobbes, and others. Some of the main
transformations of political thinking that characterized the Enlightenment: the possibility of scientific thinking and reasoning as the basis for human freedom. Nietzsche's critique of the Enlightenment, and the ability to find political principles that are genuinely true or liberating.

**Phil 0052: Aesthetics**  
Lydia Amir

A survey of some fundamental problems in the philosophy of art: the nature of aesthetic judgment; the task of criticism, formalism, and formalist criticism; the idea of antiart; the concept of quality in a work of art; modernist vs. traditional art. The course will include writings in contemporary philosophy and criticism as well as works by philosophers such as Hume, Kant, Nietzsche, and Heidegger.

**Phil 0092: Philosophy for Children**  
Susan Russinoff

From a young age, children ask questions about everything around them and many of their questions are philosophical! Kids have strong intuitions about what is beautiful, fair, right, and wrong. They enjoy playing with language and are intrigued by logical puzzles.

There are many benefits to facilitating philosophical dialog with children in the classroom. It hones analytical reasoning, reading comprehension, emotional growth, and independent thinking. Philosophical inquiry is collaborative and emerges in classrooms in which questioning, discussion, and search for unexamined assumptions are encouraged.

In this course, we will think about the value of philosophy for children, develop activities and curricula for teaching children, and work with kindergartners, first, and second graders at the Eliot-Pearson School on the Tufts campus.

Tuesday/Thursday 12-1:15

Classroom visits to Eliot-Pearson School TBD

Prerequisite: at least one philosophy course (preferably more than one.)

**Phil 0111: Semantics**  
Dilip Ninan

Anyone who knows a natural language (like English or Hindi or ASL) possesses a remarkable ability: he or she is in a position to understand an unlimited number of novel sentences, i.e. sentences that he or she has not previously encountered. Semantics, the study of linguistic meaning, aims to explain our ability to do this. Contemporary “formal semantics” is based on Richard Montague’s idea that this explanatory goal
is best achieved by using the tools and techniques of modern logic. This course will serve as an introduction to this influential approach to the study of linguistic meaning. Students will be introduced to the foundational ideas undergirding this framework, the relationship between semantics and pragmatics, and to the mathematical tools used in formal semantics. We will use these formal and conceptual tools to analyze a number of natural language expressions, including quantifiers and modals. A background in logic and/or syntax is useful, though not essential.

**Phil 0116:**
**Philosophy of Science**
**George Smith**

Nowadays, few words of praise outrank ‘scientific,’ and the scientific method is held up to be the best approach for answering questions about the world around us. This is not without justification. The more advanced sciences have achieved extraordinary results over the last 300 years. Physics, for example, has exhibited an uninterrupted train of progress since Newton, raising questions, answering them, and going on to new questions. Chemistry, and more recently biology, have not been far behind. Clearly, these sciences are doing something right.

Not all sciences, however, have had such success. Psychology, sociology, and political science, for example, have continued to struggle. Questions are answered, only to have the answers rejected a few years later when some new school of thought comes into vogue. These sciences claim to be following the same method as the more advanced sciences, yet they have not achieved the same sort of step-by-step progress. Why? In particular, are they really following the same method?

To begin addressing these questions, we first need to clarify what the method is that the advanced sciences follow and how this method contributes to the progress they achieve.

This is what the course will focus on. We will examine three different accounts of the scientific method, accounts that yield different pictures of the nature and growth of scientific knowledge. We will also read, as illustrations of the scientific method, a watershed paper by J. J. Thomson that did much to initiate modern atomic physics and a couple of other pieces.

The prerequisites for the course are either the one course in philosophy or a major in science. The course will focus on physics, but the physics we discuss will be accessible to anyone who has satisfied the prerequisites. The substantive requirement of the course will be five short papers.

**Phil 0120:**
**Metaphysics**
**Jody Azzouni**

Metaphysics addresses fundamental questions about the existence of reality of what there is: What kinds or categories of things are there? Are there properties as well as objects? Mathematical entities? Do numbers exist? Redness? Or it is only concrete objects like tables and zebras that exist. Leibniz said that whatever is, is one. What are the conditions under which something is one thing rather than two? Can one thing share all its properties with another? How can a thing change and remain one and the same? What, if anything, is essential to an object an individual? (Could a human have been a frog?)

Requirements: One previous course in philosophy or consent.

Phil 0123:
Philosophy of Law
Erin Kelly

This course involves philosophical examination of some legal principles operating in several domains of law: criminal law, tort law, and constitutional law. We will read some influential legal cases and consider the principles used by American courts to settle those cases. We will scrutinize the legal principles from an ethical point of view in order to shed light on the relationship, or lack thereof, between law and justice. Finally, we will take up questions about the conditions of law’s legitimacy and the moral obligations, if any, we have to obey the law. This will take us into a discussion of the relationship between law and democratic citizenship. Finally, we will consider civil disobedience and some other forms of resistance to unjust law.

Phil 0124:
Bioethics
Valentina Urbanek

This course has five parts. In the first part, we focus on ethical issues involved in ending human life. Is it ever permissible for a health care practitioner to kill her patient? Could it even be morally required? Is there a moral difference between killing someone by lethal injection and letting them die by not resuscitating them? Is it permissible to end the life of a human fetus, for example, by aborting? Is it permissible to conduct stem cell research, which, like abortion, involves the destruction of the embryo?

New technologies, including cloning, in vitro fertilization, and genetic engineering, have raised a host of new ethical questions about creating human life. In the second part of the course, we turn to them. Is it permissible to clone human embryos for reproductive purposes? How much discretion should parents have in deciding what their future child is like -- is it permissible to select for sex? Deafness? Intelligence? We will also ask, in general, whether creating human life can ever benefit or harm the person who’s created, and whether it could, at least sometimes, be morally wrong to procreate.

In the third part, we discuss the patient-health care practitioner relationship, asking how involved the patient should be in his or her health care. Should advance directives always be followed? Should the health care practitioner always tell the patient the truth? What’s the meaning of informed consent, and is informed consent even ethically important? If a healthy individual consents, after being informed, to amputation, should a health care practitioner perform the operation?

In thinking about how to treat patients, we will turn to consider directly what attitude we should take toward the fact of our mortality. Should we fear death? Is it a harm? Would it be better to be immortal? Should we try to stop the process of aging?

Finally, we will consider the ethics of animal experimentation.
Phil 0129:
Meta-ethics
Sigrún Svavarsdóttir

This is an advanced course in metaethics, open to both undergraduate and graduate students. In metaethics, we address questions such as: What are we doing when engaging in moral thinking or in moral discussion? What is the nature of moral and other value judgments? Are there moral facts? If so, what is the nature of these facts? Are there objective values? What would it be for values to be objective? We will undertake a rigorous study of the most influential 20th century analytic literature on these issues, starting with the work of G. E. Moore. The rest of the course is organized as a study of the main responses that have been given to Moore’s open question argument. The students will be exposed to the main theoretical developments within 20th century metaethics: non-cognitivism/expressivism, error theory, naturalized realism, and informative dispositional analysis. The course aims to give the students a solid grounding in metaethics. Prerequisites: Two philosophy courses.

Phil 0130:
Moral Psychology
Patrick Forber

From an evolutionary perspective humans have a fascinating and distinctive combination of cognitive complexity and sociality. Indeed, the combination is so distinctive that many conjecture that our cognition co-evolved with our sociality: complex cognition makes possible a psychology capable of following moral norms, and the need to track whether social behavior conforms to moral norms creates an environment that drives the evolution of even more sophisticated cognition. In this course we will investigate contemporary proposals about the evolution of human cognition and moral psychology with the aim of evaluating the proposals and their potential consequences for ethical theorizing.

The course will survey both scientific approaches and philosophical arguments based on evolutionary science, especially the so-called “debunking” arguments. Previous coursework on evolution is recommended but not required.

Phil 0140:
Liberalism Phil Critics
Robert Devigne

(Cross-listed as PHIL 140.) Examination of alternative conceptions of liberty and morality developed by critics of the Enlightenment. Topics include the charge that liberty as uninhibited activity fails to cultivate genuine individuality, erodes communities, debases culture, and is incapable of establishing norms of justice. Examination of alternative visions of art and politics that aim to establish an autonomous and moral existence. Exploration of whether these alternative visions have been integrated into the traditional liberal framework. Recommendations: Sophomore standing or permission of instructor.
Phil 0151:
Ancient Philosophy
Christiana Olfert

The philosophers of Ancient Greece and Rome asked some of philosophy's most enduring questions: What does it mean to be happy? What are the fundamental constituents of reality? What is knowledge, and how do we come to have it? And what makes for a just and healthy society? This course will introduce you to Presocratic philosophers, to Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, and to Hellenistic schools of philosophy, all of whom attempt to answer these challenging questions. In texts like Plato’s Phaedo, Republic, and Meno, as well as in Aristotle’s Metaphysics and Nicomachean Ethics, we will discover that from the Ancient perspective, questions about what is fundamentally real are deeply connected to questions about what it means to live a good and happy life. After a look back to the Pre-Socratics and their influence on the Classical thinkers (Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle), we will then turn to the Hellenistic period and the debate between the Stoics and the Ancient Skeptics, who develop even further, sometimes surprising, insights into the nature of reality, the possibility of knowledge, and human well-being.

Phil 0170:
Computation Theory
George Smith

Computation theory is an area in which philosophy, mathematics, and computer science overlap. The basic concern is the nature and limits of symbol manipulation, though this is often expressed in terms of what can and what cannot be done by computational devices of various sorts. The field developed during the 1930's as an outgrowth of studies in the foundations of logic and arithmetic. Among its major early results are conclusions, both established by Kurt Godel, that formal logic is a matter of symbol manipulation, whereas arithmetic involves something beyond mere symbol manipulation. During the 1940's, computation theory provided the theoretical foundation for the development of digital computers, and during the 1950's it was extended to cover the mathematical study of languages and grammars.

This course will be in three parts. The first part will be devoted to automata theory, i.e., the mathematical theory of devices that manipulate symbols. Topics will include McCulloch-Pitts networks and the relationship between devices of various kinds and the kinds of languages they can process and problems they can solve. The second part will examine the computable functions, which will be characterized in terms of Turing machines, recursive functions, and register machines. The third part will then consider the relationship between computation, on the one hand, and formal logic and arithmetic, on the other. We will prove Godel's completeness and Church's undecidability theorems for logic and Godel's celebrated incompleteness theorems for arithmetic. These last results are of considerable philosophical interest since they show that logic is and arithmetic is not, strictly speaking, axiomatizable.

The course will require written homework assignments (to be done in groups) and an open-book final exam. No background will be presupposed. Although the course will be self-contained, with no substantive prerequisites, it is strongly recommended that students already be familiar with some area of the material to be covered. Hence the formal prerequisite for the course is at least one of the following: Philosophy 33, Electrical Engineering 14, Math 46, or Computer Science 15.
Phil 0192-01:
Seminar: Nothingness
Steven White / Charles Inouye

What do the negative spaces of certain traditions of Japanese painting, the concept (from Buddhism and the thought of Nagarjuna) of nothing (mu), and the animism of Shinto have in common? And what do they share with the nihilism of Yukio Mishima and the Zen arts of kendo, flower arrangement, and the tea ceremony? In this course we will look at the multivalent concept of Nothingness in these and other Japanese cultural contexts through comparisons with concepts drawn from a variety of European philosophical traditions including Kantian and post-Kantian German Idealism, British Romantic literature, Phenomenology and Existentialism, and the philosophy of Wittgenstein. Chief among the concepts on the European side will be that of the experience of the sublime, variously understood as the experience of: the ground of being prior to the division of the self and nonself; that which is unrepresentable because a condition of the possibility of representation; and that, the embrace of which, in our ability to face our own immanent destruction, makes us truly agents.

This last dimension of Nothingness, tying together as it does the work of Mishima and Kojève, Hegel, and Sartre, reveals the moral and political underpinning of a complicated metaphysical story. We will look at arguments that we must inhabit a dynamic and meaningful world more like the animistic world of Shinto or of the Guttai Manifesto than the disenchanted world of Max Weber. And we will look at Paul Schrader’s suggestions (in Transcendental Style in Film) as to how such a world is given (the revelation of the invisible in the visible) in the work of Bresson and Ozu. The course is co-taught by Inouye (Japanese literature and visual studies) and White (Philosophy, aesthetics, and film).

Phil 0192-02:
Seminar: Race and Racial Progress
Lionel McPherson

In the words of Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts, “The best way to stop discrimination on the basis of race is to stop discriminating on the basis of race.” How, then, is progress toward correcting racial injustice and inequality supposed to be possible? This research seminar will focus on major themes addressed in the book manuscript-in-progress The Afterlife of Race. Specific themes under consideration include: the idea of race and recognition of mixed race; the legitimacy and nature of color-conscious political solidarity; the value of integration and forgiveness in response to historical injustice; and practical prospects for Black American socioeconomic progress when law and public policy have an increasingly “post-racial” orientation. In addition to draft chapters of the manuscript, readings will include Alexander, Appiah, Haslanger, Mills, Shelby, Taylor, and West.

Phil 0192-03:
Aristotle’s Metaphysics
Christiana Olfert

The discipline of metaphysics gained its name and many of its fundamental problems from Aristotle’s Metaphysics. In this seminar, we will be reading the four central Books of Aristotle’s Metaphysics (Z, H, Θ, and I) in translation, along with supplementary material from Plato, Aristotle, and contemporary
interpreters as needed. Our focus will be not so much on Aristotle’s theses as the questions he poses in these four books. In particular: Which items are fundamentally real? What is it to be one, independent individual? What is it for such an individual to persist through time? What role should items such as matter, form, potentiality, and actuality play in a theory of what there is? Prerequisite: for undergraduates, PHIL 1 or equivalent. PHIL 151 (Ancient Philosophy) or equivalent recommended.

Phil 0292-01:
Graduate Seminar: Topics in Epistemology
Jody Azzouni

We take up a number of contemporary issues in Epistemology. In particular, we focus on questions about the role of knowledge in our lives—how essential is it? Are there norms, for example, that require us to know what we assert? If we know something, must we believe that something? If we know something must we know that we know it? Relatedly, is knowledge unique to humans? Can other animals have knowledge? Insects? What about drones or driverless cars?

Readings will be from Jody Azzouni’s manuscript in Epistemology, as well as related literature from Williamson, Kornblith, Williams, Stanley, Hawthorne, and others.

Requirements: Two previous courses in philosophy or consent.

Phil 0292-02:
Graduate Seminar: Evidence: Law, Language, Epistemology
Dilip Ninan

Notions of direct and indirect evidence play a role in a number of diverse areas of inquiry. For example, in the literature on tort law, legal scholars often distinguish between direct and indirect ("merely statistical") evidence, and it is usually thought that direct evidence is needed to justify a finding of liability. But this is puzzling since the standard of proof in civil law is "preponderance of evidence," which would seem to imply that appropriate statistical evidence should suffice for a finding of liability.

The distinction between direct and indirect evidence also surfaces in linguistics. Many languages of the world have "evidential systems," whereby markings on the main verb in a sentence indicate what sort of evidence the speaker has for her assertion. The direct-indirect distinction is fundamental to these linguistic taxonomies. And even languages without grammatically marked evidentials have a variety of means whereby a speaker can express something about her relation to the evidence. For example, epistemic modals, future auxiliaries, and aesthetic predicates all appear to carry some information about whether the speaker’s evidence is direct or indirect. But this aspect of meaning is not yet well understood.

This seminar will investigate the notions of direct and indirect evidence at play in these (and related) discussions. Our aims will be: to understand each individually; to assess what they might have in common; and to consider whether (and to what extent) they can be usefully analyzed with the tools of contemporary epistemology. We will, for example, consider general epistemological theories of evidence, and how the distinction between direct and indirect evidence might relate to notions of causation,
explanation, and inference. Readings will be drawn from epistemology, legal scholarship, linguistics, and the philosophy of language.