Philosophy

Overview and Contact Information

We take many things for granted — that things exist besides ourselves; that time moves from the past towards the future, some art is good, some art is bad, and some “art” is not really art at all; that other people feel pain, have emotions, dreams, and desires; that there are right ways to behave, and wrong ways too. However, even casual reflection reveals that these assumptions are just that — things we take for granted without much thought. In order to illuminate our lives and appreciate our existence, we ought to investigate these assumptions.

Philosophy is a discipline that encourages the examination of life in its myriad dimensions. Our fundamental assumptions about right and wrong, beauty, truth, the mind, language, and meaning are exposed to careful scrutiny in philosophy classes. We encourage students of philosophy not only to strive to understand what philosophers have written, but also to be a philosopher — to think with depth and clarity about issues that are fundamental to our condition as human beings. Whether taking a course on epistemology, ethics, feminist philosophy, logic, or philosophy of time, students of philosophy will leave the course seeing the world anew.

A major in philosophy will provide a broad understanding of the background of both historical and contemporary philosophical thought, with the tools for critical reasoning necessary for philosophical inquiry, with a good understanding of some important philosophical themes, and with the enthusiasm for inquiry necessary for the productive pursuit of one’s own philosophical speculations. The critical approach learned will be valuable for whatever students choose to do after graduation.

See Also

- Logic (http://catalog.mtholyoke.edu/areas-study/logic/)

Contact Information

Katia Vavova, Chair (Fall 2022)
James Harold, Chair (Spring 2023)
Natalina Tulik, Academic Department Coordinator

205 Skinner Hall
413-538-2249
https://www.mtholyoke.edu/academics/find-your-program/philosophy
(https://www.mtholyoke.edu/academics/find-your-program/philosophy/)

Learning Goals

Mount Holyoke College’s undergraduate learning goals (http://catalog.mtholyoke.edu/bachelor-arts-degree-requirements/#learninggoals) emphasize skills that promote good citizenship and lifelong learning. At its heart, philosophy is the practice of critical thinking about foundational questions, including moral and political questions about what is a good life and how to be a good citizen. Philosophy is, thus, crucial to realizing Mount Holyoke’s educational mission. This is especially clear with respect to Mount Holyoke’s first learning goal, which says that students should learn to “think analytically and critically by questioning assumptions, evaluating evidence, and articulating well-reasoned arguments.” This is precisely what we learn to do when we learn to do philosophy. The ability to carefully and fairly evaluate arguments is a skill that has value in any situation. As global citizens, over a lifetime of different careers and paths, philosophy equips students with the ability to see the difference between arguments that work and ones that mislead, between sense and nonsense.

All of the courses in our department, whatever the ostensible topic — Kant’s transcendental deduction, modal logics, the ethics of euthanasia, or the hard problem of consciousness — use a distinctly philosophical way of analyzing arguments. This is most explicit in logic, where the structure of arguments is itself the object of study, but it is equally important in other areas of philosophy. In the history of philosophy, for example, the study of texts focuses closely on understanding and evaluating the reasons offered by the author. The department puts a high priority in teaching the analysis of arguments in clear prose writing. By engaging in this sort of close study of arguments, students become better thinkers, better writers, and better able to handle whatever personal and professional challenges may come their way.

The department faculty provide the students with a focus on argument, both as it ought to be done, and as it is in fact done, using formal and informal methods. The learning goals, therefore, are fourfold. Students are expected to:

- Analyze arguments using the tools of formal logic.
- Write clear prose that explicitly sets out and evaluates arguments in English.
- Set out and analyze the arguments they discover in texts.
- Develop their own arguments in clear, concise, and convincing prose.

One way to sum up the department’s learning goals is this: everything we do in philosophy is centered around the analysis of arguments. In some cases this is done formally (in our logic courses); in others, argument analysis is done in clear prose and careful discussion.

These learning goals are embodied in the major’s requirements, the graded work in philosophy courses, and in the department’s seminars, theses, and independent work.

To sum up: clearheaded critical thinking is an invaluable skill in any context. The philosophy department has a precise understanding of what such critical thinking amounts to, and the value it has for students, as scholars as well as citizens.

Faculty

This area of study is administered by the Department of Philosophy:

James Harold, Professor of Philosophy, Teaching Spring Only

Samuel Mitchell, Professor of Philosophy, On Leave 2022-2023

Nina Emery, Associate Professor of Philosophy

Katia Vavova, Associate Professor of Philosophy

Laura Sizer, Senior Lecturer in Philosophy

Stephen Harrop, Visiting Lecturer in Philosophy

David Turon, Visiting Instructor in Philosophy; UMass Teaching Associate

Requirements for the Major

A minimum of 32 credits:
methods of argument analysis.

philosophy course, which offer introductions to the subject and the

Students who are completely new to philosophy can take any 100-level

Beginning the Study of Philosophy

If you’ve done some philosophy and enjoyed it or if you want to challenge

yourself, we encourage you to take a 200-level course with a number

lower than 280, such as PHIL-201 (The Greek Period), PHIL-202 (The

Modern Period), PHIL-205 (Ethics), and many others. Courses at this level

require no previous knowledge, but offer more useful background for

other philosophy courses, and can be used to satisfy major and minor

requirements.

We also offer advanced intermediate classes in ethics, epistemology,

and metaphysics. These courses are numbered 280-299 and they require

previous coursework in philosophy. These courses offer good training for

the work required in 300-level seminars.

Logic is of use to mathematicians and computer scientists, as well as an

essential tool for philosophy majors.

Our seminar (300-level) courses offer instruction on challenging and

exciting problems in philosophy. We go into considerable depth and

encourage students to develop their own arguments. We offer a variety

of seminars each year on topics such as metaphysics, epistemology,

advanced logic, ethics, and the philosophy of art.

Course Offerings

PHIL-101 Introduction to Philosophy
Fall. Credits: 4
This course will explore topics that philosophers have grappled with for

thousands of years, and that still undergird (or sometimes threaten to

undermine) our understanding of the world, our knowledge, ourselves,

and each other. In historical and modern texts of the Western intellectual

tradition, we will discuss questions such as: What makes right actions

right, if anything? Do you know anything at all about the future? Are you

really free if your actions are caused? This class is for first and second

year students who know nothing about philosophy, and want to know

whether they will be interested in it. Students with some exposure to, and

interest in, the field should take other classes.

Applies to requirement(s): Humanities
S. Harrop
Restrictions: This course is limited to first-years and sophomores.

PHIL-103 Comparative Introduction to Philosophy
Spring. Credits: 4
What kind of life should a person live? What can we know about the

world? Do we have souls that are separate from our bodies? The

aim of the course is to learn how to do philosophy by engaging with

philosophical thinkers from around the globe. We read some philosophers

from the Western tradition (such as Plato and Sartre) alongside

philosophers from other historical traditions, such as the Daoist thinker

Zhuangzi and the Sufi mystic al-Ghazali, and we also read the work of

more recent philosophers of color (such as Anthony Appiah and Maria

Lugones).

Applies to requirement(s): Humanities, Multicultural Perspectives
J. Harold
Restrictions: This course is limited to first-years and sophomores.
Advisory: Students who have taken PHIL-101 should not take PHIL-103.
Notes: Course will open to juniors and seniors in second week of pre-
registration.

Requirements for the Minor

Like the major, the minor is intended to provide an understanding of some

of the structure and content of current philosophical thinking, with upper-

level work in some area of special interest and with enough philosophical

breadth to imbue a generous mixture of knowledge and enthusiasm.

A minimum of 20 credits:

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<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Credits</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>One course in the History of Philosophy, such as:</td>
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<tr>
<td>PHIL-201</td>
<td>Philosophical Foundations of Western Thought: The Greek Period</td>
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<tr>
<td>PHIL-202</td>
<td>Philosophical Foundations of Western Thought: The Modern Period</td>
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<tr>
<td>PHIL-212</td>
<td>Philosophical Foundations of Chinese Thought: The Ancient Period</td>
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<td>PHIL-255</td>
<td>Existentialism</td>
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<td>One course in Ethics and Value Theory, such as:</td>
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<td>PHIL-205</td>
<td>Ethics</td>
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<td>PHIL-242</td>
<td>Social and Political Philosophy</td>
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<td>PHIL-273</td>
<td>Philosophy of the Arts</td>
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<td>One course in Theoretical Philosophy, such as:</td>
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<td>PHIL-222</td>
<td>Philosophy of Quantum Mechanics</td>
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<td>PHIL-272</td>
<td>Metaphysics</td>
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<td>One course in Logic, such as:</td>
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<td>PHIL-170</td>
<td>Logical Thought</td>
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<td>PHIL-225</td>
<td>Symbolic Logic</td>
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<td>PHIL-328</td>
<td>Non-Classical Logic</td>
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<td>At least 12 credits in philosophy at the 300 level</td>
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<td>4 additional credits in philosophy</td>
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<td>Total Credits</td>
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Additional Specifications

• Students who plan to do graduate work in philosophy will need to
  complete far more than the above minimum requirements for the
  major. Such students should complete at least 40 credits, including
  PHIL-201: The Greek Period; PHIL-202: The Modern Period; PHIL-225:
  Symbolic Logic; and at least one graduate course (500-level or
  above) at the University of Massachusetts through the Five College
  interchange. Students interested in graduate work should consult
  with their advisor early in their major planning.

Course Advice

Beginning the Study of Philosophy

Students who are completely new to philosophy can take any 100-level

philosophy course, which offer introductions to the subject and the

methods of argument analysis.
PHIL-112 Introduction to Philosophy Through Science Fiction
*Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4*
This course introduces students to philosophical writing, analysis, and argument. We will pair classical and contemporary readings in philosophy with science fiction films and short stories in order to explore philosophical issues such as the nature of reality, free will, personal identity, artificial intelligence and the nature of mind. While science fiction will be used to animate and explore these issues, the emphasis of the class is on philosophical analysis and argument.
*Applies to requirement(s): Humanities*
L. Sizer

PHIL-161 Science and Human Values
*Spring. Credits: 4*
Modern science has taught us surprising new things and modern technology has given us extraordinary new abilities. We can now prolong life in extraordinary ways, dramatically enhance our physical and cognitive abilities, collect and process remarkable amounts of data, and radically reshape the natural environment on local and global scales. This course is devoted to the critical study of moral problems that have been raised or affected by this newfound information and these newfound abilities. Potential topics include euthanasia, pharmaceutical enhancement, genetic engineering, the moral status of animals, climate change, and artificial intelligence.
*Applies to requirement(s): Humanities*
N. Emery
*Restrictions: This course is limited to first-years and sophomores.*

PHIL-170 Logical Thought
*Fall. Credits: 4*
This course cultivates sound reasoning. Students will learn to see the structure of claims and arguments and to use those structures in developing strong arguments and exposing shoddy ones. We will learn to evaluate arguments on the strength of the reasoning rather than on the force of their associations and buzzwords.
*Applies to requirement(s): Humanities*
N. Emery
*Restrictions: This course is offered to philosophy majors only.*

PHIL-180 Topics in Applied Philosophy
*Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4*
These courses ask questions about the ethical and/or conceptual problems pertaining to a practice, such as law, medicine, or caring for the non-human natural entities mentioned above. Students will read and critically analyze philosophical positions and will learn to articulate thinking about our obligations – professional, social, and individual.
*Applies to requirement(s): Humanities*
L. Sizer
*Other Attribute(s): Writing-Intensive*
*Restrictions: This course is limited to first-years, sophomores, and juniors*

PHIL-180LW Topics in Applied Philosophy: 'Philosophy of Law'
*Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4*
This course is an inquiry into questions concerning the nature of ‘justice,’ ‘law,’ and the relationship between the two from the point of view of various schools of legal thought like natural law theory, positivism, utilitarianism, legal realism, critical race studies, and feminist theory. We will examine questions like ‘is there a duty to obey, or sometimes disobey, the law?’ and ‘What do we mean by ‘equality’ or ‘rights’? within the context of contemporary legal issues like affirmative action, abortion, and same-sex marriage. Readings drawn from Aristotle, Hobbes, Locke, Kant, Mill, Holmes, Llewellyn, Hart, Rawls, and others.
*Applies to requirement(s): Humanities*
The department

PHIL-181 Medical Ethics
*Fall. Credits: 4*
Contemporary medicine gives rise to a variety of moral and philosophical questions. Some of the questions we will discuss include: Is the concept of disease objective? What moral duties do we have to those at the beginning and the end of life? How should limited health care resources be distributed? What are the responsibilities of medical researchers towards their subjects? Do we have reason to be worried about the growth of technology in medicine? Are the basic institutions of medicine just? The goals of this course are to improve our understanding of the arguments on different sides of these questions, and to acquire some tools to evaluate those arguments.
*Applies to requirement(s): Humanities*
D. Turon

PHIL-183 Problems in Global Ethics: Climate Change, War, and Poverty
*Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4*
Living in today’s world presents distinctive and pressing moral problems. What are the responsibilities of individuals, particularly individuals living in relatively affluent societies, to prevent climate change, or to alleviate the harms caused by it? How should we act to prevent war, and should we ever initiate wars in order to prevent greater evils (such as terrorism)? What responsibilities do citizens of relatively affluent nations have to prevent and ameliorate poverty and global inequality? In order to reason clearly about these questions, we will need to think deeply about the notion of global citizenship (or “cosmopolitanism”) and the nature of individual moral responsibility.
*Applies to requirement(s): Humanities*
J. Harold

PHIL-184 Environmental Ethics
*Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4*
What moral obligations – if any – do we have towards non-human entities? Do non-human animals have rights? Do trees and rivers? What about entire ecosystems? What might be the basis for such rights and obligations? We will discuss how traditional ethical theories have approached questions about moral obligations towards non-humans, and see whether these views can be extended to include some or all of the non-human natural entities mentioned above. Students will read and critically analyze philosophical positions and will learn to articulate arguments on several different sides of the issues.
*Applies to requirement(s): Humanities*
The department
*Notes: Short and longer argument papers are required.*
PHIL-201 Philosophical Foundations of Western Thought: The Greek Period
Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4
An introduction to ancient Greek philosophy, focusing mainly but not exclusively on the works and ideas of three Athenian philosophers who worked and taught in the period between the Persian Wars and the rule of Alexander the Great, more than 2,300 years ago: Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. Topics to be discussed include: What is the nature of the self? What is truth, and how can it be known? What kind of life should we live? We will work to understand each philosopher's responses to these questions, but we will also learn to develop our own answers. We will take care to place these figures and their works in their historical and cultural context.
Applies to requirement(s): Humanities
J. Harold
Restrictions: This course is limited to philosophy majors and minors.
Notes: Course will open to non-Philosophy majors/minors in the second week of pre-registration.

PHIL-202 Philosophical Foundations of Western Thought: The Modern Period
Fall. Credits: 4
Philosophy was transformed during the 17th and 18th centuries, in a period known as the Modern period, or the Enlightenment. This period is important for the background of our current views both in Philosophy and in intellectual endeavor generally. In this course, we'll look at the major figures involved in this transformation, and the positions about knowledge and reality that they defended. We'll have selections from the work of Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, and Kant. We might not cover all of these, but will get to most.
Applies to requirement(s): Humanities
S. Harrop
Notes: Evaluation is by three essays.

PHIL-205 Ethics
Spring. Credits: 4
What do we owe to ourselves and to others? Which actions are right, which are wrong, and how can we tell the difference? Can we give principled answers to questions like these, or is it just a matter of opinion? We will think critically about such questions and some key theoretical approaches to answering them. We will focus on central traditions of Western moral philosophy, typified by Mill, Kant, and Aristotle. We will also consider vexing contemporary moral issues with an eye to whether these theories can guide our actions. Along the way, we will ask whether the moral theorizing we engage in can really uncover objective moral truths.
Applies to requirement(s): Humanities
K. Vavova

PHIL-212 Philosophical Foundations of Chinese Thought: The Ancient Period
Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4
An introduction to Chinese thought during the Eastern Zhou Dynasty (roughly 770-256 BCE), a time of remarkable philosophical growth and controversy. We read the works of this era's most influential philosophers, including: Kongzi (Confucius), Mozi, Laozi, Mengzi (Mencius), Zhuangzi, Xunzi, and Han Feizi. Topics discussed include: What makes for a just ruler? What kind of life should we live? What is our relationship to nature? We work to understand each philosopher's responses to these questions, but we also learn to develop our own answers. We take care to place these figures and their works in their historical and cultural context.
Crosslisted as: ASIAN-214
Applies to requirement(s): Humanities; Multicultural Perspectives
Other Attribute(s): Writing-Intensive
J. Harold

PHIL-220 Philosophy of Science
Fall. Credits: 4
This course covers some classic topics and debates in philosophy of science, such as the problem of induction: can prior observations give us reason to make predictions about things we have not observed? Other questions discussed may include: Can science tell us about things that we cannot directly observe? What counts as evidence for a scientific hypothesis, and when (if ever) may we say that such a hypothesis is confirmed? What problems arise when we use approximations, false theories (like Newtonian mechanics), or models? What is the role of moral or social values in science? This course is recommended for those interested in the natural sciences, but no specific preparation is required.
Applies to requirement(s): Humanities
Other Attribute(s): Writing-Intensive
S. Harrop

PHIL-222 Philosophy of Quantum Mechanics
Spring. Credits: 4
Although quantum mechanics is a remarkably successful scientific theory, it also leads scientists to make extraordinary claims like that cats can be both dead and alive and that the state of a fundamental particle depends on whether someone one is observing it. In this class we will consider the various interpretations of quantum mechanics and the way in which those interpretations influence and are influenced by philosophical issues in science more generally.
Applies to requirement(s): Humanities
N. Emery
Advisory: No previous work in physics is necessary, but students should be prepared to learn some mathematical formalism involving basic algebra and trigonometry.

PHIL-225 Symbolic Logic
Spring. Credits: 4
This course develops a symbolic system that can be used as the basis for inference in all fields. It will provide syntax and semantics for the language of this system and investigate its adequacy. It provides the basis for all further work in logic or in the philosophical foundations of mathematics. Much of the course has a mathematical flavor, but no knowledge of mathematics is necessary.
Applies to requirement(s): Humanities
The department
PHIL-226 Philosophy of Religion
Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4
Is there a God? If there is, what is God like? Could all religions be true, or are they contradictory? Is religion in conflict with science? Can we have morality without religion? What happens when we die? In this class, we will consider arguments for and against different positions that people have on these questions. This course will give students a sense of the issues that philosophers of religion are currently thinking and writing about. As we think through topics such as these, we will be working to develop and hone philosophical skills such as analyzing concepts, constructing and critiquing arguments, and evaluating philosophical theories.
Crosslisted as: RELIG-226
Applies to requirement(s): Humanities
J. Mooney

PHIL-242 Social and Political Philosophy
Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4
We will examine the place of liberty and equality in a just society by looking at classic and contemporary topics in social and political philosophy. We will consider big questions such as the following: what is liberty and why is it important? What about equality? Do these values conflict? Or can a society ensure both? We will also consider more narrow, practical questions on topics such as immigration, voting, commodification, reparations, freedom of expression, and a universal basic income.
Applies to requirement(s): Humanities
The department

PHIL-248 Philosophical Issues in Race and Racism
Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4
The category of race has profound political, economic, and moral significance for people. In the first part of this class, we explore the problem of whether race is real. What would it mean for race to be real? If race is not real, what follows? Can we continue to use the concept of race if it is not real? The second part of the course deals with racism. What is racism? Is it a matter of conscious belief, implicit bias, institutional forces, or something else? What policies are morally appropriate to address racism? For example, are reparations for slavery justified? We dig deep, critically examine the key arguments on these topics, and practice disagreeing with one another respectfully.
Applies to requirement(s): Humanities; Multicultural Perspectives
J. Harold
Restrictions: This course is limited to first-years and sophomores.

PHIL-250 Topics in Philosophy

PHIL-250CN Topics in Philosophy: ‘Consciousness’
Fall and Spring. Credits: 4
Nagel states, "Without consciousness the mind-body problem would be much less interesting. With consciousness it seems hopeless." Chalmers calls consciousness "the hard problem." Explaining consciousness raises significant challenges for philosophers and cognitive scientists alike, and understanding the nature of the problem is half the battle. This class will explore contemporary philosophical approaches to consciousness, and draw in psychology and neuroscience perspectives. Topics may also include split-brain problems, the nature of dreaming, and altered states.
Crosslisted as: PSYCH-249CN
Applies to requirement(s): Humanities
Other Attribute(s): Writing-Intensive
L. Sizer
Prereq: One course in philosophy and either a second course in philosophy or a course in neuroscience.

PHIL-250HG Topics in Philosophy: ‘Happiness and The Good Life’
Spring. Credits: 4
Philosophers through the ages have asked about the nature of happiness and its contribution to the 'good life.' Happiness is something we all want, but what is it? And why do we all want it so much? What makes us happy and why? Is a 'good life' also a happy one? This course will examine happiness from several different perspectives. We will look at what ancient and contemporary philosophers have said about the nature and importance of happiness in our lives and compare it with some recent work from the field of positive psychology. This is a writing-intensive course that focuses on developing skills in philosophical reading, analysis, and writing.
Applies to requirement(s): Humanities
Other Attribute(s): Writing-Intensive
L. Sizer
Notes: Students will learn to read and critically analyze primary research articles in a number of different fields, and are expected to write a series of short papers and complete a final project.

PHIL-250PD Topics in Philosophy: ‘Ancient Philosophy in Dialogue: China, India, and Greece’
Spring. Credits: 0
This course puts into dialogue the ancient philosophical traditions of China, India, and Greece. We will explore their reflections and debates on how to live a good life, how to gain knowledge, and how to understand our place in the universe. Through close readings of texts, we will compare ancient philosophical conceptions, styles of discourse, and intellectual contexts. The course reconsiders the Eurocentric history and ideologies of many modern conceptions of philosophy.
Applies to requirement(s): Humanities; Multicultural Perspectives
J. Harold
Coreq: Must be taken concurrently with Amherst College’s course of the same name.
Notes: This is the Mount Holyoke College discussion section for the course being run at Amherst College. If accepted at Amherst for the course, you will be added to this section as well.

PHIL-255 Existentialism
Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4
Modernity has brought with it scientific and technological wonders, but it has also uprooted millennia-old convictions about God, morality, and humanity’s place in the universe. In a secular society, how should we choose which values to adopt, or what path in life we should follow? How can we be authentic or true to ourselves in a culture that rewards conformity? What, moreover, is the meaning of life? Existentialism, a philosophical movement that flourished in the 19th and 20th centuries, is unique in trying to provide answers to these questions. Readings are drawn both from philosophical works and from existentialist authors like Kafka, Dostoevsky, and Tolstoy.
Applies to requirement(s): Humanities
J. Koon, M. O'Rourke-Friel

PHIL-260 Topics in Applied Philosophy
These courses ask questions about the ethical and/or conceptual problems pertaining to a practice, such as law, medicine, or caring for the natural environment. Such courses are suitable for philosophy majors as well as for students who are new to philosophy but who are interested in the relevant practice.
PHIL-260EB Topics in Applied Philosophy: 'Ethics in Entrepreneurship and Business'
Fall. Credits: 4
This course uses the traditional approaches of moral philosophy to explore ethical challenges and obligations faced by individuals, businesses, and organizations in an increasingly complex global environment. Through consideration of philosophical theories and particular cases we explore issues such as the social roles and ethical obligations of businesses or organizations; rights and responsibilities of workers, managers, and owners; ethics in sales and marketing; and ethics in a global business environment.
Crosslisted as: EOS-249
Applies to requirement(s): Humanities
Other Attribute(s): Writing-Intensive
L. Sizer
Notes: This course is strongly recommended for students interested in participating in the International Business Ethics Case Competition.

PHIL-272 Metaphysics
Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4
Metaphysics is the study of what world is like. This course will survey some major topics in metaphysics, with a particular focus on radical metaphysical arguments -- arguments that call into question our most basic beliefs about the world. Examples of questions that we will consider include: Do ordinary objects exist? Is there anything that makes persons distinct from other sorts of objects? Could things have been different than the way they in fact are? In answering these questions we will investigate the nature of composite objects, the criteria for personal identity, and the metaphysics of causation, laws of nature, and modality.
Applies to requirement(s): Humanities

PHIL-273 Philosophy of the Arts
Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4
The purpose of this course is to explore philosophical problems concerning the arts and aesthetic experience. Some questions to be explored include: What is the difference between beauty and moral goodness? Can artistic taste be objective? What does it mean for a work of music to be 'sad'? Are the intentions of artists relevant to appreciation? What is the purpose of art criticism? How do pictures represent their objects? Readings will be drawn from both historical and contemporary philosophical writings.
Applies to requirement(s): Humanities
J. Harold

PHIL-281 Advanced Studies in Epistemology
Fall. Credits: 4
As the study of knowledge and related concepts like justification, rationality, and evidence, epistemology is of central importance, and not just to philosophy. This course provides an introduction to epistemology through a number of epistemological problems or puzzles about skepticism, dogmatism, and humility.
Applies to requirement(s): Humanities
K. Vavova
Prereq: 4 credits in Philosophy.
Advisory: The required credits should be from a course with a substantial writing component. If in doubt ask instructor.

PHIL-282 Advanced Studies in Metaphysics
Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4
Metaphysics is the study of what world is like. This course will survey some major topics in metaphysics, with a particular focus on radical metaphysical arguments -- arguments that call into question our most basic beliefs about the world. Examples of questions that we will consider include: Do ordinary objects exist? Is there anything that makes persons distinct from other sorts of objects? Could things have been different than the way they in fact are? In answering these questions we will investigate the nature of composite objects, the criteria for personal identity, and the metaphysics of causation, laws of nature, and modality.
Applies to requirement(s): Humanities
N. Emery
Prereq: 4 credits in philosophy.

PHIL-285 Advanced Studies in Ethics
Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4
What do we owe to ourselves and to others? Which actions are right, which are wrong, and how can we tell the difference? Can we give principled answers to questions like these, or is it just a matter of opinion? We will think critically about such questions and some key theoretical approaches to answering them. We will focus on central traditions of Western moral philosophy, typified by Mill, Kant, and Aristotle. We will also consider vexing contemporary moral issues with an eye to whether these theories can guide our actions. Along the way, we will ask whether the moral theorizing we engage in can really uncover objective moral truths.
Applies to requirement(s): Humanities
K. Vavova
Prereq: 4 credits in philosophy.

PHIL-289PM Advanced Studies in Philosophy: 'Advanced Studies in Philosophy of Mind'
Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4
This course focuses on the relationship between minds and bodies (the 'mind-body problem'), and the nature of mental phenomena. We will discuss the nature of mental features such as thoughts, sensations, emotions and consciousness, and consider their relationship to the seemingly unthinking, unfeeling, grey matter of the brain. We will read some historical responses to these issues but will focus on insights provided by contemporary philosophy and sciences of the mind, including neuroscience.
Applies to requirement(s): Humanities
L. Sizer
Prereq: 4 credits in Philosophy.
Advisory: Students who do not meet the prerequisite but are working towards the Five College Cognitive Neuroscience certificate are encouraged to contact the instructor.

PHIL-295 Independent Study
Fall and Spring. Credits: 1 - 4
The department
Instructor permission required.
PHIL-327 Advanced Logic
Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4
This course uses the predicate calculus to present a careful development of formal elementary number theory, and elementary recursion theory, culminating in a proof of Gödel's incompleteness results. It includes some discussion of the philosophical significance of these results for the foundations of mathematics.
Applies to requirement(s): Humanities
S. Mitchell
Prereq: PHIL-225.

PHIL-328 Non-Classical Logic
Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4
This course looks at the recent flowering of non-classical logics. The most prominent are modal logics concerning necessity and possibility, which have come to dominate work in metaphysics and epistemology. Conditional logics, intuitionist logics, and relevance logics have also become important. These logics are particularly useful in graduate-level classes in philosophy but also are interesting in their own right.
Applies to requirement(s): Humanities
S. Mitchell
Prereq: PHIL-225, MATH-225, or 12 credits in Philosophy.
Advisory: One course in Logic, Mathematics, Computer Science or PHIL-225.

PHIL-334 Topics in Ethics
PHIL-334MA Topics in Ethics: 'Immoral Art'
Spring. Credits: 4
We know it’s wrong to kick puppies for fun – morally wrong. But how do we know this? Wait – do we know it? This class is about moral knowledge: what it is, if we have it, and how we get it (when we do have it). We’ll consider question in moral epistemology such as: Can we gain moral knowledge from testimony? What are the implications of the prevalence of moral disagreement? Do our evolutionary origins pose a challenge to our moral beliefs? And, more generally, should we be moral skeptics?
Applies to requirement(s): Humanities
K. Vavova
Prereq: 8 credits from the Philosophy department in writing intensive courses.

PHIL-334KR Topics in Ethics: 'Knowing Right from Wrong'
Spring. Credits: 4
From Plato's attacks on Homer's poems to the protests against D.W. Griffith's racist film The Birth of a Nation to the recent spotlight cast by the #metoo movement, it is clear that the relationship between art and morality is a difficult one. Are some works of art inherently immoral? If so, why? What should we say about works of art that are created by immoral artists? Or works that have morally troubling social effects? What is the relationship between an artwork's moral status and its value as a work of art? Are moral and aesthetic judgments objective? How are they related? We will survey the current state of the philosophical debate over the conflict between moral and aesthetic value.
Applies to requirement(s): Humanities
Other Attribute(s): Writing-Intensive
J. Harold
Prereq: 8 credits from the Philosophy department.
Advisory: One previous course in ethics or philosophy of art; at least one course in philosophy that is writing-intensive.

PHIL-334NE Topics in Ethics: 'Neuroethics'
Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4
Neuroethics draws on the tools of philosophical analysis to investigate the role of neuroscience in our personal, social, and ethical lives. This class will look at the ethics of neuroscientific interventions such as cognitive enhancement, mind reading, and lie detection. We will examine how the neurosciences might inform philosophical discussions about human nature, personality, and ethics. In addition, we will look at the evidential role of neuroscientific evidence and how neuroscience technologies such as fMRI have influenced our thinking about the mind/brain and person.
Crosslisted as: NEURO-309NE
Applies to requirement(s): Humanities
L. Sizer
Prereq: 8 credits from the Philosophy department or 4 credits from Philosophy and 4 credits from Neuroscience and Behavior.

PHIL-350 Topics in Philosophy
PHIL-350FR Topics in Philosophy: 'Freedom and Responsibility'
Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4
Is free will possible if all our actions are causally determined? Might we be justified in blaming, praising, rewarding, or punishing people even if their actions are not free? Abstract metaphysical questions about freedom intersect in important ways with everyday problems in our relationships with others and our attitudes about moral ignorance, addiction, and madness. This course will examine these issues side by side in the hope of improving our understanding of freedom and responsibility.
Applies to requirement(s): Humanities
K. Vavova
Prereq: 8 credits from the Philosophy department.
Advisory: The required credits should be from a course with a substantial writing component. If in doubt ask instructor.

PHIL-350MD Topics in Philosophy: 'Meaning and Reality: Michael Dummett'
Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4
This course is a study of 20th Century analytic philosophy using one philosopher to focus the course, Michael Dummett. Dummett was one of the greatest philosophers of the 20th century. He gave a theory of meaning using work by Frege and Wittgenstein. He then used this to argue that if our knowledge of the Universe is to be objective, then we cannot conceive of that Universe as real. That is, it is not in existence independently of our ability to find out about it. He was the first to introduce non-classical logic as a means to address the nature of truth. This introduction to his work will fill in the background to this argument, and thereby give an overview of 20th century philosophy.
Applies to requirement(s): Humanities
S. Mitchell
Prereq: One logic course (which may be at the 100 level) and 8 credits in the department at the 200 level or above.
PHIL-350PB Topics in Philosophy: 'Public Philosophy'
Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4
In this course we will take up the question of what it means to investigate a philosophical question in a way that is accessible to a broad audience. Students will develop their own philosophical project in an academically rigorous way and then find a way to present that project outside the classroom. Along the way we investigate the question of what counts as philosophy and why. Students should have extensive experience writing philosophy papers and be ready and willing to work independently on a philosophical topic of their choosing.
Applies to requirement(s): Humanities
N. Emery
Instructor permission required.
Prereq: 8 credits in Philosophy and permission of instructor.
Advisory: Registration for this course is by instructor permission only. Please email emery@mtholyoke.edu with a short description of your previous work in philosophy during advising week in order to get permission to register.

PHIL-350SE Topics in Philosophy: 'Philosophy and Science of Emotion'
Fall. Credits: 4
This course is an interdisciplinary investigation of the nature of emotions and their influences on our thoughts and actions. While we will draw from a variety of disciplines, the nature and motivations of the inquiry are philosophical. We will consider: what are emotions? Are they bodily responses? Thoughts? Feelings? What roles do cultures play in shaping our emotions? What functions do emotions serve? We will examine evidence and arguments offered by philosophy, psychology, neuroscience, anthropology and evolutionary theory, and consider how these perspectives do or don't inform each other, as well as how they can help us understand the nature of emotions.
Crosslisted as: NEURO-309SE
Applies to requirement(s): Humanities
Other Attribute(s): Writing-Intensive
L. Sizer
Prereq: 8 credits in Philosophy or Neuroscience and Behavior, or 4 credits in each.

PHIL-350TM Topics in Philosophy: 'Philosophy of Time'
Fall. Credits: 4
Does time flow? What is the difference between the future and the past? Is time travel possible? This course will survey the major topics in the philosophy of time from Augustine’s Confessions and the Leibniz-Clarke correspondence to relativity theory. Along the way we will take up philosophical issues regarding the relevance of intuition, the nature of causation, determinism, and freedom, and the relationship between science and philosophy.
Applies to requirement(s): Humanities
Other Attribute(s): Writing-Intensive
N. Emery
Prereq: 8 credits from the Philosophy department.

PHIL-375 Philosophy of Film
An examination of different theoretical issues concerning the nature of film and film viewing. Topics vary yearly.

PHIL-375AV Philosophy of Film: 'Artists vs. Audiences'
Not Scheduled for This Year. Credits: 4
Usually, an artist produces a work, and then an audience experiences that work. However, sometimes audiences influence what a work means and even how an ongoing story unfolds. This course focuses on works of popular, serialized art in which the possibilities for artist/audience interaction are great, and so is the potential for conflict. We look at serial novels, film series, television shows, and new media (such as TikTok), among others. What are the rights of artists to control their works? What rights do audiences have to alter or create new works based on an existing work? What should we do when these rights conflict? What makes a "bad fan" bad? When do audiences become artists?
Crosslisted as: FMT-330AV
Applies to requirement(s): Humanities
J. Harold
Prereq: 8 credits in Philosophy or 4 credits in Philosophy and 4 credits in Film, Media, Theater.

PHIL-395 Independent Study
Fall and Spring. Credits: 1 - 8
The department
Instructor permission required.

Courses Meeting Philosophy Area Requirements for the Major

History of Philosophy

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<tr>
<th>Code</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PHIL-201</td>
<td>Philosophical Foundations of Western Thought: The Greek Period</td>
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<tr>
<td>PHIL-202</td>
<td>Philosophical Foundations of Western Thought: The Modern Period</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>PHIL-212</td>
<td>Philosophical Foundations of Chinese Thought: The Ancient Period</td>
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<td>PHIL-250PD</td>
<td>Topics in Philosophy: 'Ancient Philosophy in Dialogue: China, India, and Greece'</td>
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<td>PHIL-255</td>
<td>Existentialism</td>
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Ethics and Value Theory

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<tr>
<td>PHIL-180DE</td>
<td>Topics in Applied Philosophy: 'Data Ethics'</td>
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<tr>
<td>PHIL-184</td>
<td>Environmental Ethics</td>
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<td>PHIL-205</td>
<td>Ethics</td>
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<td>PHIL-242</td>
<td>Social and Political Philosophy</td>
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<td>PHIL-248</td>
<td>Philosophical Issues in Race and Racism</td>
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<td>PHIL-250HG</td>
<td>Topics in Philosophy: 'Happiness and The Good Life'</td>
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<td>PHIL-260EB</td>
<td>Topics in Applied Philosophy: 'Ethics in Entrepreneurship and Business'</td>
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<td>PHIL-273</td>
<td>Philosophy of the Arts</td>
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<td>PHIL-285</td>
<td>Advanced Studies in Ethics</td>
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<tr>
<td>PHIL-220</td>
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<tr>
<td>PHIL-222</td>
<td>Philosophy of Quantum Mechanics</td>
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<td>PHIL-226</td>
<td>Philosophy of Religion</td>
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<td>PHIL-272</td>
<td>Metaphysics</td>
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<td>PHIL-281</td>
<td>Advanced Studies in Epistemology</td>
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<td>PHIL-282</td>
<td>Advanced Studies in Metaphysics</td>
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<td>Advanced Logic</td>
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