Philosophy Courses - Fall 2020

All 100 and 200-level philosophy courses satisfy the Gen Ed humanities requirement -- except PHIL 120, which satisfies the Gen Ed math requirement. We offer both a major and a minor in philosophy plus an optional concentration in Politics, Philosophy, and Law. Requirements can be found at philosophy.cofc.edu.

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE MAJOR IN PHILOSOPHY: 33 semester hours in philosophy which must include 120, 201, 202, and 450 (or PPLW 400). Of the remaining 21 hours, at least 3 hours must be taken in value theory courses; 12 hours must be taken at or above the 200 level; and least nine hours must be taken at or above the 300 level.

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE MINOR IN PHILOSOPHY: 18 semester hours in philosophy which must include a course in the history of philosophy (201, 202, 304, 305, 306, 307, or 310), and one course at or above the 300 level.

Philosophy majors who are interested in independent study options (including Internships, Bachelor’s Essays, and Teaching Apprenticeships) should consult with the department chair or their advisor. A maximum of six hours these courses may be taken to satisfy the requirement of nine elective hours at or above the 300-level.

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FYSE 129.01: The Ethics of Food
Prof. Grantham
CRN 13438 (MWF 1:00-1:50)
NO PREREQUISITE

This course will explore a number of ethical issues related to the food system. We will discuss the nature of hunger and food insecurity (both in the US and internationally), ethical and environmental concerns about animal agriculture; as well as ethical and environmental concerns about industrial plant agriculture. Throughout, our aim will be to develop an interdisciplinary understanding of food systems and to critically evaluate ethical arguments about how to best address issues of hunger, sustainability of food systems, and food justice.

HONS 180.01: Honors Business & Consumer Ethics
Prof. Baker
CRN 10488 (MWF 10:00-10:50)
PREREQUISITE: Honors College student

“Business ethics” is not a contradiction in terms, as this course will make clear. Indeed, ethics and business are so interrelated that the old joke is more misleading than funny. In this course we will look to historical and modern economic sources in order to investigate the nature of business and profit. Once we have garnered a general understanding of what business involves and what the market requires, we will be prepared to ask how “ethics” is pertinent to business. Of course, what we mean by “ethics” will have to be decided. In the final portion of the course we will be reading work done by contemporary business ethicists and attempting to think critically about both their approach and the issues being addressed. My hope is that by the end of the semester each of you will have developed a framework of thought with which to (in this class and outside of it) approach the initially bewildering array of issues that intersect business and ethics.

HONS 225.01: Honors Colloquium Special Topics in Self, Other, and Society
Time Travel in Fiction, Films, Philosophy, & Physics: Thought Experiments about Personal Identity, Free Will, & Determination
Prof. Nunan
CRN 13184 (TR 9:25-10:40)
PREREQUISITE: Honors College student

We are both as individual selves and as culturally anchored communities of selves, lodged in time. Perhaps not lodged like bugs in amber, unable to alter our fates. But even if we aren’t each frozen in the amber of our moment, we are very much products of our time, our identities linked with our particular temporal and cultural setting. What would it mean for our identities to be temporally displaced in an alien time, with its alien cultural setting and residents? And what might that mean for our propensity to believe in free human agency?

Treatments of time travel in fiction and film both provoke and rely upon speculation, in philosophy and physics, governing the possibility and potential significance of time travel if it were to be achieved. Metaphysical speculation about the nature of time, if there is such a thing (which we’ll also explore), together with related speculation about free will & determinism, goes back as far as the Greek philosophers Parmenides, Plato, and Aristotle, and the more theologically motivated Roman philosophers Augustine & Boethius. But philosophical, literary, and scientific reflection specifically about time travel is much more historically constrained, first emerging toward the end of the 19th century as a literary genre, and not really emerging as cinematic topic until the mid-20th century, and as a philosophical & scientific one (with a few notable exceptions) only in the 1970s and thereafter. Time travel thus offers a historically manageable way to explore interdisciplinary treatment of a thought-provoking body of speculation about the self, the human condition, and some potentially very odd facets of the natural world.
PHIL 101.01 and 101.02: Introduction to Philosophy
Prof. Grantham
CRN 11524 (MWF 10:00 – 10:50)
CRN 11663 (MWF 11:00 – 11:50)
NO PREREQUISITE

This course offers a general introduction to philosophy, focusing on four enduring philosophical topics: (1) Religion: Are there good grounds to think that God does (or does not) exist? If the evidence doesn’t decide the case, is it reasonable to believe “based on faith”? (2) Knowledge: What is “knowledge”? Does experience provide an adequate foundation for objective knowledge? (3) Metaphysics: How are the mind and the brain related? If minds are nothing but collections of mindless particles governed by deterministic laws, is free will possible? (4) Ethics: Are some ethical beliefs objective or is all ethical reasoning fundamentally subjective? What criteria can we use to determine when an action is morally right? We will read classic philosophical texts and discuss how philosophical arguments remain relevant today.

PHIL 101.03: Introduction to Philosophy
Prof. Hough
CRN 11933 (TR 1:40 – 2:55)
NO PREREQUISITE

What is a human being? Our beliefs about the human constitution necessarily shape our sense of what is good for us. Indeed, the realization, actualization or fulfillment of our ‘nature’ is usually the aim of an ethical account. Do human creatures have immortal souls, or souls of a very different sort? Are we essentially rational? Political? Products of our culture, or beings already equipped with knowledge? Do our lives ‘mean’ anything? Is human life part of a grand cosmic scheme, or is it a meaningless series of actions and accidents? Is the cosmos moral and just? Can a life that ends in calamity be redeemed? What is redemption? In order to answer these questions, we will read from a number of influential accounts of human nature, both ancient and modern. These philosophical models of the self will guide our exploration of what it means to be human, and what the best kind of life for a human truly is.

PHIL 101.04: Introduction to Philosophy
Prof. Hemmenway
CRN 11934 (TR 3:05 – 4:20)
NO PREREQUISITE

This course will introduce you to philosophy by means of a careful study of selections from some of the great philosophers on the theme of the good life. Some of the philosophers we’ll read are Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Descartes, Spinoza, Nietzsche, and Sartre; thus all of the major periods of Western philosophy will be represented. Some of the many questions we will raise about the good life are What is the good life? Is it completely individual, or can we argue that some lives are better than others? Is morality a necessary part of the good life? Is happiness?

PHIL 105.01: Contemporary Moral Issues
Prof. Coseru
CRN 11940 (TR 10:50 – 12:05)
NO PREREQUISITE

The coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) pandemic has upended all aspects of our personal and professional lives, and forced us to consider whether public health should trump personal, political, leisure, and business interests. This course aims to address some pressing ethical issues we now confront: Is it just to set economic limits to fight a deadly disease? Might some people be justly sacrificed for the greater good in situations such a pandemic? Should medical personnel be permitted to play God, and triage emergency room patients on the basis of their age, health profile, and chances of survival? Should casual sex apps continue to operate during a pandemic? Do contact-tracing programs violate civil liberties? Our goal here is twofold: (i) to examine these issues in depth in light of various ethical theories, and (ii) to gain a deep understanding of the practical aspects of morality.
PHIL 115.01: Critical Thinking
Prof. Neufeld
CRN 13673 (Online)
NO PREREQUISITE

An examination of methods for the critical analysis of arguments in such contexts as science, law and morality, including a consideration of the use of language and definition and the detection of errors in reasoning in everyday communication. Skills in critical reading, writing and thinking will be introduced.

PHIL 120.01 and 120.02: Symbolic Logic
Prof. Krasnoff
CRN 10844 (MWF 11:00 – 11:50)
CRN 10845 (MWF 12:00 – 12:50)
NO PREREQUISITE

Analysis of arguments using the tools of mathematical logic. Since Socrates, Western philosophy has asked that we argue for our beliefs on the basis of reasons. Logic is the branch of philosophy which asks: what makes an argument rationally convincing? We will develop a formal, mathematical language that will allow us to translate an important set of arguments from ordinary English, and proof techniques for the mathematical language that will allow us to determine with precision whether the arguments are valid, and thus should be accepted if their premises are true.

PHIL 170.01 and 170.02: Biomedical Ethics
Instructor TBA
CRN 12435 (TR 8:00-9:15)
CRN 13197 (TR 9:25-10:40)
NO PREREQUISITE

The application of ethical theories to issues and problems in biomedical ethics such as abortion, euthanasia, genetic engineering and genetic counseling, behavior control, death and dying and medical experimentation.

PHIL 201.01: History of Ancient Philosophy
Prof. Hough
CRN 10554 (TR 10:50-12:05)
PREREQUISITE: 3 semester hours in philosophy or permission of the instructor.

What is the nature of reality, and what can we say about what is ‘ultimately real?’ That kind of question—one that seeks what is essential and fundamental in the world around us—fuels what we now call physics, chemistry, biology: in short, science, but it is essentially a philosophical question, and one that the Greeks began to ask in the 6th and 5th century BCE. In this course we will explore these issues about what is real, and pursue them in our most immediate concerns: what can we know? Is there a difference between knowledge and correct opinion? What is the best life to lead, and why? What will constitute a happy life? Do our lives have meaning? If so, what can it be? We will be reading central figures from classical philosophy, from the Presocratics to Plato and Aristotle, as well as Hellenistic philosophers such as Epictetus and Cicero. We will also consider the legacy of these texts in light of contemporary philosophical arguments and claims.
PHIL 206.01: Topics in Law and Morality: LGBT Rights
Prof. Nunan
CRN 13198 (TR 1:40–2:55)
NO PREREQUISITE

Examines the gap between cultural aspirations some of us have concerning civil and human rights in two closely intertwined (but distinct) areas—gender identity & sexual identity — and the cultural reality of existing U.S. legal institutions and practices. You will be introduced to some important theoretical debates and historical developments concerning our legal practices governing gender and sex, together with their implications for the broader concept of legal moralism — the legal enforcement of majoritarian moral convictions.

This course does not presuppose a prior background in philosophy or law. Course material may be of special interest to majors or minors in Philosophy, Political Science, Women's & Gender Studies, History, Sociology, Psychology, or Religious Studies.

PHIL 207.01: Ethics
Prof. Nadelhoffer
CRN 13199 (TR 12:15 – 1:30)
NO PREREQUISITE

In this course, we will primarily be exploring a wide variety of issues in moral philosophy ranging from normative ethics and meta-ethics to applied ethics and the relevance of philosophy to public policy. We will begin with a survey of several of the main theories in moral philosophy—e.g., relativism, egoism, social contract theory, utilitarianism, deontology, feminist ethics of care, and virtue ethics. Then, we will do some applied ethics and consider the relevance of philosophical inquiry to public policy—namely, what should we think about issues surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic such as rationing health care, the morality and legality of quarantine, and the tradeoff between people's lives and the economy? This will hopefully give students a chance to see some important moral, political, and legal issues unfold in real time!

PHIL 305.01: Topics in the History of Philosophy: Stoicism
Prof. Baker
CRN 12139 (MW 2:00–3:15)
PREREQUISITE: 6 semester hours in philosophy or permission of the instructor.

Stoicism has always been of influence, even despite the many misinterpretations it has suffered. In this course we will read the original Stoics (including Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius and Seneca), look to the development of the moral psychology associated with Stoicism, and track its influence on various other philosophers, political philosophy, the concept of human rights, and even cognitive-behavioral theory. We will read the most contemporary accounts of Stoicism, which engage debates in ongoing ethical theory. Students may not agree with the Stoics on happiness and ethics, but they will come to understand the account by contrasting it to the more common, but often vague and ambiguous, notions of happiness and ethics on offer today.

PHIL 330: Philosophy of Mind
Prof. Coseru
CRN 13200 (TR 1:40–2:55)
PREREQUISITE: 6 semester hours in philosophy or permission of the instructor.

Rocks probably don't have minds, but research shows that plants are at least sentient. Do animals have minds? Do computers? In virtue of what does something have a mind? What is the mind? Our main concern in this course is the nature of mind and the relation between our minds and the physical world. We will reflect on whether having a mind is just a matter of having a brain, on the nature of mental states such as sensations, thoughts, and feelings, on the connection between mental states and behavior, and on the nature and character of consciousness.
PPLW 400: Seminar in Philosophy, Politics, and Law
Prof. Nadelhoffer
CRN 11077 (TR 9:25-10:40)
PREREQUISITE: Limited to senior PHIL and POLI majors in the PPLW concentration

The goal of this course is to take a close look at the history and moral foundations of the legal concept of insanity. We will start with a brief overview of how criminal law is structured and the role that excuses play more generally. We will then discuss several of the different standards that have been developed to define legal insanity in the common law tradition. Along the way we will discuss several landmark court cases from both here and abroad that have helped set the stage for the role insanity presently plays in courtrooms around the world. Having taken a close look at the history and moral and legal foundations of the insanity defense, we will take a look at several famous criminals who used insanity as a defense for their crime and discuss whether or not you think they should have been found guilty (and why or why not). Finally, we will take a look at the nature of psychopathy and the question of whether psychopaths should qualify for the insanity defense. In most jurisdictions, they do not. The question we will explore is whether this is the morally and socially appropriate legal response to psychopathic criminality.