

# Spring 2023

# Course Descriptions

**WVU Philosophy Department**  
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## WVU Philosophy Department

The WVU Philosophy Department is an intellectually vibrant student-centered department, with an energetic faculty devoted to outstanding teaching and research. The department is dedicated to helping students to discern their guiding passion and life goals. With supervision and guidance from faculty mentors, students are encouraged to pursue their interests through independent research and collaboration with others. Through close mentorship, our graduates acquire a clear set of personal goals and are well prepared for the next step in their professional or academic endeavors. We are committed to fostering a community where all students and faculty feel encouraged to participate in the open and respectful exchange of ideas.

Our mission is to communicate and model the value of the examined life, a life focused on the pursuit and love of wisdom. Students have the opportunity to grapple with deep questions about ourselves, our societies, and our world. How should we live our lives? What are our ethical obligations toward others? What is the just society? Are race and gender social constructs? Is time real? Does God exist? Is consciousness a purely physical phenomenon? Do human beings have free will? Is it possible to know anything? Students practicing philosophy often come up with enlightening answers to those questions and learn to support their answers with sound reasoning. Through their philosophical investigations, students develop specialized skills and practices that are useful in all aspects of life. Philosophy students are trained to engage in careful and respectful dialogue about difficult ethical, social, and political issues. They develop patience and endurance for working through difficult conceptual problems with clarity and rigor. Philosophy students practice the art of imagining, presenting, analyzing, and applying interesting solutions.

The study of philosophy prepares students for employment in fields that demand sophisticated critical thinking skills and the clear communication of complex ideas. Philosophy majors consistently score very well on standardized exams such as the LSAT and GMAT. The analytical and communication skills emphasized in philosophy are valuable far beyond the boundaries of the classroom. Philosophy is a great preparation for students interested in many satisfying careers, including careers in law, health care, education, politics, counseling, and business.

The WVU Philosophy Department values and shares the mission of WVU and the Eberly College of Arts and Sciences in promoting the full development of students as individuals and as members of society, and in our commitment to creating a diverse and inclusive culture that advances education, healthcare and prosperity for all by providing access and opportunity; by advancing high-impact research; and by leading transformation in West Virginia and the world through local, state and global engagement

# Philosophy Major Requirements, BA

<b>Basic Core Requirements</b> Phil 244, Phil 248, Phil 260
<b>Philosophy Upper-Division Courses</b>  <u>Select one of the Following:</u> Phil 301 or Phil 302  <u>Select one of the Following:</u> Phil 321 or Phil 346
<b>Philosophy Upper-Division Electives</b> Select 9 hours at the 300 Level or Above in Philosophy
<b>Philosophy General Electives</b> Any PHIL Course at the 100-level or above
<b>Capstone Experience</b> PHIL 480 or PHIL 496

## Philosophy Minor Requirements

The Philosophy minor is designed to acquaint students with a broad range of philosophical topics and skills, and to introduce them to the fundamental issues in philosophy. The minor consists of fifteen hours in Philosophy, with at least nine hours at the upper level (300 level or above). A grade of C- or higher must be earned in all courses counted toward the minor.

## **We have a brand-new minor in Applied Ethics!**

### Applied Ethics Minor Requirements

Core Courses		6
Phil 130	Current Moral Problems	
Phil 321	Ethical Theory	
or Phil 346	History of Ethics	
APPLIED THEORY*		6
Select two of the following:		
Phil 313	Philosophy of Race	
Phil 314	Philosophy of Sex and Gender	
Phil 315	Free Will and Moral Responsibility	
Phil 331	Health Care Ethics	
Phil 332	Environmental Ethics	
SPECIFIC AREA OF PRACTICE *		3
Select one of the following:		
Phil 285	Ethics Bowl	
Phil 491	Professional Experience	
Phil 497	Research	
Total Hours		15

Students must have completed at least 6 credits in the minor before being eligible to complete the Specific Areas of Practice requirement. A grade of C- or higher must be earned in all courses counted toward the minor.

\* With the approval of the Philosophy Department, students may substitute up to one relevant course in philosophy or another department and apply it toward the Applied Theory or the Specific Area of Practice.

# Spring 2022 Course Descriptions

Philosophy 100 satisfies area 5 of the GEF

**PHIL 100**                      **Problems of Philosophy**                      **3 hr**  
**Devin Curry**

In this course, we will take a whirlwind tour of philosophical inquiry. We'll begin by acquiring some of the basic tools of logical thinking, and sharpen those tools by identifying good, bad, and bullshit arguments in a US presidential debate. We'll then bring our critical tools to bear on the metaphysical and epistemological work of a few of the greatest philosophers in the European tradition. Finally, we'll read and discuss recent essays on science and religion, race and racism, moral partiality, and the meaning of life, amongst other topics. By the end of the course, we will have studied many (though not nearly all) of the big questions that make up the subject matter of philosophy. We may not walk away with satisfactory answers to these questions, but we will develop a deeper understanding of both the questions themselves and various possible ways of answering them. By immersing ourselves in Plato's 4th century BCE dialogues, Descartes's 17th century *Meditations*, and essays, polemics, and analyses from the 18<sup>th</sup>–21<sup>st</sup> centuries, we will also come to appreciate several distinctive ways of doing philosophy.

Philosophy 130 satisfies area 5 of the GEF

**PHIL 130**                      **Current Moral Problems**                      **3 hr**  
**Megan Hungerman**

Over the duration of this course, we will be examining four current moral problems, which will carry us through the complete human life cycle; from sex, to birth, to death, and what comes between. You will get the opportunity to examine the topics from multiple angles, and differing viewpoints

**PHIL 130**                      **Current Moral Problems**                      **3 hr**  
**David Hoinski**

Our historical era will have been marked by extensive human migrations and also by the response of wealthy countries like the US and others of the “Global North” to these “strangers at our door.” Refugees, human beings in flight from persecution, war, crime, poverty, and natural disasters come to countries like the US often at great risk to themselves in an attempt to secure their basic human rights. Here we confront one of the great political and ethical questions of our time, namely, (and as the philosopher Bruno Latour puts it) “how can we organize to welcome the refugees?” Answering this question requires us to consider the further questions of who should count as a refugee and what our ethical obligations are to such persons. In this course we will advance an answer to precisely these questions. Our particular investigation will place special emphasis on the topics of the stranger, humanity, and hospitality, and we will read and discuss a number of short books that approach these topics—and the refugee crisis as a whole—from a variety of angles. These books include David Livingstone Smith’s *On Inhumanity*, Zygmunt Bauman’s *Strangers at Our Door*, David Owen’s *What Do We Owe to Refugees?*, Serena Parekh’s *No Refuge: Ethics and the Global Refugee Crisis*, and Jacques Derrida and Anne Dufourmantelle’s *Of Hospitality*. Taking into account the conceptual and ethical

difficulties that surround the questions of the stranger, hospitality, and humanity, we will aim to outline an ethical response to refugees, both those to come and those who are even now arriving at our door.

**PHIL 130**                      **Current Moral Problems**                      **3 hr**  
**Ariane Nomikos**

This course will examine several contentious moral issues of the day using the tools of philosophy. Among the topics that may be discussed are abortion, capital punishment, climate change, euthanasia, distributive justice, global poverty, human enhancements, immigration, mass incarceration, online dating, policing, procreation, reparations, sex work, and vegetarianism. Some of the specific issues we consider will be predetermined by the professor; others will be selected based on student interest. To set up our engagement with these issues, whatever they may be, we will begin the course with an introduction to some basic terminology in ethics and a brief survey of some major moral theories.

Philosophy 147 area 6 of the GEF

**PHIL 147 Philosophy and Film**                      **3 hr**  
**David Cerbone**

This course provides an introduction to philosophical questions and problems using the medium of film. We will be viewing a variety of films over the course of the semester to consider how they frame, develop, and enact philosophical ideas pertaining to the nature of reality and our knowledge of it, the nature of the self and personal identity, the character of contemporary society and technology, and the meaning and value of life. The films we view will be accompanied by a variety of readings from the Western philosophical tradition.

Philosophy 170 satisfies area 5 of the GEF

**PHIL 170**                      **Intro to Critical Reasoning**                      **3 hr**  
**Gary Ciocco**

An introduction to skills of critical reasoning; the structure of deductive and inductive arguments; recognition of common formal and informal fallacies; application of reasoning skills to textbooks, news articles, editorials, advertisements, political speeches, and other arguments in ordinary language. We will also emphasize the importance of induction and role of language in our acquisition of knowledge and our understanding of arguments and issues.

Philosophy 244 satisfies area 5 of the GEF

**PHIL 244**                      **History of Ancient Philosophy**                      **3 hr**  
**David Hoinski**

Plato's Republic (or, in Greek, Politeia) is arguably the greatest single work of philosophy ever written. It concerns the question whether it is better for a person to be just rather than unjust. In order to answer this question, however, Plato gives us a dialogue of epic proportions, in which Socrates, Glaucon, Adeimantus, and others discuss the nature of political life, childrearing, the four cardinal virtues (wisdom, courage, moderation, and justice), the nature of the soul, the

relations between men and women, the family, the nature of philosophy and philosophical education, epistemology, metaphysics, the different kinds of political regimes, the relation between pleasure and the good, and the afterlife, amongst many other topics. In this course we will conduct a careful study of the ten books of Republic paying special attention to Plato's famous (and infamous) notion of philosopher-rulers or the idea that philosophers should lead the political community for the good of humanity.

Philosophy 248 area 5 of the GEF

**PHIL 248**                      **History of Modern Philosophy**                      **3 hr**  
**David Hoinski**

Modern western philosophy is a broad historical category that covers roughly the period from 1600 to 1900 in European philosophy and is often further divided into early modern philosophy and late modern philosophy, with 1781 (the publication year of the first edition of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason) frequently cited as the turning point. This course will focus on late modern philosophy and in particular on the philosophy of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831), one of the greatest philosophers of all time. One of Hegel's central claims is that what is rational, is actual, and what is actual, is rational. In this course we will learn what Hegel means by this claim through a careful study of The Encyclopedia Logic (which is also the first part of the Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences). This work concerns the basic categories of thought and reality, including being, something, other, quality, quantity, measure, essence, existence, appearance, relationship, actuality, the concept, life, and the idea. The Encyclopedia Logic also invites us to undertake a thoroughgoing reflection on the relation between subjectivity and objectivity, an opposition that Hegel aims to sublimate by showing how the world is in thought and thought is in the world. Our study of Hegel will also give us ample opportunities to consider the central doctrines of, amongst others, the Pre-Socratics, Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Spinoza, Locke, Hume, and Kant.

Philosophy 260 area 3 of the GEF

**PHIL 260**                      **Intro to Symbolic Logic**                      **3hr**  
**Geoff Georgi**

This course is an introduction to contemporary formal (or symbolic) logic. Historically, the study of logic originated with Aristotle and the Stoic philosophers of ancient Greece. Discoveries in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, however, led to a far more sophisticated understanding of logic. Thanks to these developments, formal logic is now central to many disciplines, including computer science, linguistics, mathematics, and philosophy. More generally, an understanding of the basic concepts of formal logic is indispensable for reasoning critically on any topic.

Philosophy 302 satisfies area 5 of the GEF  
Pre-Requisite – 3 Hr. Philosophy

**PHIL 302**

**Theory of Knowledge**

**3 hr**

**Geoff Georgi**

Philosophical inquiry into the nature of knowledge began with Plato. In his classic dialogue Meno, Plato raised several questions that still exercise philosophers, including (i) what distinguishes knowledge from mere true belief? and (ii) how do we come to have knowledge? But it was Descartes's Meditations on First Philosophy that has had the largest influence on epistemology—the study of knowledge. Descartes asked us to imagine that we are being deceived by an evil demon, so that not only our senses, but reason itself, is unreliable. By raising the possibility of such systematic doubt, Descartes confronts us with the question (iii) is it possible to know anything? In addition to these traditional questions, this class will address more recent philosophical questions about the relationships between knowledge, politics, ethics, and society.

Philosophy 308 satisfies area 5 of the GEF.  
Pre-Requisite – 3 Hr. Philosophy or Religious Studies interdepartmental major

**PHIL 308**

**Philosophy of Religion**

**3 hr**

**Sharon Ryan**

In this course, we will analyze various philosophical questions and problems that arise in the philosophy of religion. The focus will be on theistic traditions. We will begin the course with a brief review of the methods of philosophical analysis, focusing on argument extraction and evaluation techniques. After solidifying the methods and terminology for argument analysis, we will begin to articulate some of the characteristics of a divine being who is worthy of human worship. This will lead us to a puzzle about the vices and virtues of worship. Does worship undermine moral autonomy? If so, is that a problem? We will analyze arguments about whether it is possible for us to know, or believe rationally, that a divine being who is worthy of worship exists. What is faith? Is it an intellectual and spiritual virtue? What is the relationship between faith and rationality? What should we rationally conclude when we notice that equally reasonable people come to opposing views in religious discourse? We will carefully unravel and analyze several puzzles about the nature of Abrahamic conceptions of God. We will consider problems about petitionary prayer; divine forgiveness; incarnation; omniscience and free will; and the viability of concepts of the afterlife, heaven, and hell. We will conclude the course with a careful study of the problems of suffering, evil, and hiddenness that are central challenges for theistic religions that emphasize a personal god of love and fellowship.

Students who are interested in exploring some eastern religious traditions should consider:

RELG 231: Religions of China and Japan with Dr. Snow

Philosophy 310 satisfies area 5 of the GEF  
Pre-Requisite- 3 hrs. Philosophy or Science Major

**PHIL 310**                      **Philosophy of Science**                      **3 hr**  
**Devin Curry**

The scientific revolution began with narrowly focused attempts to understand the movements of planetary objects and animal bodies. 400 years later, we know the age and constitution of the universe and the basis of heredity. We can predict short-term weather patterns and long-term climate change, make and break chemical bonds, and identify the neural basis of the human capacity to recognize faces. Science seems to have made substantial progress and earned its reputation as humanity's most reliable means of understanding the world. This course is about how science has generated this understanding, and whether it has been as progressive, reliable, and unified as it seems. By way of examining case studies from across the natural and social sciences, we will study topics including the diverse sources of scientific explanation, the distinction between science and pseudoscience, the purported objectivity of scientific theories, the ontological status of laws of nature, and the multifarious roles that human values and interests play in scientific research.

Philosophy 321 satisfies area 5 of the GEF  
Pre-Requisite- 3 hrs. philosophy

**PHIL 321**                      **Ethical Theory**                      **3 hr**  
**Daniel Miller**

This course is primarily focused on different theories of the right and the good. Guiding questions include: What makes right acts right? Is the only relevant factor the amount of good an act produces, or are other considerations also relevant? What is it for something to be good or valuable? Can anything be intrinsically good or bad beyond what we subjectively experience? Are genuine moral dilemmas possible? The course also explores metaethical questions: Do we have good reason to be moral even when it's not in our self-interest? Do moral judgments make claims that can be true or false? If so, what sorts of evidence could there be for them? Are moral judgments the products of reason or of feeling?

Philosophy 323 satisfies area 5 of the GEF  
Pre-Requisite – 3 Hr. Philosophy or Political Science Major

**PHIL 323**                      **Social/Political Philosophy**                      **3 hr**  
**Scott Davidson**

W.E.B. Dubois coined the term "abolition democracy" to denote the ambition to achieve a racially just society. Du Bois argued that the abolition of slavery was only accomplished in the narrow sense, while the true ambition of creating a racially just society remained unrealized. It required the construction of new institutions, new practices, new social relations to enable all citizens to live as equal members of society. Drawing from classic (Rousseau, Marx) and contemporary (Sandel, Davis, and others) readings in political theory, this course will interrogate the prospects of abolition democracy today. What can we learn from different forms of abolitionism? What is the link between abolition democracy and equality? What are the possible risks and pitfalls of abolitionist



campaigns? Students will have the opportunity to advocate for their own abolitionist programs and/or respond to their challenges.

Philosophy 325 satisfies area 5 of the GEF  
Pre-Requisite – 3 Hr. Philosophy or Pre-Law student

**PHIL 325**                      **Philosophy of Law**    **3 hr**  
**Scott Davidson**

The central aim of this course is to teach students how to think like a lawyer. First, we will examine the question: What is law? When philosophers turn their attention to this question, they want to know what features are distinctive to law as law. The course thus begins with a study of some of the most influential answers to this question, such as natural law, legal positivism, American legal realism. After studying those theoretical paradigms, the course will turn to the topic of legal reasoning. Through the study of landmark cases, we will examine the role of reason in constitutional interpretation and construction. Students will learn how to think like a lawyer by carefully analyzing and evaluating complex legal arguments in court opinions. Mastery of the common types of legal argument will prepare students for law school and more broadly to navigate complex and deeply contested topics of public concern.

Philosophy 331 satisfies area 5 of the GEF  
Pre-Requisite – 3 hours of Philosophy or Pre-Med or Health Science Student

**PHIL 331**                      **Health Care Ethics**    **3 hr**  
**Daniel Miller**

The course provides a framework for the ethical principles and concepts at work in medical decision-making, including the nature of rights, autonomy, justice, benefit, and harm. It explores difficult and controversial issues that arise in healthcare ethics, including autonomy and informed consent, life-sustaining treatment, reproduction, conscientious objection, justice and health care, and emerging technologies. Questions include: What does consent involve, and to what extent must a patient be informed about what they consent to? How can we balance competing rights among patients, their families, and health care providers? How should we make medical decisions concerning patients who fail to meet the standards of competence but lack an advance directive? To what degree should we prioritize the life of a fetus? Is healthcare a moral right? Would it be permissible for parents to genetically enhance their children?

Pre-Requisite – One previous Philosophy Course

**PHIL 341**                      **Philosophy and Death**    **3 hr**

**David Cerbone** Whether we like it or not, all of us will (eventually, someday, inevitably) die. While this course cannot change that, it may change how you think about that inevitable eventuality. Over the course of the semester, we will examine a variety of philosophical questions and arguments pertaining to our mortality. We will start by considering views that make our earthly demise only a transition rather than an end by arguing for the immortality of the soul. Despite the popularity and attractiveness of a continued postmortem existence, we will consider arguments that challenge not just the desirability but the coherence of the idea of life after death. In the second part of the course, we will examine

questions and views oriented around the finality of death: Is death something to fear? In what way am I harmed by dying? Should we think about death in terms of deprivation? We will then pivot to considering the coherence and desirability of a more worldly form of immortality that involves never dying rather than some kind of life after death. Arguments for the undesirability of worldly immortality suggest a different way to think about death and its significance: rather than a merely contingent feature, death is in some way essential or constitutive of being the kind of beings we are. This in turn suggests that death plays an important role in contemplating the question of life's meaning. In the final part of the course, we will examine a very different take on the idea of an afterlife by considering the ways in which the continued existence of others after my death affects the meaning of my life. Readings will be drawn from classical sources (Plato, Epicurus, and Lucretius), the continental tradition (Heidegger, Sartre, and Camus), recent and contemporary work in Anglo-American (or analytic) philosophy (Bernard Williams, Thomas Nagel, John Fischer, Samuel Scheffler), as well as more "hybrid" approaches (Martin Hägglund).

**PHIL 393A                      Aesthetics & Phil of Art                      3 hr**  
**Ariane Nomikos**

What is a work of art? Do all works of art have something in common, and must all *good* art be beautiful? Does it matter if "a five-year-old could draw that"? Are all judgments of art just a matter of taste, or can one be legitimately criticized for, say, preferring Kinkade over Van Gogh? What does it mean to value (or to "appreciate") an object aesthetically, and what characterizes *aesthetic* experience from other kinds of experience? Moreover, is art the only thing capable of producing aesthetic experience, or can our encounters with everyday objects and the natural world furnish rich aesthetic experiences as well?

This course will acquaint students with some of the major issues in aesthetics and philosophy of art through an examination of such questions, both abstractly and in terms of different (traditional and popular) artistic media. Because the concepts of art and aesthetic value develop historically and vary culturally, we shall consider historical material alongside contemporary theories, and we will draw from both philosophers and artists themselves.

Pre-Requisite – Phil 260, Math Major or Instructor Consent
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**PHIL 360                      Truth, Proof, and Possibility                      3 hr**  
**Geoff Georgi**

This course is an introduction to some advanced topics in logic. It is important to emphasize both the introduction part and the advanced part. We will discuss several different advanced topics in logic, but no one topic will provide the main focus for the semester. Thus this is not strictly a course in mathematical logic, though we cover some basics of mathematical logic in the first half of the course (in particular, the soundness and completeness of propositional logic). Nor is it strictly a course in philosophical logic or the philosophy of logic, though we will discuss some basic philosophical issues in logic in the second half of the course (including the liar paradox, intuitionistic logic, and the necessity of identity). Rather, the goal of the course is to convey the richness and diversity of contemporary work in logic by introducing some of the many ways in which logic is used and studied by both philosophers and logicians.

Philosophy 480 Satisfies the Capstone Experience and Writing requirement  
Pre-Requisite: 12 hrs in philosophy, 6 hrs of PHIL 300 or higher

**PHIL 480 Capstone Seminar: Blame and Forgiveness 3 hr**  
**Daniel Miller**

This course will explore the following questions: What is blame, and what's the point of blame? When is it appropriate to blame (or withhold blame from) a blameworthy person? Who has the right to blame? What is forgiveness, and what's the purpose of forgiveness? Should we only forgive those who have apologized and repented for their faults, or should forgiveness be unconditional? Can forgiveness be offered by third parties, or can only victims forgive? How might divine forgiveness work? What is the relationship between blame and forgiveness?