

Philosophy

Dr. Latiolais (Chair), Dr. McDowell, Dr. Lambert, Dr. Scarrow (Emeritus)

What is Philosophy?

Philosophy is a historically evolving, self-reflective inquiry into the fundamental questions that humans confront in making sense of their lives. It examines essential features of the human condition—e.g., morality, knowledge, nature, society, happiness, justice, beauty, selfhood, and friendship – in the search for knowledge that both preserves and transforms enduring dimensions of human self-understanding. Philosophy emerges in the Western tradition as a rational, systematic, and self-critical inquiry committed to grounding its own claim to knowledge. Contemporary philosophy continues to examine the fundamental principles that guide our thought and action, our pursuit of knowledge, and our desire to live well. Because philosophy adopts a radically self-critical orientation to its own historical formation, philosophers often disagree profoundly about what philosophy is and how it differs from other disciplines. Such disagreements – openly, critically, and vigorously deliberated – are vital to the type of radical questioning that characterizes philosophy.

Philosophy challenges students to (1) reflect upon naively lived patterns of thought, action, speech, and perception; (2) identify how practices, institutions, and perceptions are shaped by philosophical traditions; (3) critically examine and assess the fundamental assumptions that inform such human enterprises; and (4) conduct this inquiry in the spirit of open critical communication committed to mutual understanding and respect for difference. Students learn the basic skills of identifying and analyzing arguments, and the department actively fosters an environment committed to the vigorous, respectful exchange of ideas to protect both commonalities and differences. Philosophy also cultivates ethical responsibility by balancing (1) the articulation, justification, and application of normative principles with (2) the deepening of moral imagination and sensibility.

Curriculum

The department offers six historical courses that represent important periods and traditions of Western philosophy: Ancient, Early Modern, 18th Century, 19th Century, Existentialism, and Contemporary Continental Philosophy. These historical courses reconstruct the debates, issues, concerns, questions, and concepts that define a historical period from within. They also offer linkages among historical periods, allowing students to appreciate the larger, “paradigmatic” shifts in Western philosophy. Students gain an awareness of how canonical philosophers characteristically address their own historical precedents and shape their views in critical dialogue with predecessors. Students are required to engage in close textual interpretation and careful critical evaluation

of original texts. Instructors identify contemporary advocates for, or illustrations of, traditional schools of thought and, in this way, underscore the real historical effects of philosophical creativity. Students write detailed, textually supported expository and argumentative essays that are graded for their balance between interpretive charity and critical acuity. Emphasis is placed upon cultivating a student's ability to first reconstruct the historical debates among canonical philosophers and to then critically evaluate their bearing upon contemporary concerns. Many of the Philosophy Department's history courses have interdisciplinary units of instruction that link historical debates to contemporary research programs within the natural and social sciences

The department also offers courses in the classic subfields of philosophy: epistemology, logic, ethics, metaphysics, and aesthetics. These courses explicate the fundamental conceptual tools we need to systematically address particular types of contemporary issues:

- How do we know? (Theories of Knowledge).
- What ought we to do? (Ethics).
- What is beauty? (Philosophy of Art).
- What is good reasoning? (Logic and Reasoning).
- What is? (Metaphysics and Mind).

In these courses, students are asked to identify, reflect upon, and exercise the key concepts, theories, and viewpoints that allow us to competently address ethical, epistemological, logical, and metaphysical issues. Subfield courses cultivate a student's ability to systematically, self-consciously, and flexibly manage a repertoire of conceptual tools to discern, analyze, and deliberate about contemporary problems. By gaining a sensitivity for different ways of perceiving and thinking about a single issue, students develop an appreciation for the complexity of actual problem solving:

The department also offers specialized subfield courses under the following three categories:

- Applied Ethics (Ecological Philosophy, Biomedical Ethics, Philosophy of Law, and The Just Society).
- Applied Epistemology (Philosophy of Science and Philosophy of the Social Sciences).
- Linguistics (Philosophy of Language and Philosophy and Literature).

In these courses, emphasis is placed upon genuine problem solving in contemporary circumstances. The applied ethics courses introduce students to the systematic analysis of contemporary problems encountered in jurisprudence, political legitimation, healthcare practices, and environmental stewardship. Students learn to unravel the factual, conceptual, and normative threads interwoven in current crises. They also develop the ability to reflectively manage

different theoretical perspectives upon a single, multifaceted problem. The applied epistemology courses examine fundamental questions concerning the logic and practices of the natural and social sciences. The philosophical linguistics courses analyze language competencies (semantics and pragmatics) and literary discourse (narratology).

Outcomes

The philosophy program is committed to five overarching outcomes for students in our classes and in our major:

1. Knowledge: Gain appropriate breadth and depth of knowledge of the major traditions, figures, issues, and theories studied.
2. Skills:
 - Write in a style appropriate to scholarly philosophy;
 - Think clearly, rigorously, and logically about conflicting philosophical points of view;
 - Engage in open, critical, cooperative discussion and interrogation;
 - Cultivate philosophical impulses and insights and reflectively employ philosophical techniques;
 - Comprehend, accurately represent, and originally construct arguments in the philosophical style;
 - Conduct independent philosophical research;
 - Present independent research results in a professional setting.
3. Integration:
 - a. Connect philosophical learning to other learning abilities, career goals, daily life, and roles in the world;
 - b. Deepen a shared commitment to critical self-reflection as a fundamental dimension of living well.
4. Preparation:
 - a. Thrive in selected post-graduate studies;
 - b. Address vocational challenges by mobilizing critical thinking, writing, and verbal skills;
 - c. Confront personal challenges with an awareness of philosophical resources.

5. Attitude: Gain a "philosophical sense" of curiosity, a willingness to engage in "meta-level" thinking, a determination to understand complex issues, and a cooperative and constructive spirit in critical deliberation with others.

Preparation

Philosophy is a sound choice for those seeking a broad liberal arts undergraduate education, and those who value the skills and outlook imparted by studying the discipline. The major program prepares students for graduate studies in philosophy, law, social policy, and political theory, to name just a few areas of formal specialization. Students preparing for graduate studies in philosophy are strongly advised to follow a more structured majors program with additional course recommendations.

Transfer and Study Abroad Credit

The Philosophy Department's transfer policies are as follows. All transfer courses in Philosophy must be approved by the Philosophy faculty upon consideration of a course catalog description and a syllabus for the course (to be provided by the student). If the course is taken during a student's enrollment at Kalamazoo College (for instance, on study abroad or during the summer), the approval must be obtained before the course is taken. In addition, the Department will consider only courses taught by instructors with a Ph.D. in Philosophy, or who are "ABD" (all but dissertation) in Philosophy.

For more information about the philosophy department, please visit our website at <http://www.kzoo.edu/phil/>, where you will find a fuller description of the Department and its faculty and curriculum, advice for choosing philosophy courses, course syllabi, and more.

Requirements for the Major in Philosophy

Number of Units

Eight units are required, which may include the SIP.

Required Courses

PHIL 105 Ethics or PHIL 106 Theories of Knowledge

PHIL 107 Logic and Reasoning

PHIL 490 Philosophy Seminar

Three student-chosen electives

Two of the following History or Traditions Courses:

PHIL 109 Existentialism and Film

PHIL 205 Ancient Philosophy

PHIL 206 Early Modern Philosophy

PHIL 207 18th-Century Philosophy

PHIL 208 19th-Century Philosophy

PHIL 307 Contemporary Continental Philosophy

Majors Preparing for Graduate Studies in Philosophy are Strongly Recommended to pursue the following program.

Number of Units

Ten units are required, which may include the SIP.

Required Courses

PHIL 105 Ethics or PHIL 106 Theories of Knowledge

PHIL 107 Logic and Reasoning

Core History Sequence:

PHIL 205 Ancient Philosophy

PHIL 206 Early Modern Philosophy

PHIL 207 18th-Century Philosophy

PHIL 208 19th-Century Philosophy

PHIL 490 Philosophy Seminar

Three or four Electives chosen in close consultation with Department

Requirements for the Minor in Philosophy

Number of Units

Six units are required.

Required Courses

PHIL 105 Ethics or PHIL 106 Theories of Knowledge

Two historical or “traditions” courses (See list under Required Courses for the Major in Philosophy)

Three electives chosen in consultation with the department

We also recommend either supervisory or advisory involvement with SIP

SIP in Philosophy does not count toward minor requirements

PHILOSOPHY COURSES

PHIL 105 Ethics

Introduction to the fundamental concepts and problems in ethical theory, and to skills for applying moral thinking for oneself. What makes an act, or a person, morally good? What reasons do we have for our answers to such questions? What do we mean by the terms "right" and "good"? Why be moral? How do things like intentions, results, emotions, and rights fit into what is ethically good? This course is about ethical theory and "meta-theory," and thus concentrates on abstract issues about the nature of ethics and ethical concepts. Classical and contemporary views such as relativism, utilitarianism, deontology, and feminist ethics will be explored. Excerpts from literature and non-academic writing, such as Golding's *Lord of the Flies* and King's "I Have a Dream," will illustrate and test theoretical concepts studied. AOS (PHIL)

PHIL 106 Theories of Knowledge

An introduction to Western philosophical issues concerning the nature, origins, limits, and justification of knowledge. What's interesting about distinguishing good from bad beliefs, or successful from unsuccessful thinking? How do we know what we know and don't know; and should this concern us? What if nothing you believe is really true? How much knowledge or justification can sources of belief like memory and testimony give us? We will explore issues and theories including skepticism, induction, and internalism and externalism. The readings for this course will consist mostly of primary scholarly articles by contemporary philosophers. Students will be expected to distinguish

different legitimate stances on the topics we'll cover, compare and contrast the arguments and principles underlying them, and defend through careful argument their choices of the most reasonable positions and views. AOS (PHIL)

Recommended for psychology students.

PHIL 107 Logic and Reasoning

An introduction to methods for evaluating the validity and strength of reasoning. The course will investigate (1) the theory and practice of constructing and analyzing arguments as they occur in ordinary, informal contexts (reasoning), and (2) the concepts and techniques of elementary formal logic: the art of symbolizing English-language statements and arguments in terms of formalized languages and applying logical principles to them. Topics explored include informal fallacies, critical thinking, evaluating evidence, deciding between hypotheses, propositional logic, natural deduction, and predicate logic. AOS (PHIL)

Recommended for computer science, psychology, and pre-law students.

PHIL 108 Ecological Philosophy

This course investigates the question of our understanding of, and ethical responsibility to, animals, plants, microorganisms, non-living beings, ecosystems, and "nature" as a whole. The first part of the course critically assesses whether traditional ethical theories adequately capture our ethical responsibilities to the environment. The second part surveys traditional Western conceptualizations of nature, reason, body, and space, which ecologists severely criticize as detrimental to developing an ecological ethic. Special emphasis will be placed upon developing a philosophical conception of life (bios) that is appropriate for both evolutionary biology and the development of a normative theory of environmental care. Contemporary positions such as anthropocentrism, deep ecology, radical ecology, ecofeminism, and social environmentalism will be studied. AOS (PHIL)

Recommended for environmental studies and biology students.

PHIL 109 Existentialism and Film

Survey of key existentialist thinkers, such as Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger, De Beauvoir, Merleau-Ponty, and Sartre, with a special emphasis upon their radical ideals of freedom and self-responsibility. Films are shown as depictions of existentialist themes, such as alienation, authenticity, bad faith, despair, passion, anonymity, and anguish.

Existentialists oppose traditional, "essentialist," "teleological," and "cognitivist" conceptions of human life, and they reject the hierarchical dualities of reason/will, knowledge/choice, mind/body, thought/being. Special emphasis will be placed upon the existentialist analysis of interpersonal relations in contemporary circumstances. Students are required to see seven films in addition to regularly scheduled classes. Discussion-based course with two writing assignments. AOS (PHIL)

Recommended for psychology, media studies, and literature students.

PHIL 205 Ancient Philosophy

A study of ancient views on topics such as nature, knowledge, soul, the self, morality, and the good life. This is a history of philosophy course, rather than a history course: we will be studying the ideas, arguments, and theories put forth by ancient philosophers, rather than biographical, cultural, anthropological, or historical issues about them or their time period. We will largely be trying to understand what these thinkers were trying to say, and why they thought what they did. In addition, we will be discussing the merits of the various positions and reasons offered. Readings will focus on selections from Plato and Aristotle, but will also include readings from the pre-Socratic and Hellenistic philosophers, all major sources of the Western philosophical tradition. AOS (PHIL)

Recommended for classics students.

PHIL 206 Early Modern Philosophy

Historical study of the "Early Modern" period in Western philosophy (17th and 18th century). The course will explore the profoundly influential development of rationalist and empiricist approaches to philosophical thinking; topics may include the connection between mind and body, skepticism and the possibility of knowledge, the existence of God, knowledge of the external world, the nature of minds and their ideas, and the proper method of philosophical method. Readings from Descartes, Leibniz, Berkeley, Locke, Hume, and others. AOS (PHIL)

Recommended for computer science and psychology students.

Recommended for students with sophomore standing, or by permission.

PHIL 207 18th-Century Philosophy

Study of the Enlightenment period through a critical comparison of two of its most famous 18th-century philosophers – David Hume and Immanuel Kant – who set the stage for contemporary debates in psychology, cognitive science, and artificial intelligence. Hume proposed to study

humans just as Sir Isaac Newton had proposed to study nature: namely, through observation and experimentation. We will study Hume's *A Treatise of Human Nature* as a manifesto for the modern, naturalistic study of human experience and judgment. We will then study Kant's powerful arguments against Hume, examining in close detail Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, his demonstration that humans actively synthesize sensory data according to rules that it "spontaneously" imposes to make experience possible. The film *Memento*, literary narratives, and studies of Alzheimer patients are used to illustrate the logical and temporal construction of human experience. A reading intensive course with three essay assignments. AOS (PHIL)

Recommended for psychology, computer science, and English students.

PHIL 208 19th-Century Philosophy

This course examines how 19th-century European philosophers inherit and develop Kant's radical claims that (1) human agents are radically free, (2) knowledge is constructed, and (3) faith in redemption is rational. We will examine how Fichte, Schiller, Hegel, Marx, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche work out how humans could really be "free," "autonomous," or "self-determining" while remaining natural animals and socially-situated subjects. Films such as *American Beauty*, *Waterland*, *Babette's Feast*, and *Sex, Lies, and Videotapes* are shown. Lecture and discussion course with three paper assignments. AOS (PHIL)

First-year students with strong writing skills welcome.

Recommended for psychology, English, and political science students.

PHIL 209 Philosophy of Science

A philosophical examination of scientific methods and reasoning. Topics may include the analysis of explanation, the nature of scientific truth, instrumentalist and realist interpretations of science, confirmation and falsification, observational and theoretical terms, inter-theoretic reduction, the relation among various sciences, scientific revolutions, and the possibility of scientific progress. AOS (PHIL)

Recommended for science students. Recommended for students with sophomore standing, or by permission.

PHIL 210 The Just Society

Critical analysis of competing traditional theories of justice in connection with contemporary political and legal issues surrounding race, ethnicity,

and gender. Such topics may include (1) the nature of political legitimation and power; (2) the interdependence of social, legal, and political institutions; (3) legal protection for individuals and groups; (4) the shifting boundaries between individual, private, and public; (5) social-welfare institutions and the marketplace; (6) diversity and democracy; and (7) the autonomy of nation states within the global context. Discussion oriented with three paper assignments. AOS (PHIL)

First-year students with strong writing skills welcome.

Recommended for political science, pre-law, and HDSR students.

PHIL 211 Philosophy of Law

Historical examination of the two opposing paradigms in the study of legal systems: namely, factual (“positivist”) and normative (“natural law”) models of law. Selected topics may include (1) the relation between law and morality; (2) the nature of legitimation and authority; (3) the nature of juridical interpretation and legal reasoning, (4) the role of the legal system within ethical traditions, market forces, and political institutions; and (5) the Critical Legal Studies challenge to liberal jurisprudence. Readings from Aquinas, Austin, Holmes, Hart, Fuller, Dworkin, Scalia, Unger, Raz, MacKinnon, and Habermas. Seminar format with an emphasis upon discussion and structured debate. AOS (PHIL)

Suggested for pre-law and political science students.

PHIL 212 Philosophy of Social Science

Introduction to classical and contemporary issues in the logic of the social sciences. Topics include (1) the distinction between the natural and social sciences; (2) historicist and relativist challenges to the objectivity and value neutrality of social inquiry; (3) causal, interpretive, rational, and critical models of practically oriented social research; and (4) behaviorist, structuralist, individualist, reductionist, and holist methods of inquiry. Recent debates about ethnocentrism, gender biases, and epistemological constructivism will be reviewed. We will examine a cluster of important conceptual issues regarding life-narrative psychology as a special case study of social scientific research. AOS (PHIL)

Suggested for psychology, sociology/anthropology, and history students.

PHIL 213 Philosophy and Literature

An exploration of the complex and historically evolving relationship between the discipline of philosophical analysis and the art of literary

depiction. Classical philosophical analyses of issues such as personal identity, the experience of time, the relation between self and society, and moral reciprocity are paired with literary works sensitive to the same issues. Schools of literary interpretation are also surveyed, along with various attempts to develop an historical taxonomy of literary forms. AOS (PHIL or LIT)

First-year students with strong writing skills welcome.

Suggested for psychology, literature, and history students.

PHIL 305 Biomedical Ethics

A course in applied ethics, the study of how ethical thinking can be used in real-life situations and issues: in this case, biomedical issues such as euthanasia, allocating medical resources, and eugenics and human genetics. What is the morally right thing to do in various biomedical contexts? What are good reasons for answers to that question and others like it? What kinds of things should we take into consideration when making difficult moral decisions about these topics? This course is intended to help students become adept at looking at as many relevant aspects of moral issues as clear-headedly and constructively as possible and learn to present their views and the reasons for them in the form of logically-constructed arguments. Readings will include contemporary philosophical articles, court decisions, statements by medical and governmental organizations, and textbook material on ethical theories and tools. AOS (PHIL)

Suggested for health sciences students, and recommended for science students. No prerequisites, but junior- or senior-level reading and writing skills are recommended.

PHIL 306 The Philosophy of Language

Study of 20th-century philosophy of language. Introduction to traditional semantics (e.g. reference, truth and meaning) will be followed by a detailed examination of speech-act theory or pragmatics. The course will focus the complexity of speech acts and the various dimensions of understanding involved in successful communication. Using speech act theory, students are asked to analyze four cinematographic artworks – *Twelfth Night*, *Glengarry Glen Ross*, *American Buffalo*, and *Oleanna* – and to draw conclusions regarding language and social power. Topics include theories of speaker meaning and reference, indexicals, direct and indirect speech acts, conversational implication, presupposition, anaphora, non-literal language use, translation, rule-following, and the relation between language and thought. Readings from Frege, Russell, Wittgenstein, Quine, Austin, Dummet, Putnam, Searle, Davidson,

Habermas, and Recanati. Lecture and discussion format with three essay assignments. AOS (PHIL)

Recommended for foreign language, theatre arts, and English students.

PHIL 307 Contemporary Continental Philosophy

Introduction to contemporary European Continental philosophy, with an emphasis upon either the German tradition of Critical Social Theory or the French tradition of Post-structuralism (alternating rotation). Accordingly, we will read either German figures – e.g. Horkheimer, Adorno, Benjamin, Marcuse, Habermas, Benhabib, and Honneth – or French figures – e.g. Merleau-Ponty, Foucault, Derrida, Lyotard, Bourdieu, Kristeva, and Irigaray. Both traditions are engaged in the project of offering a critical historical diagnosis of Western modernity, and their respective approaches will be analyzed as radicalizing the 19th-century impasse between Hegelian phenomenological and Nietzschean genealogical philosophical historiography. Seminar course with three writing assignments. AOS (PHIL)

PHIL 308 Metaphysics and Mind

Examination of topics in the Western philosophical areas of metaphysics and philosophy of mind and their intersection. Metaphysics is concerned with the structure of reality; philosophy of mind is the branch of metaphysics concerned with the nature of minds. The topics studied could include the “mind/body problem,” consciousness, personal identity, and free will and determinism. Is the mind a nonphysical soul-like entity, or is the mind the brain, or is it the software that runs on the brain’s hardware, or is it something else? Can the qualitative part of our experience – the part involving what it feels like to be in various states – be captured in purely physical terms, or is it inescapably nonphysical? What makes you the same person over time? Does modern scientific knowledge entail that none of our actions is really free? What is it for an action to be free, anyway? The readings for this course will consist mostly of primary scholarly articles by contemporary philosophers. AOS (PHIL)

Suggested for psychology students. Recommended for students with some background in philosophy, or by permission of instructor.

PHIL 490 Philosophy Seminar

Intensive study of contemporary research on a major philosophical issue. The seminar is devoted to the critical reading of significant contemporary publications and a subsequent examination of the philosophical debates they have spawned. Advanced seminar-style discussion-centered course,

with participants writing and presenting scholarly papers for the group. The seminar may meet over the course of either one or two quarters.