PHILOSOPHY

Department Overview

The study of philosophy provides the concepts, analytical skills, and creative perception to engage deeply with the human situation. Courses in this discipline develop the habits of mind that make it possible to engage our changing world in a perceptive, intelligent, sensitive, and creative manner. The major emphasizes active engagement with philosophical texts, with the histories and traditions of human thought, and with current issues of deep significance.

Students are drawn to philosophy for a variety of reasons, and so the major aims to provide flexibility for students to pursue their own interests while also providing a solid foundation for those students who wish to continue with philosophy at the graduate level.

Chair of the Department of Philosophy: Larry Jorgensen

Professors: Larry Jorgensen, William Lewis, Reginald Lilly

Associate Professor: Silvia Carli

Assistant Professor: Susan Kizuk

Teaching Professor: Peter Murray

Philosophy B.A.

For a major in Philosophy, students must fulfill the requirements in each of the areas below as well as satisfy the general college requirements for the degree of bachelor of arts. Students must take a minimum of 30 credit hours in the major. *(Effective for students entering fall 2020: the minimum is 33 credit hours in the major.)*

Code	Title	Hours
Foundational Requirements [1]		
History Sequence		
PH 203 & PH 204	Ancient Greek Philosophy and Modern Philosophy from Descartes to Kant	8
Logic		
PH 207	Introduction to Logic	4
Electives		
Select six additional philosophy courses of 3 credit hours or more satisfying the following:		19-24
Select at most one elective course at the 100-level		
Select at least four elective courses at the 300-level		
History of Philosophy Electives		
Select one 300-level elective of the following:		
PH 306	Nineteenth-Century Philosophy	
PH 307	Twentieth-Century Philosophy	
PH 308	American Philosophy	
PH 327	Great Philosophers	
PH 329	Seminar in Kant	
PH 330	Advanced Topics in Philosophy (when the topic is historical)	
Senior Coda		
PH 375	Senior Portfolio	4
Maturity Requirement		
At least 6 credit hours must be taken at the 300-level during the senior year.		
Total Hours		**35-40**

[1] The Philosophy Department recommends completing the Foundational Requirements early in the major, by the end of sophomore year if possible. It is also strongly recommended that students complete a 100-level philosophy course before taking other philosophy courses.

Philosophy Minor

Requirements for a minor in philosophy are five courses of at least 3 credit hours each totaling 18 credit hours, with the following requirements:

Code	Title	Hours
Required Course		
Select one of the following:		3-4
One 100-level course		
PH 203	Ancient Greek Philosophy	
PH 204	Modern Philosophy from Descartes to Kant	
Additional Requirements		
Select four courses; at least two must be at the 300-level		12-16
Total Hours		**15-20**

Honors

Majors must meet the College requirements for departmental honors and attain a GPA in the major of 3.700 or higher.

Course Listing

PH 101 - Introduction to Philosophy
Credits: 3
A topical and historical survey, this course will introduce the student to the discipline of philosophy. Through analysis of texts, through discussion, through participation, and through lecture, the student will gain an understanding of philosophy as both a unique discipline that attempts to answer the most profound questions about ourselves and our world and as a practice that illuminates our scientific, spiritual, social, and individual existences.
Note(s): Fulfills Humanities requirement; fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement.

PH 110W - Political Philosophy: An Introduction
Credits: 4
An examination of who should have power over others, of the forms that this power should take, and of the possibility of resisting and reconfiguring these power relations. Students will read and discuss classical and contemporary texts in social and political philosophy to answer these questions, and to pose related questions about justice, equality, freedom, citizenship, and social organization.
Note(s): Fulfills Expository Writing and Humanities requirements; fulfills Humanistic Inquiry and Writing requirements. This course is not an equivalent or a substitution to PL 102.

PH 112H - The Cave: Philosophy in the Shadows
Credits: 4
An introductory philosophy course that looks at the powerful metaphor of philosophy as a way of emerging from the darkness of the cave into the light of day. Students will read seminal works in philosophy, each of which has a similar argumentative structure: being released from faulty preconceptions (our lives in the cave) in order to ascend toward intellectual illumination (the emergence from the cave), only to return to our previous lives (a return to the cave, but now wiser). While each of the authors reflects on this process in some way, they are rather diverse in how they understand the nature of philosophy and how philosophy might help us to live our lives. Proposals will include ascents toward ethics, religion, science, freedom, and social justice.
Note(s): Fulfills Humanities requirement; fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement.

PH 203 - Ancient Greek Philosophy
Credits: 4
Ancient Greek thinkers engaged in a continuous dialogue about certain core philosophical questions, such as: Why do we philosophize? What is the nature of the cosmos, and what is the place of human beings in it? How do we know the world and ourselves? What is it to be human? What is happiness, and how can we achieve it? This course enters into that conversation through a careful reading and discussion of primary texts. Special attention will be given to Plato's and Aristotle's thought.
Note(s): Fulfills Humanities requirement; fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement.

PH 204 - Modern Philosophy from Descartes to Kant
Credits: 4
An introduction to major thinkers and themes of seventeenth and eighteenth-century Europe. The dynamics of the Scientific Revolution, the collection of new discoveries and inventions, and the evolving experimental methods in the early modern period led philosophers to a profound reappraisal of fundamental issues, such as the sources and limits of knowledge, the relation between mind and body, theories of human freedom and personal identity, and the apparently competing desires to explain the surrounding world in both natural and religious terms. Students will investigate how these philosophical developments led to distinctively modern ways of thinking about nature and the self. Primary documents will be read throughout.
Note(s): Fulfills Humanities requirement; fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement.

PH 207 - Introduction to Logic
Credits: 4
An introduction to the basic concepts and methods of modern symbolic logic, with a focus on their application to proper reasoning. Students learn how to represent sentences in logical notation, to reconstruct arguments in that notation, to assess arguments for validity and soundness, and to prove conclusions from premises using a system of natural deduction. Students also learn to recognize common argument forms and common mistakes in reasoning (fallacies), are introduced to philosophical issues related to logic, and learn how symbolic logic is the basis for the digital computer.
Note(s): Fulfills QR2 requirement; fulfills CS 106 prereq.

PH 210 - Philosophy and the Arts
Credits: 3
A philosophical study of the arts, art movements, their various histories and natures, as well as the questions they raise for the artist, the public, and, more broadly, contemporary culture. Classical as well as contemporary philosophies of art and art movements will be examined.
Note(s): Fulfills Humanities requirement; fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement.

PH 211 - Ethics
Credits: 3
A critical examination of the nature and principles of some of the major ethical theories proposed in the history of Western thought. Theories studied may include virtue ethics, natural law, deontological ethics, social contract, and utilitarianism. The course may also include some consideration of the application of the theories studied to selected contemporary moral issues.
Note(s): Offered alternate years. Fulfills Humanities requirement; fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement.

PH 212 - Philosophy of Race
Credits: 4
Examination of arguments and ideas about the ontological, ethical, and political status of race. By exploring and critiquing historical and contemporary understandings of race and by practically applying these insights to the analysis of contemporary situations--personal, ethical, political and scientific--students will understand and be able to better affect the way in which race functions to shape our selves, our cultures, and our world.
Prerequisites: *SSP 100.*
Note(s): Fulfills Humanities and Social Sciences requirements; fulfills Humanistic Inquiry and Bridge Experience requirements.

PH 215 - Buddhist Philosophy
Credits: 3
An introduction to selected themes, schools, and thinkers of the Buddhist philosophical tradition in India, Tibet, China, and Japan. Buddhist metaphysics and ethics are examined with reference to the nature of reality and the person, causality and action, wisdom and compassion, emptiness and nihilism. Comparisons are made to Western philosophers, especially regarding the Buddhist critique of substance and the Buddhist ideal of compassionate openness to the world.
Note(s): Offered alternate years. Fulfills non-Western Cultures and Humanities requirements; fulfills Humanistic Inquiry and Global Cultural Perspectives requirements.

PH 221 - Memory & Retrospective Justice
Credits: 4
A course focusing on memory, memorialization, and retrospective justice in the United States, focusing particularly on issues of race, taking as its case study the contested memory of the Civil War in the United States and the enduring systemic injustices that resulted from national efforts at reconciliation. Retrospective justice focuses on repairing historic wrongs, wrongs that resulted in serious and lasting harms and yet the primary actors are long dead. In this course, students will investigate the promises and limits of methods of responding to historic injustices, focusing in particular on three areas: (a) memorials, monuments, and memorial spaces; (b) truth telling and efforts at reshaping the narratives; and (c) reparations.
Prerequisites: *SSP 100.*
Note(s): Fulfills Humanities requirement; fulfills Humanistic Inquiry and Bridge Experience requirements.

PH 222 - Law, Property and (In)Humanity
Credits: 4
A study of the law from legal, philosophical, and human rights points of view. The focus will be on the philosophical conceptions of personhood and property that have been at the basis of property law for 300 years and that shape disadvantageously and in a material manner contemporary communities of color. Special attention is given to how American treaty and property law has been used an instrument of disenfranchisement and oppression of the Native American and African American communities. The challenge that modern property law makes for environmental activism is also considered.
Prerequisites: *SSP-100*
Note(s): Fulfills Bridge Experience and Humanistic Inquiry requirements.

PH 223 - Love and Friendship
Credits: 3
An exploration of love and friendship as understood in a variety of contexts from ancient Greece to the contemporary world. Students will learn how a number of philosophers think about personal bonds, self-love, the effect of gender inequality in shaping intimate relations, the difference between infatuation and enduring affection, and the power of love and friendship to fuel political movements.
Note(s): Fulfills Humanities and Cultural Diversity requirements.

PH 225 - Environmental Philosophy
Credits: 3
An introduction to philosophical questions regarding the relation of humans to the environment. This course explores both foundational issues such as our understanding of nature and value as well as specific problems in environmental ethics such as animal rights, duty to future generations, and the justification of public policy. In addition to these explorations, students will have the opportunity to apply the knowledge gained in this class by developing an environmental ethics embodied by the institutions and practices that surround us.
Note(s): Fulfills Humanities requirement; fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement.

PH 230 - Topics in Philosophy
Credits: 1-4
The study of a selected topic in philosophy.
Note(s): Course may be repeated with permission of the department. Fulfills Humanities requirement; fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement.

PH 241 - Philosophy of Mind
Credits: 3
A philosophical (as opposed to a psychological or biological) approach to the study of mind. Students will investigate the metaphysical foundations for a philosophy of mind, the nature of mental representation, and the "hard problem" of consciousness.
Note(s): Fulfills Humanities requirement; fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement.

PH 304 - Social-Political Philosophy
Credits: 4
A study of the nature of political community and of social institutions. Topics to be discussed include the nature and purposes of political community, the relation of ethics to political life and social institutions, the notions of equality, liberty, power, and justice, and the nature of rights.
Prerequisites: *One course in philosophy or permission of instructor.*
Note(s): Offered alternate years. Fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement.

PH 306 - Nineteenth-Century Philosophy
Credits: 4
An examination of major figures in nineteenth-century philosophy, such as G. W. F. Hegel, Schopenhauer, Marx, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Comte, Mill, Peirce, and Frege.
Prerequisites: *PH 204 or permission of instructor.*
Note(s): Fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement.

PH 307 - Twentieth-Century Philosophy
Credits: 4
An examination of a selected number of twentieth-century philosophers such as Adorno, Ayer, Davidson, Dewey, Foucault, Heidegger, Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Quine, and Wittgenstein.
Prerequisites: *PH 204 or permission of instructor.*
Note(s): Fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement.

PH 308 - American Philosophy
Credits: 4
An exploration of America's indigenous philosophical tradition, this course seeks to understand how various native thinkers have sought to develop modes of thought that both supersede and improve upon European models and which are adequate to the American experience in its diversity, originality, and totality. Starting with Ralph Waldo Emerson and continuing with such philosophers as C.S. Peirce, William James, John Dewey, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Alain Leroy Locke, and Susanne Langer, this course will examine a history of such attempts, their philosophical methods, and their conclusions. In addition to gaining an understanding of various American philosophers' independent contributions to the discipline and their relationship to the Western philosophical tradition, this course will situate American philosophy within the post-Civil War cultural and scientific context that gave rise to that most characteristic of American philosophies: pragmatism.
Prerequisites: *PH 204 or permission of instructor.*
Note(s): Fulfills Humanities requirement; fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement.

PH 311 - Existential Philosophy
Credits: 4
A study of the central concepts of existential philosophy as found in the writings of such thinkers as Nietzsche, Heidegger, Sartre, Camus, and Marcel. Concepts such as freedom, facticity, dread, nothingness, the absurd, being-for-itself, and being-in-itself will be examined.
Prerequisites: *PH 204 or RE 241 or permission of instructor.*
Note(s): Offered alternate years. Fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement.

PH 314 - Philosophy of Law
Credits: 4
Analysis and discussion of various topics and approaches to the philosophy of law or jurisprudence. Readings may be chosen from classic philosophers as well as from modern legal positivists and realists.
Note(s): Offered alternate years. Fulfills Humanities requirement; fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement.

PH 315 - Flesh: Thinking (with) Bodies
Credits: 4
This seminar focuses on the experience and theorization of human embodiment from poly-disciplinary perspectives. Point of departure is Descartes' mind-body dualism that has had a far-reaching influence on the humanities, sciences, and general culture. Students will critically examine this Cartesianism through the study of perception (especially touch), of psychology, of bodies of culture (race and gender), as well as of psychoanalysis and trauma. The body in law and politics, visual and performing arts, sports, and religion are other avenues of possible inquiry.
Prerequisites: *One Philosophy course or permission of the instructor. (Fulfills humanistic inquiry requirement; Fulfills humanities requirement).*

PH 316 - Artificial Intelligence: Metaphysics of Mind and Ethical Issues
Credits: 4
An examination of the conceptual foundations of artificial intelligence (AI) and the moral dimensions of our increasing reliance on it. Issues we address in this course include: What is intelligence, and what makes an AI "artificially" intelligent? What is the relation between intelligence and the other aspects of psychology, e.g., sensations, emotions, moods, beliefs, desires, etc.? Could an AI system come to have rights and duties, or will AIs always just be tools? If AI systems cannot be morally or legally responsible for what they do, who should be? What ethical principles should we program into AI systems to avoid the perpetuation of historical injustices and structural inequities in our society? Is ethical decision-making programmable at all?
Prerequisites: *One course in philosophy.*
Note(s): Fulfills Humanities requirement; fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement.

PH 317 - Personal Identity
Credits: 4
An examination of the concepts of personhood and identity as they relate to animal rights, abortion rights, environmental justice, end-of-life care, and penal justice. Issues we address in this course include: What is a person, as opposed to an animal or plant? When do we become persons, or are we persons from the beginning of our existence? What is the role of a community in our being and becoming a person? Can only a member of the species Homo sapiens be a person? What determines one's identity in the sense that answers the question "Who am I (really)?" Are self-narrative and/or social identity markers essential to making us the particular person that we are?
Prerequisites: *One course in philosophy.*
Note(s): Fulfills Humanities requirement; fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement.

PH 327 - Great Philosophers
Credits: 4
A course in depth in the philosophy of a single great philosopher, philosophical school, or tradition.
Prerequisites: *One course in philosophy.*
Note(s): Course may be repeated with a different philosopher, philosophical school, or tradition. Fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement.

PH 327A-D - Plato
Credits: 4-4
A course in depth in the philosophy of a single great philosopher, philosophical school, or tradition.
Note(s): Fulfills humanistic inquiry.

PH 327H - Hegel
Credits: 4

PH 327X - Levinas
Credits: 4

PH 328 - Metaphysics
Credits: 4
A study of the most fundamental concepts of being as developed in several major philosophers from the Greeks to the present. Discussion will focus on such topics as God, time, space, substance, essence, existence, process, causality, and value.
Prerequisites: *PH 204 or permission of instructor.*
Note(s): Fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement.

PH 329 - Seminar in Kant
Credits: 4
A study of Immanuel Kant, the pivotal thinker of modern Western philosophy. Kant offers a critique of both early modern empiricist and rationalists, introduces the transcendental standpoint into philosophy, and sets the stage for nineteenth- and twentieth-century philosophers, all of whom respond to his critique of theoretical and practical reason in one way or another.
Prerequisites: *PH 204 or permission of instructor.*
Note(s): Fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement.

PH 330 - Advanced Topics in Philosophy
Credits: 1-4
The study of a selected topic in philosophy.
Prerequisites: *one course in philosophy or permission of instructor. Course may be repeated with a different topic.*
Note(s): Fulfills humanistic inquiry.

PH 341 - Philosophy of Literature
Credits: 4
This seminar examines philosophies of literature and literary criticism. Various schools of thought, including phenomenology, hermeneutics, structuralism, deconstruction, and psychoanalysis, may be examined particularly closely, as well as some of the founding philosophical texts in literary theory. There may also be a study of selected literary texts.
Prerequisites: *One course in philosophy or permission of instructor.*
Note(s): Fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement.

PH 371 - Independent Study
Credits: 3
A reading course in an area or a philosopher not available in this depth in other courses.
Prerequisites: *Permission of department.*

PH 375 - Senior Portfolio
Credits: 4
A capstone course in which students develop a portfolio of representative work in philosophy. Students will compile at least three research papers from previous course work, which will form the basis of their senior portfolio. The development of the portfolio will have at least three stages: (1) a re-envisioning and significant revision of a previous research paper, including doing further research into scholarly literature on the topic, with an opportunity to explore interdisciplinary connections; (2) the redevelopment of that paper into a short presentation; and (3) a reflection exercise in which students synthesize their work in the portfolio, drawing connections with other work they have done at Skidmore and considering the ways in which it might inform their future endeavors.
Note(s): Open to senior Philosophy majors; permission of the instructor required for minors. Fulfills the writing requirement in the major. Offered each spring. Fulfills Humanistic Inquiry and Senior Experience Coda requirements.

PH 376 - Senior Thesis
Credits: 3
Individual conferences with senior majors in the areas of their research projects.

PHDS 217 - Film Truth
Credits: 4
An interdisciplinary investigation of the possibility of truth and objectivity in documentary film. Students will examine the history of documentary practice and theory, including topics such as mimetic theory, narrative realism, scientific truth, juridical truth, institutional truth, film truth, direct cinema, self-reflexive cinema, and constructivism. The course will integrate methods from philosophy, aesthetics, and film studies.
Note(s): Fulfills Humanities requirement.

PR 324 - Philosophy Of Religion
Credits: 3
An investigation of the fundamental paradoxes of religious belief. Questions to be considered will include the arguments for the existence of God, the problem of suffering and evil, the nature of mystical knowledge, and the rise of modern religious skepticism.
Prerequisites: *One course in philosophy or religion or permission of instructor.*
Note(s): Offered alternate years. Fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement.