We can all imagine ways our lives might be better, and ways they might be worse. So too, we can imagine better and worse ways for our lives to end. And it’s obvious that the choices we make affect the quality of our lives. In this course, we will examine a variety of philosophical perspectives on these issues. In particular, we will raise the following questions:

- What makes life worth living? What does it take to lead a good life?
- What is the relationship between a person’s moral character, her actions, and her well-being?
- What, if anything, makes death bad? Should we fear death?
- Is there any such thing as a good death?
- What does it mean to be rational?
- What does it mean to make good choices?
- What is the relationship between choosing rationally and living well?

We will begin by canvassing a variety of philosophical views on these questions. We will also explore how contemporary research in psychology and behavioral economics informs our answers to these questions. Students will develop philosophical skills that enable them to approach these and other important questions carefully, thoughtfully, and rigorously. In particular, students can expect to improve their understanding of arguments, learn to carefully analyze philosophical concepts that appear in these arguments, and learn to identify the strengths and weaknesses of various philosophical positions.

This course serves as an introduction to philosophy of art or aesthetics. The course will begin trying to answer the seemingly simple but deceptively difficult question of “what is art?” To attempt to answer this question we look into real world examples of art forgery and what this can tell us about art’s nature. The course will then look at relationships between works of art and those who view them. Specifically, we will discuss the way we value and judge art, the nature of art appreciation, and how we interpret, or ought to interpret, art. The course will then move on to examining the moral status of art; we will try to understand what makes an artwork immoral and look at the relationship between art and society. Lastly, we will look at specific aesthetic issues that arise due to the nature of music. Students should note that this is not a class that will look into issues about the history of art but rather one that is trying to answer fundamental philosophical questions about art itself.

PHIL 155 aims to provide a broad overview of the main issues in the philosophy of science, including the character of scientific reasoning, the empirical method and our knowledge of the external world, the nature of experimentation, the confirmation of scientific hypotheses by empirical data, theory choice, the realism/anti-realism debate, and the question of what differentiates science from non-science. Various episodes in the history of science will be used to illustrate these points. Special attention will be paid to the Copernican Revolution, the rise and fall of Newtonian mechanics, and the early development of the theory of evolution. A second goal of the course is to help students develop and improve their skills in critical reading and argumentative writing.

This course has a unique structure: the lecture introduces students to moral principles while the discussion sections have a specific theme concerning some practical moral problems. The goal of the course is to develop an ability to think abstractly about moral theory and the nature of justification in ethics, and to apply these tools to concrete cases. The topics covered include skepticism and realism, moral relativism and natural rights theory, utilitarianism and deontology, and the role of reason and the emotions in ethics. We will read selections from some of the most important philosophers in history as well as some modern discussions. The practical issues to be considered will vary by section.
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<th>Course Code</th>
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<td>162</td>
<td>Is the University a moral institution? This course will examine moral dimensions of the University and of the academic activity of faculty and students. We will think about how to approach our own learning and participation in the community of the University by questioning academic life and the University. The class will work to develop understanding of moral inquiry and of three basic types of moral theory: consequentialism, represented by John Stuart Mill; deontology, represented by Immanuel Kant; and virtue ethics, represented by Aristotle. We will seek to apply these theories through a case-study approach to a variety of issues such as academic integrity; the purposes of higher education and of the university; admissions, access, and costs of attendance; academic freedom, codes of conduct, diversity, and other aspects of the university as an academic community; and the University's moral and social obligations as an institution. Most case studies will deal with ongoing issues, but if there are breaking issues on campus, we will endeavor to work them into the curriculum.</td>
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| 180 | Learn how to think! This course is about reasoning:  
  - how to recognize good and bad reasoning  
  - why we often fail to reason well; and  
  - how we can do better.  
  
It is hard to overstate the importance of good reasoning to everyday life, not to mention the role of persuasive argument in law, politics, and academics. Reasoning well helps us become better people, better citizens, and better leaders. (And it just might help you do better on standardized tests for postgraduate education.)  
This course covers various types of reasoning, including deductive reasoning, probabilistic reasoning, and decision-theoretic reasoning. We'll learn some abstract ways to represent these types of reasoning, but also some practical ways to identify our own bad reasoning and fix it. To this end, we'll draw not only from formal methods of logic, but also from work in contemporary psychology on biases and heuristics.  
Every line of reasoning (“argument”) has its own internal structure or logic. But note that what is often called 'logic' in textbooks or course descriptions involves just one particular way to formalize one particular kind of reasoning--namely, deductive inference represented in an artificial first-order predicate language. That kind of logic is only one tool among many that we will be learning how to use. In other words, this is as much a "critical thinking" course as it is a "formal logic" course. |
| 196.001 | What is a law? What provides a law with its legitimacy or authority? Is there a correlation between morality and law or are these two areas of inquiry entirely separate and distinct? What is a right? Does the existence of a right imply a corresponding duty? Can a right exist without a way to exercise that right? Is there only one way to properly understand a law or are there many such ways? Is law designed for the benefit of all or is it designed the benefit of the dominant group? Should law be used to improve society? Can morality be legislated? Who is the ideal subject of the law? Is the concept of an ideal subject of the law a contradiction in terms? Should law be used to regulate the private lives of its citizens? On what basis is criminal liability assessed? Why are attempted crimes punished? Is private law based entirely on the concept of a contract? If so, is this justified? This course will examine all of the above questions and tensions in a classroom environment designed to facilitate robust philosophical dialogue. We will read primary texts in the philosophy of law designed to provide students with an overview of both the historical and the contemporary issues in the field. |
| 196.002 | Grave Question: What would Socrates be doing and saying if he were alive today, intending to press his worldview in light of what has been learned since?  
For each séance I'll channel a zombie from an important era or movement in Western philosophy:  
  - Socrates (don't guess — think!)  
  - Aristotle (don't overthink — look!)  
  - Descartes (think about God — He'll help you look!) |
To survive the course you'll need to argue me out of my trances, before I feast on your brains.

**Grave Answer:** Desperately clawing at the inside of his coffin, screaming "Let me out!"

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202 This course will have two aims. The first aim is to give you a sense of what philosophers think about and why. Here we will look at some philosophical attempts to answer questions about what to believe and how to act. We'll ask about the relationship between faith and rationality and about the relationship between the sensory information that our brains process and the external world. We'll ask what's required to hold someone morally responsible and how physical determinism and automaticity impact responsibility. We'll think about ways to overcome some of the apparent deficits in our reasoning. For most topics we will look at both historical and contemporary treatments. The second aim is to help you begin to think and write philosophically. We will learn how to develop some of the skills that are necessary for reading critically, constructing good philosophical arguments, and writing clear papers.

232 Do we have free will? Does God exist? What is the correct moral code? Are the answers to any of those questions necessarily related? Fifty years from now, when you have very different beliefs and desires, what is going to make you the same person that you are now? How can you know that the external world exists? Even if it didn't exist, why should you care?

The main goal of this class is that you deeply engage with these questions and thereby come to love the practice of doing philosophy. In particular, you will learn how to do philosophy well — how to read and write and talk and reason with an incisive and yet open mind — and you will enjoy engaging with these questions not just because they are themselves rich and intriguing, but because you appreciate your own developing skill in thinking about them.

297 In this course, we'll take up some central questions from three different areas of philosophy. First, from the philosophy of religion:

- Does God exist?
- Are there persuasive arguments in favor of God’s existence? What about persuasive arguments against God’s existence?
- Is an all-knowing, all-seeing, all-powerful God compatible with our having free will?

Second, from the philosophy of law:

- Do we have a moral obligation to obey the law? If so, why?
- When is the state justified in restricting our liberties against our will?
- Are some individual liberties (e.g., freedom of speech, freedom of association, freedom of religion, etc.) more basic than others? If so, what makes them more basic?
Third, from the philosophy of mind and action:

- What is it to act intelligently?
- What is it to act intentionally, rather than doing something by accident?
- What's the difference between believing something (e.g., believing that the sky is blue) and wanting something (e.g., wanting the sky to be blue)?
- What's the difference between intending something and merely foreseeing it? Is it morally worse to intend harm to someone else than to merely foresee it?

In taking up these and related questions, the course has two main goals. First, we will learn about both historical and contemporary discussions of these topics. Second, we will work on careful reading, critical reasoning, and argumentative skills, through both written work and intensive discussion.

303 Logic aims to clarify principles of good reasoning in a range of areas: ordinary day-to-day reasoning as well as more abstract investigations in mathematics and the physical sciences. A basic guiding idea is the idea that logically good reasoning is 'truth-preserving'. ('Truth-preserving' reasoning cannot fail to take you from true premises to true conclusions. If the premises of truth-preserving reasoning are true, the conclusions must be as well.) So one goal we have in the study of logic is to get a grip on which forms of argument are truth-preserving and which are not.

In this course, we study two simple yet powerful systems of formal logic — 'sentential' logic, and 'predicate' logic. In the course of learning these systems, we will have the chance to apply formal techniques in analyzing arguments, and to solve practical problems. After mastering these systems, we'll address some questions concerning their power and dependability. In order to answer our questions we will have to develop a 'meta-theory' for the systems we've studied. That is, we'll develop techniques for studying the systems themselves: what can be proven in these systems? How do we know that the systems are reliable? And along the way, we will learn to employ the extremely important tool of mathematical induction. No previous training in logic is required.
We begin by asking whether machines can think, and discover that this question has many dimensions. The idea that thought is in some ways mechanical will provide surprising insights into human psychology, but at the same time raises many philosophical questions.

We will begin with a classical paper written in 1950 by Alan Turing, which argues forcefully that there are no fundamental differences between human and computer mentality. This paper raises two questions, which we will pursue in some detail.

1. Turing avoids the question of whether computers can think, asking instead if the performance of an intelligent human could be simulated by a computer. But we can turn this question around: can we use the idea that thought is computation to understand human cognition? This question leads us to look at the field known as cognitive psychology. By looking in detail at the idea of a cognitive architecture, we will see that computational models can explain a great deal about human thought. If that is so, the similarity between human and computer thinking runs very deep.

2. Why, then, is it so hard to produce a computer program that successfully simulates an intelligent human being? We will look at several case studies from the field of Artificial Intelligence to see why this has turned out to be much harder than many people expected.

All along, and especially in the second half of the course, we will be asking how these things relate to issues that are debated in philosophy. The main question, which has been framed in many different ways, is whether the mechanical approach to mind leaves out something that is importantly and distinctively human.

Some people have it all—fame, fortune, power, a clean rap sheet, a positive group identity, good looks, good health, good credit, good neighborhoods, good job prospects, and a good education. Other people have none of these things. We live in a deeply unequal society of have and have-nots. Is there anything morally wrong with inequality?

To answer this challenging question we will consult philosophy as well as anthropology, economics, history, law, psychology, political science, and sociology. These disciplines shed light on crucial issues: What causes inequality? Is it evolution, past injustice, prejudice, poor choices, government policy, or dumb luck? Do beliefs about inequality and its causes vary by race, gender, class, religion, level of education, and political ideology? Will liberals say that inequality is caused by prejudice and conservatives say that it is caused by poor choices? Who is responsible for addressing inequality? Is it the have, the have-nots, or both? How should we resolve the conflict between mitigating inequality and respecting individual rights? Should we legislate against pornography and hate speech, which foster unequal social relations, or should we allow both to uphold the right to freedom of expression?

In addition, the course will be fun, engaging, and focused on an urgent moral problem of interest to taxpayers, voters, politicians, activists, and everyday people.
Which is more important to a flourishing society: liberty or equality? What is liberty? What is equality? What makes a government a good government? On what basis and to what extent is government responsible for the quality of life of its citizens? To what extent are we able to influence the regimes that govern us? Should governments be concerned with the welfare of individual persons or communities of persons? How are those concerns different? Are material goods the bases of societies? What kind of economic system is best for government? Are people inherently good or bad or neither? How does the answer to this question affect assessments about the best form of government? How are society’s problems generated? How can they best be solved by government? Do those with more material goods have any sort of responsibility to or for those with less? This course will explore key questions in political philosophy from a variety of perspectives in order to provide students with a solid understanding of the key themes in, and criticisms of, Western political philosophy.

FRIEDRICHLY ASKED QUESTIONS — by Nietzsche

[Click on links below for Nietzsche’s answers, further discussion, and evaluation.]

- In what way may your life retain the highest value and the deepest significance? And how may it least be squandered?
- How is man to be surpassed? What have ye done to surpass man?
- As is well known, priests are the most evil of enemies—but why?
- Our love of our neighbor—is it not a desire for new possessions? And likewise our love of knowledge, truth, and altogether any desire for what is new?
- What really is this “Will to Truth” in us? What is it that forces us in general to the supposition that there is an essential opposition of ‘true’ and ‘false’?
- What makes one heroic? Why not be defeated some time, too?
- Hath there ever been anything filthier on earth than the saints of the wilderness?
- For what is there suffering? Think ye that I am here to make snugger couches for you sufferers? Or show you new and easier footpaths?
- What is good? What is evil? What is happiness? Can all values not be turned around?
- What great result has he to show, who has so long practiced philosophy and yet has hurt nobody? Was Socrates after all a corrupter of youths, and deserved his hemlock?
- What thinking person still needs the hypothesis of a god?
- What if some day or night a demon were to steal after you into your loneliest loneliness and say to you: “This life as you now live it and have lived it, you will have to live once more and innumerable times more.” Would you curse or answer ‘never have I heard anything more divine’?
- Why am I so wise, so clever, and why do I write such excellent books?

[If links above do not work, take this course instead.]

One of the most common ways of describing a person’s relation to the world is to say that they know something about it. But what do we mean when we say that someone knows something, and are these claims true?

This course will start by looking at proposed explanations of what people mean when they say that someone knows something. In the twentieth century, the form these explanations took was to replace talk of knowledge with more basic locutions, such as saying someone believes something, this belief is true, and the belief is merited in some way. Philosophers in this century have moved away from that. Knowledge is one of the fundamental concepts we use in understanding how people relate to the world, and we should not try to replace it, but try to explain how it works, and how it relates to other concepts. We’ll look over why philosophers made this move, with special focus on the relationship between knowledge and other attributions of achievement.

With that background in place, we’ll turn to one of the lasting problems of philosophy: the challenge of
skepticism. There are many seemingly strong arguments that almost all knowledge claims are false. We'll look at the best formulations of these skeptical arguments. That's in part to see if any of them are true. But the bigger aim is to see what we learn about knowledge, and more generally about the relationship between mind and world, from the fact that these arguments must fail if we are to have knowledge.

Finally, we'll look at the emphasis on the social aspects of knowledge in recent philosophy. The tradition in Western European philosophy, especially from the 17th Century onwards, has been to focus on the individual knower, and ask how they relate to the world. But this was arguably a mistake. We get most of our knowledge of the world through testimony, and through other projects that involve others. So any understanding of knowledge has to respect its social nature. We'll look at recent work on the nature of testimony, and on the relationship between knowledge and social justice.

The only textbook for the course is Jennifer Nagel's "Knowledge: A Very Short Introduction", but we will also look at a number of journal articles, and the readings will be supplemented with extensive lecture notes.

| 389 | This course is a survey of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century (aka, "early modern") philosophy, one that concerns primarily the writings of Descartes, Malebranche, Leibniz, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, and Kant, with some attention to the writings of Copernicus, Galileo, Boyle, Newton and Clarke. The course focuses on issues concerning nature of reality (metaphysics) and our knowledge of that reality (epistemology). Among the issues to be discussed are the relation between religious faith and science; the distinction between primary and secondary qualities; the rise and fall of mechanism; skepticism and responses to skepticism; the nature of mind and of the mind-body relation; realism and idealism concerning matter, motion, space and time; the nature of human freedom; and personal identity. One recurring topic is the impact in the modern period of the "Scientific Revolution".

| 399 | Independent study of a topic not otherwise available through a regular departmental offering.

| 406 | It is often said that Aristotle's philosophy is profoundly influenced by his lifelong interest in biology. The paradigmatic substances for Aristotle, unlike Plato, are individual living organisms, substances that are born, grow, reproduce, and eventually die. The ways in which their organs and body parts subserve their needs and functions in an integrated way provides a model for understanding the relation between form and matter in general. It is here above all that we would expect his theory of scientific explanation, and the logic and metaphysics that lies behind it, to apply most fully and successfully.

We will approach these themes through a close examination of the logical and metaphysical concepts that provide a foundation for these views, above all the distinctions between essence and accident; between form and matter; causation and teleological explanation; and the nature and structure of scientific explanation (including his views on definition and demonstration, division, and dialectic more generally). We will focus especially on selections from the following works: Categories, Topics, Posterior Analytics, Physics, Metaphysics, On the Soul, and On the Parts of Animals.

| 413 | This course surveys formal tools used in contemporary philosophy, providing students with an introduction to vocabulary, techniques, and results from formal semantics, propositional modal logic, probability theory, decision theory, and recent literature on conditionals. Each section of the course begins with an introduction to formal material and ends with a contemporary philosophical paper presupposing that material.

| 425 | Many philosophers and scientists have been skeptical in the past about the idea that biology had something distinctive to teach us about science and nature. It was common 100 years ago to assume that the different sciences shared a single, unified method, and that physics stood above all others as an exemplar. Events since then have led to a radical change in view, however, growing out of difficulties with providing a unified account of science as well as the rapid expansion and development of biology as a science. This course will examine several philosophical issues that have contributed to marking off
Many different intellectual currents combined to shape the Enlightenment, and one of them will get extra
attention here: The view called (philosophical) Skepticism, that human beings know much less than they take themselves to know, or even (in it’s strongest, so-called Pyrrhonian form) that we can't know anything at all. This point of view had been explored in different variations in Ancient Greece and Rome, but was largely forgotten for over a thousand years until it was revived in the sixteenth century. We'll consider classic works of the Pyrrhonian skepticism of Aenesidemus and the Academic skepticism of Cicero, and some of the thinkers in the sixteenth and seventeenth century revival, including Michel de Montaigne, and Pierre Bayle, as well as Hume, when wearing his epistemologist hat.

The Enlightenment didn't unfold without a struggle, which in some ways continues to this day. To round out the picture, we'll read, (or in some cases just read about) some of the thinkers who made up the reaction that scholar Isaiah Berlin has called the “Counter-Enlightenment”. We'll read some classic essays by Berlin himself on this intellectual tendency, and look at Joseph De Maistre, Giambattista Vico and Edmund Burke, as well as Rousseau's anti-enlightenment side.

475 We will concentrate on the seminal theoretical moments and movements during the long 20th century, an era that includes Friedrich Nietzsche and Sigmund Freud, Martin Heidegger and the philosophers of the Frankfurt school such as Walter Benjamin, Theodor W. Adorno, and Jürgen Habermas, and political philosophers such as Carl Schmitt and Hannah Arendt; non-German authors include Georges Bataille, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, and Giorgio Agamben.

499 In PHIL 498 or 499, which is taken in the semester following PHIL 401, students work with a thesis supervisor to develop their ideas into a thesis of appropriate length (usually 40-50 pages, double-spaced). At the end of this process, they defend their thesis at an oral exam, conducted by a committee of two professors, one of whom supervised the thesis. The award of the honors degree requires successful defense of the thesis and the level of honors (honors, high honors, highest honors) is determined on the basis of thesis and defense. Before a student enrolls in PHIL 498 or 499, Honors candidates must submit a thesis proposal to the department for its approval. Students considering an Honors degree should consult a concentration advisor as early as possible.