

PHILOSOPHY (PHIL)

Philosophy has always been at the heart of liberal education, deepening and enriching the lives of those who pursue it. The philosophy major provides students with the opportunity to confront a wide variety of questions, especially those that cannot be dealt with in the framework of other disciplines. Such questions include those about the ultimate nature of reality: Does God exist? Are minds distinct from bodies? Are there more things between heaven and Earth than are dreamed of in science? Other questions probe what it is to know: Do we know that material bodies external to our minds exist? What does it mean to justify a belief? Still other questions are about how we ought to be or act: What is a good person? Are there moral rules? How are they justified? Must we obey them?

Philosophy also concerns itself with other disciplines: What makes something a work of art? What distinguishes a scientific theory from a religious theory or myth? Is capitalism amoral? Is legal authority moral or political?

The Department of Philosophy offers a wide range of courses exposing students to the full scope of philosophical activity. Grappling with major primary texts from the history of philosophy is an important emphasis of the program, for philosophy today is the continuation of a conversation that extends back to the ancient Greeks and the Vedic scriptures. Philosophy also always has wrestled with cutting-edge topics emerging in the current culture. Some recent examples are: What are the prospects for machines with mental lives? What are the implications of new views in cosmology? How do we handle the pressing ethical dilemmas brought on by emerging medical technologies, or by the historically unparalleled rate of destruction of the Earth's environment? Are gender and race socially constructed concepts rather than biological concepts?

Options in the Major

Students may select one of three options for the philosophy major, but are not required to do so. The options do not add additional requirements to the general philosophy major, but rather focus philosophy electives in a specific area.

- The **ethics and social responsibility (ESR) option** provides official recognition for those who choose to emphasize concern with moral responsibility in personal and social contexts, including the political and corporate arenas. You will choose courses in environmental ethics, law, evolution, social and political philosophy, and feminism.
- The **business, innovation, and technology (BIT) option** provides official recognition for those who choose to emphasize the study of the relationships between markets, technology, and human well-being. You will choose courses in the philosophy of artificial intelligence, evolution, neuroscience, biotechnology, business ethics, economic policy, environmental ethics and other high-impact subjects.
- The **political and legal philosophy (PLP) option** provides official recognition for those who choose to emphasize the systematic study of the fundamental philosophical questions regarding politics, law and justice, and how they apply to contemporary issues. You will choose courses in the nature of justice, limits of state power, balancing liberty and equality, capitalism vs. socialism, authoritarian challenges to democracy, fascism and antifascism, privacy, freedom of expression, police ethics, justifications for punishment, racial and

gender injustice, wealth inequality and crime, immigration, and other issues at the interface of ethics, justice, law and states.

Research

Students are strongly encouraged to consider the possibility of presenting research at the [Philosophy Department Undergraduate Research Conference](#) and/or fulfilling an [undergraduate research grant](#). This is especially encouraged for students considering graduate school in philosophy.

Graduate Preparatory Emphasis

This emphasis is strongly recommended for students who plan to do graduate work in philosophy. Beyond the ten (10) courses required for the major, such students should select, with their adviser's approval, two additional philosophy courses above the 400-level, for a total of twelve (12) courses. [Consult the Department of Philosophy website for additional graduate school planning information.](#)

Honors in Philosophy

To graduate "With Honors" in philosophy, students will be expected to complete their philosophy capstone requirement; complete two additional 700-level PHIL courses (The 700-level course options will vary depending upon which departmental honors option [thesis or portfolio] the student fulfills; they will be expected to have an overall GPA of 3.5 or above; they will engage in independent study and research (under the supervision of a faculty member) beyond the requirements of their coursework; and, they will be expected to present and defend a culminating project to the department's faculty. [Consult the Department of Philosophy website for more details.](#)

Distinction on Senior Thesis

Distinction on Senior Thesis is granted by a unanimous determination of the student's committee that the thesis exceeds A-level work and is worthy of special recognition.

<https://cola.unh.edu/philosophy>

Programs

- [Philosophy Major \(B.A.\)](#)
- [Philosophy Major: Business, Innovation & Technology Option \(B.A.\)](#)
- [Philosophy Major: Ethics and Social Responsibility Option \(B.A.\)](#)
- [Philosophy Major: Political and Legal Philosophy Option \(B.A.\)](#)
- [Philosophy Minor](#)
- [Philosophy of Business, Innovation, & Technology Cognate](#)
- [Political and Legal Philosophy Cognate](#)

Courses

Philosophy (PHIL)

PHIL 401 - Introduction to Philosophy

Credits: 4

This course gives a basic grounding in Philosophy. We explore enduring questions that we have all grappled with: Does God exist? Do we have free will? How can we lead fulfilling lives? No background in philosophy is needed, only an open and inquiring mind.

Attributes: Humanities(Disc)

Equivalent(s): PHIL 401H, PHIL 401W

Grade Mode: Letter Grading

PHIL 405 - Critical Thinking

Credits: 4

One of the most salient features of our culture is that there is so much BS. Most people are overconfident about their ability to avoid being taken in by it. This course aims to sharpen your BS detection skills and help you to diagnose errors in reasoning. You will learn how to check your (often unreliable) gut reactions, improve your critical thinking skills, and identify specious arguments across a range of topics.

Attributes: Humanities(Disc); Inquiry (Discovery)

Grade Mode: Letter Grading

PHIL 410 - Happiness, Well-Being , and a Good Life

Credits: 4

A sustained exploration of happiness, well-being, and a good life. Are they the same? If not, do any include the others, and can they conflict? What sorts of things might contribute to or detract from happiness, well-being, and having a good life? Comparing work on these topics in philosophy and psychology will be a key theme in the course.

Attributes: Humanities(Disc); Inquiry (Discovery)

Grade Mode: Letter Grading

PHIL 412 - Beginning Logic

Credits: 4

Principles of reasoning and development of symbolic techniques for evaluating arguments.

Attributes: Quantitative Reasoning(Disc)

Equivalent(s): PHIL 412H

Grade Mode: Letter Grading

PHIL 417 - God, Religion, and the Meaning of Life

Credits: 4

An introductory philosophical exploration of the relationship between reason and religious experience, particularly as this relationship has developed in and in response to, the great world religions.

Attributes: Humanities(Disc); Writing Intensive Course

Grade Mode: Letter Grading

PHIL 419 - Race, Gender and Social Justice

Credits: 4

We are in the midst of a social reckoning in the United States. Black Lives Matter and #Me Too have turned a spotlight on the murder of black people by police officers and the sexual assault of women. Public health events reveal racialized health care inequities and unfair domestic and care work for women. This course provides philosophical tools that help us to understand our social world, its history, and to consider how to contribute solutions.

Attributes: Humanities(Disc); Inquiry (Discovery)

Equivalent(s): PHIL 419W

Grade Mode: Letter Grading

PHIL 420 - Introduction to Philosophy of Law and Justice

Credits: 4

Introduction to debates regarding how ethical values relate to law and justice. Is justice universal or relative? Are laws making progress toward justice? How should we balance liberty and equality? Should freedom of speech be an absolute right? Does the state have too much power, or too little? Are laws applied fairly by police and the justice system? Why do we punish? What is the relationship between wealth, race, and justice? Discussion.

Attributes: Humanities(Disc); Writing Intensive Course

Grade Mode: Letter Grading

PHIL 421 - Philosophy and the Arts

Credits: 4

Contemporary philosophic concerns and perspectives as reflected in one or more of the arts (literature, theatre, film, music, plastic art).

Attributes: FinePerformingArts(Discovery); Inquiry (Discovery); Writing Intensive Course

Equivalent(s): PHIL 421H

Grade Mode: Letter Grading

PHIL 424 - The Future of Humanity: Science, Technology, and Society

Credits: 4

Consideration of the impacts of science and technology on humanity from a philosophical perspective. Topics often include genetic engineering, automated labor, advanced weaponry, artificial intelligence, social media and data extraction, space exploration, alien contact, virtual realities, transhumanism, and the future of humanity as an interplanetary species.

Attributes: Environment,TechSociety(Disc)

Equivalent(s): PHIL 424H

Grade Mode: Letter Grading

PHIL 424H - Honors/The Future of Humanity: Science, Technology, and Society

Credits: 4

Consideration of the impacts of science and technology on humanity from a philosophical perspective. Topics often include genetic engineering, automated labor, advanced weaponry, artificial intelligence, social media and data extraction, space exploration, alien contact, virtual realities, transhumanism, and the future of humanity as an interplanetary species.

Attributes: Environment,TechSociety(Disc); Honors course

Equivalent(s): PHIL 424

Grade Mode: Letter Grading

PHIL 430 - Ethics and Society

Credits: 4

Critical study of principles and arguments advanced in discussion of current moral and social issues. Possible topics: violence, rules of warfare, sexual morality, human rights, punishment, abortion.

Attributes: Humanities(Disc)

Equivalent(s): PHIL 430H, PHIL 430W

Grade Mode: Letter Grading

PHIL 430W - Ethics and Society

Credits: 4

Critical study of principles and arguments advanced in discussion of current moral and social issues. Possible topics: violence, rules of warfare, sexual morality, human rights, punishment, abortion.

Attributes: Humanities(Disc); Writing Intensive Course

Equivalent(s): PHIL 430, PHIL 430H

Grade Mode: Letter Grading

PHIL 431 - Business Ethics**Credits: 4**

An interdisciplinary study of ethical issues in business. This course, taught collaboratively by business school and philosophy department faculty, applies philosophical perspectives, critical thinking, and analysis to ethical decision-making and implementation in the workplace as well as the broader context of other businesses, customers, society, and the environment.

Attributes: Humanities(Disc)

Grade Mode: Letter Grading

PHIL 435 - Human Nature and Evolution**Credits: 4**

Philosophy of biology and the evolutionary process. Readings of scientists and philosophers' commentary on scientists. Examination of the differences between scientific debate and philosophic debate. Philosophical study of scientific theory stressing humans' place in the natural world and the ethical implication of humans as natural beings in the evolutionary process.

Attributes: Environment,TechSociety(Disc)

Equivalent(s): PHIL 435H

Grade Mode: Letter Grading

PHIL 436 - Social and Political Philosophy**Credits: 4**

Examines social and political thought that may include texts from ancient through contemporary times, addressing topics such as natural rights, revolution, law, freedom, justice, power. Questions may include: What is a community, and how are individuals related to communities? Can any particular form of government be morally justified, and if so, what kind of government? Can anarchism work? Is there something wrong with a society in which there is private ownership of property? What is oppressive? What is freedom, and are we free? What roles should different forms of power play in a society? Could and should there be a genderless society? Is ethnic diversity valuable?.

Attributes: Humanities(Disc); Inquiry (Discovery)

Equivalent(s): PHIL 436H, PHIL 436W, PHIL 437

Grade Mode: Letter Grading

PHIL 436H - Honors/Social and Political Philosophy**Credits: 4**

Examines social and political thought that may include texts from ancient through contemporary times, addressing topics such as natural rights, revolution, law, freedom, justice, power. Questions may include: What is a community, and how are individuals related to communities? Can any particular form of government be morally justified, and if so, what kind of government? Can anarchism work? Is there something wrong with a society in which there is private ownership of property? What is oppressive? What is freedom, and are we free? What roles should different forms of power play in a society? Could and should there be a genderless society? Is ethnic diversity valuable?.

Attributes: Honors course; Humanities(Disc); Inquiry (Discovery); Writing Intensive Course

Equivalent(s): PHIL 436, PHIL 436W, PHIL 437

Grade Mode: Letter Grading

PHIL 436W - Social and Political Philosophy**Credits: 4**

Examines social and political thought that may include texts from ancient through contemporary times, addressing topics such as natural rights, revolution, law, freedom, justice, power. Questions may include: What is a community, and how are individuals related to communities? Can any particular form of government be morally justified, and if so, what kind of government? Can anarchism work? Is there something wrong with a society in which there is private ownership of property? What is oppressive? What is freedom, and are we free? What roles should different forms of power play in a society? Could and should there be a genderless society? Is ethnic diversity valuable?.

Attributes: Humanities(Disc); Inquiry (Discovery); Writing Intensive Course

Equivalent(s): PHIL 436, PHIL 436H, PHIL 437

Grade Mode: Letter Grading

PHIL 440A - Honors/Who Are You? Personal Identity and Humanity**Credits: 4**

What makes you you? Are you the same person over time? What does it mean to be a person? How is being a person related to being a human being? This course is part of an Honors Symposium on the nature of personhood and humanity. We will explore a number of philosophical questions related to personal identity over time, the social construction of the self, and the relationship between being a member of homo sapiens and being a person.

Attributes: Honors course; Humanities(Disc)

Grade Mode: Letter Grading

PHIL 440B - Honors/Who's Human Now?**Credits: 4**

When we call someone human or a person, what do we mean, and what are we trying to do? How has the concept of personhood expanded or contracted to include more or fewer beings and why? Are fetuses persons? Are corporations persons? Are chimps persons? Who counts as a person now, and who will count as a person in the future? How and why are human persons subject to dehumanization? Readings and texts will draw from historical sources and contemporary philosophy. No credit if credit earned for PHIL 780.

Attributes: Honors course; Humanities(Disc)

Grade Mode: Letter Grading

PHIL 440C - Honors/The Copernican Lens: Finding a Place for Humanity**Credits: 4**

How do humans fit into the cosmos? Once, we thought we were central players; most human societies believed they played a starring role, second only to the gods. Developments in the sciences have led modern humanity to a far more modest view: our existence is full of contingency and without cosmic significance. Humanity's self-conception is now recognized to be deeply culturally conditioned: is an objective view of humanity's place even possible?.

Attributes: Honors course; World Cultures(Discovery); Writing Intensive Course

Grade Mode: Letter Grading

PHIL 447 - A.I., Robots, and People**Credits: 4**

The historical origins of the science of computation. The implications of the nature of information-processing for understanding the mind-body relation. Examines the possible social, economic, and educational consequences of the computer revolution.

Attributes: Environment,TechSociety(Disc)

Equivalent(s): PHIL 447H

Grade Mode: Letter Grading

PHIL 450 - Environmental Ethics**Credits:** 4

Thoughtful people cannot help escape considering hard questions about our relationship to the natural world and what it means for the future of life on earth. In this course we think philosophically about these crucial concerns. We try to answer questions about our responsibilities to the environment and to future generations.

Attributes: Environment, TechSociety(Disc)**Equivalent(s):** PHIL 450H**Grade Mode:** Letter Grading**PHIL 495 - Tutorial Reading****Credits:** 1-4

Basic introductory reading under faculty direction on topics of philosophical importance. Books offered for tutorial reading may be in any area the instructor chooses or on independent study basis.

Repeat Rule: May be repeated for a maximum of 8 credits.**Grade Mode:** Letter Grading**PHIL 500 - Workshop****Credits:** 4

Introduces methods of studying philosophical texts. Emphasizes reading philosophical texts and arguments for comprehension, and on writing philosophically with accuracy and clarity. Open to PHIL majors (PHIL minors may enroll if they receive permission).

Attributes: Writing Intensive Course**Grade Mode:** Letter Grading**PHIL 510 - Philosophy and Feminism****Credits:** 4

Focuses on philosophical issues in feminism primarily through the work of historical and contemporary philosophers. Topics include the question of the nature of women, feminism as an ethical and political theory, feminism as an exploration and transformation of the self, feminism as a philosophical methodology, and the institutions of marriage and motherhood.

Attributes: Humanities(Disc); Writing Intensive Course**Grade Mode:** Letter Grading**PHIL 520 - Introduction to Eastern Philosophy****Credits:** 4

Major Eastern traditions of philosophy. Concentration on Indian, Chinese, and Japanese systems may vary from semester to semester.

Attributes: World Cultures(Discovery)**Grade Mode:** Letter Grading**PHIL 525 - Existentialism****Credits:** 4

Readings from existential philosophy and literature. Selections may be drawn from the works of Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Sartre, Camus, de Beauvoir, Buber, Bultman, Merleau-Ponty, Tillich, Kafka, and others.

Attributes: Humanities(Disc); Inquiry (Discovery)**Equivalent(s):** PHIL 525H**Grade Mode:** Letter Grading**PHIL 530 - Ethics****Credits:** 4

Critical examination of the development of philosophical thinking regarding human values, rights, and duties.

Attributes: Writing Intensive Course**Grade Mode:** Letter Grading**PHIL 531 - Topics in Professional and Business Ethics****Credits:** 4

Content variable. Examines a topic or topics related to ethical issues in professional and business situations. Some variations of the course will look in-depth at a specific issue, such as consumer behavior, medical ethics, discrimination, or the theory of the firm. Alternatively, the course may examine, from one or more ethical perspectives, a wide range of issues related to business activity, workplace culture, regulation, and economic practices.

Attributes: Humanities(Disc)**Grade Mode:** Letter Grading**PHIL 560 - Philosophy Through Fiction****Credits:** 4

Philosophical implications of representative literary works, read in tandem with philosophical literature. The content will vary. The literary works explored may be drawn from ancient times through modern times. For examples, the classic Greek tragedy "Antigone" might be explored for its implications regarding moral, political, and feminist philosophy, or the philosophical implications of an anti-utopian contemporary work like "Brave New World" might be explored, or short stories drawn from science fiction and other speculative fiction might be used to explore the possibility of time travel or of machines with mental lives.

Attributes: Inquiry (Discovery); Writing Intensive Course**Grade Mode:** Letter Grading**PHIL 565 - Philosophy Through Film****Credits:** 4

Philosophical exploration of film as a medium for developing philosophical ideas and for stimulating philosophical thinking about various issues reflected in film, from traditional philosophical issues to the pressing social and cultural issues of our time. The content will vary. Philosophical texts are read in tandem with screenings of a range of movies from Hollywood blockbusters and art house films to films made for TV. Philosophical issues such as the nature of consciousness, appearance and reality, God and evil, the good life, and time and memory might be explored. Film might also be used to examine representations of race and gender or violence in society; and the power of movies to influence society might be explored through documentaries and propaganda films. Required evening film screenings in addition to regular class meetings.

Attributes: Writing Intensive Course**Grade Mode:** Letter Grading**PHIL 570 - Ancient Philosophy****Credits:** 4

Development of Western philosophy from its beginnings in Greece to the Roman period, with particular emphasis on the thought of Plato and Aristotle. Attention is paid to the historical context and the development of ideas in culture.

Attributes: Humanities(Disc)**Equivalent(s):** PHIL 570H**Grade Mode:** Letter Grading**PHIL 580 - Modern Philosophy from Descartes to Kant****Credits:** 4

The birth and development of distinctively modern philosophy in the thought of such creative minds as Galileo, Descartes, Hobbes, Leibniz, Spinoza, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, Rousseau, Reid, Kant, and others.

Grade Mode: Letter Grading

PHIL 620 - 20th Century European Philosophy**Credits:** 4

Major figures or philosophical movements such as phenomenology, existentialism, critical social theory, and post-modernism. Content will vary. Consult Time and Room Schedule for topics.

Attributes: Writing Intensive Course**Repeat Rule:** May be repeated for a maximum of 8 credits.**Grade Mode:** Letter Grading**PHIL 630 - Neuroscience and Philosophy****Credits:** 4

This course has a double focus. It investigates theories concerning the nature of the mind/brain relation, especially in light of recent work in the neurosciences. It also considers the particular presuppositions of and methodological challenges endemic to the neurosciences, along with the relations neuroscience bears to neighboring disciplines.

Attributes: Writing Intensive Course**Grade Mode:** Letter Grading**PHIL 631 - Topics in the Philosophy of Science****Credits:** 4

Many people think that philosophy and science are miles apart. But philosophy of science is a dynamic field. It asks questions like: are scientific explanations always true and what's the difference between science and other ways of knowing? It explores issues such as the relation of science to common sense, the relation of theory to observation, the claim to objectivity in the natural and social sciences, and the role of values in scientific research.

Attributes: Writing Intensive Course**Equivalent(s):** PHIL 725**Grade Mode:** Letter Grading**PHIL 660 - Law, Medicine, and Ethics****Credits:** 4

Critical examination of the diverse legal and moral issues facing the profession of health care. Variable topics may include: duty to provide care; nature of informed consent to treatment; problems of allocating limited health-care resources (e.g., withdrawal of life-support systems, quality-of-life decisions, etc.); patient's right to confidentiality. Problems relating to involuntary preventive care (e.g., involuntary sterilization, psycho-surgery, etc.)

Attributes: Writing Intensive Course**Grade Mode:** Letter Grading**PHIL 780 - Special Topics****Credits:** 4

Advanced study of special topics: a problem, figure, or movement in the history of philosophy, or selected issues, thinkers, or developments in contemporary philosophy. Repeatable with permission.

Attributes: Writing Intensive Course**Repeat Rule:** May be repeated up to 4 times.**Grade Mode:** Letter Grading**PHIL 795 - Independent Study****Credits:** 1-8

For students who are adequately prepared to do independent, advanced philosophical work; extensive reading and writing. Before registering, students must formulate a project and secure the consent of a department member who will supervise the work. Conferences and/or written work as required by the supervisor.

Attributes: Writing Intensive Course**Repeat Rule:** May be repeated for a maximum of 8 credits.**Grade Mode:** Letter Grading**PHIL 798 - Senior Thesis****Credits:** 4

Two-course sequence (798, then 799) open only to senior philosophy majors in the University Honors Program, the philosophy department honors-in-major program, or by special permission from the department. All senior thesis candidates must have a proposal approved in the spring of their junior year and a thesis adviser assigned by the chair of the department before registering for 798. Students must orally defend their theses before the department. (See department guidelines for further details).

Attributes: Writing Intensive Course**Grade Mode:** Letter Grading**PHIL 799 - Senior Thesis****Credits:** 4

Two-course sequence (798, then 799) open only to senior philosophy majors in the University Honors Program, the philosophy department honors-in-major program, or by special permission from the department. All senior thesis candidates must have a proposal approved in the spring of their junior year and a thesis adviser assigned by the chair of the department before registering for 799. Students must orally defend their theses before the department. (See department guidelines for further details).

Attributes: Writing Intensive Course**Grade Mode:** Letter Grading

Faculty

[Philosophy Department Faculty](#)