

# Philosophy

## Chair

- David Cunning

**Undergraduate major:** philosophy (B.A.)

**Undergraduate minor:** philosophy

**Graduate degrees:** M.A. in philosophy; Ph.D. in philosophy

**Faculty:** <https://clas.uiowa.edu/philosophy/people/faculty>

**Website:** <https://clas.uiowa.edu/philosophy/>

## Courses

For more detailed descriptions of undergraduate and graduate courses offered during a given semester or summer session, visit the University's MyUI website before early registration. Graduate-level courses are numbered from 4000 to 6000.

## Philosophy Courses

- PHIL:1010 First-Year Seminar** 1 s.h.  
Small discussion class taught by a faculty member; topics chosen by instructor; may include outside activities (e.g., films, lectures, performances, readings, visits to research facilities).
- PHIL:1033 The Meaning of Life** 3 s.h.  
Philosophical investigation of the nature of human life and of what makes human life valuable and/or meaningful. GE: Historical Perspectives.
- PHIL:1034 Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness** 3 s.h.  
Examination of conflict between state power and individual liberty; philosophical and historical examination of theories from Plato through today. GE: Historical Perspectives.
- PHIL:1401 Matters of Life and Death** 3 s.h.  
Contemporary ethical controversies with life and death implications; topics may include famine, brain death, animal ethics, abortion, torture, terrorism, capital punishment. GE: Values and Culture.
- PHIL:1636 Principles of Reasoning: Argument and Debate** 3 s.h.  
Critical thinking and its application to arguments and debates. GE: Quantitative or Formal Reasoning.
- PHIL:1861 Introduction to Philosophy** 3 s.h.  
Varied topics; may include personal identity, existence of God, philosophical skepticism, nature of mind and reality, time travel, and the good life; readings, films. GE: Values and Culture.
- PHIL:1902 Philosophy Lab: The Meaning of Life** 1 s.h.  
Further exploration of PHIL:1033 course material with the professor in a smaller group.
- PHIL:1904 Philosophy Lab: Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness** 1 s.h.  
Further exploration of PHIL:1034 course material with the professor in a smaller group.
- PHIL:1950 Philosophy Club** 1-3 s.h.  
Relevant philosophical debates as they are exhibited in current events, text, and film; participation through discussions and film screenings.
- PHIL:2111 Ancient Philosophy** 3 s.h.  
Ancient Greek philosophy from Thales to Aristotle; pre-Socratic cosmologists, Socrates, ancient medicine and religion, rivalry between sophists and philosophers; primary focus on reaction of Plato and Aristotle to this intellectual inheritance culminating in their greatest achievement, the invention of systematic philosophy.
- PHIL:2214 Seventeenth-Century Philosophy** 3 s.h.  
Varied topics; may include free will, the mind-body problem, existence of God, relationship between God and creatures, science and religion, stoicism, early feminism; Francis Bacon, Rene Descartes, Margaret Cavendish, Baruch Spinoza, Anne Conway, G.W. Leibniz, Mary Astell, John Locke.
- PHIL:2215 Modern Philosophy** 3 s.h.  
Varied topics; may include free will, the mind-body problem, existence of God, creation versus evolution, subjectivity of perception, limits of cognition, the good life; Rene Descartes, Margaret Cavendish, Baruch Spinoza, Anne Conway, G.W. Leibniz, Mary Astell, John Locke, George Berkeley, David Hume, Immanuel Kant.
- PHIL:2216 Eighteenth-Century Philosophy** 3 s.h.  
Varied topics; may include appearance versus reality, empiricism and science, the mind-body problem, existence of God, creation versus evolution, subjectivity of perception, limits of cognition, the good life, early feminism; Mary Astell, John Locke, George Berkeley, David Hume, Immanuel Kant.
- PHIL:2343 Philosophy East and West** 3 s.h.  
A comparative study of Eastern and Western theories and arguments concerning the nature and existence of the self.
- PHIL:2352 Chinese Philosophy** 3 s.h.  
Introduction to Chinese philosophy; Confucius and Mencius; human flourishing in accordance with nature; Daoism; Laozi and Zhuangzi; virtues and lives in ancient China and Greece; human nature and good and evil; moral sentiment and desire for profit.
- PHIL:2402 Introduction to Ethics** 3 s.h.  
Analytical and historical introduction to ethical theories; issues such as the nature of the goodness, distinction between right and wrong. GE: Values and Culture.
- PHIL:2415 Bioethics** 3 s.h.  
Recent developments in biotechnology and medicine; designer babies and cloning, genetic screening for disease, distributive justice in health care, animal experimentation, physician-assisted suicide, and euthanasia. Same as GHS:2415.
- PHIL:2422 Feminist Ethics** 3 s.h.  
Philosophical evaluation of gender as a pervasive and persistent structuring principle for social inequality.
- PHIL:2429 War, Terrorism, and Torture** 3 s.h.  
Examination of some of the most compelling ethical and legal questions surrounding the topic of war: Can a war ever be just? If so, under which conditions is one justified in waging war? Are there limitations on permissible ways to fight a war? How are acts of terrorism different from acts of war? Is torture ever justified?
- PHIL:2432 Introduction to Political Philosophy** 3 s.h.  
Survey of central problems in political philosophy; focus on liberty, equality, justice, and purpose of the state; core philosophers may include John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Thomas Hobbes, John Stuart Mill, and John Rawls.

- PHIL:2435 Philosophy of Law** 3 s.h.  
Examination of jurisprudential theories and their answers to the question, "What is law?"; intersection between law and morality, legal punishment, political obligation, constitutional interpretation.
- PHIL:2436 The Nature of Evil** 3 s.h.  
The nature of evil explored through philosophical texts, videos and films, case studies of individuals.
- PHIL:2437 Introduction to Metaphysics** 3 s.h.  
Questions about the ultimate nature of reality and our place in it: What is the nature of space and time? Is time travel possible? What is the self and how does it persist through time and change? What is the nature of causation? Do we have free will?
- PHIL:2442 Knowledge and the Threat of Skepticism** 3 s.h.  
Skeptical doubt and distinction between appearance and reality; nature of knowledge and what, if anything, can we know.
- PHIL:2480 Language and Its Social Roles** 3 s.h.  
Introduction to basic concepts in philosophy of language and speech act theory; social and political uses of language including nature of speech, silencing, oppressive and hate speech, propaganda and dehumanizing language, lying and misleading with language.
- PHIL:2534 Philosophy of Religion** 3 s.h.  
Historical to contemporary treatments of central issues; nature of faith, existence and nature of God, science and religion, ethics and religion, miracles, religious experience, interpretation of religious texts. Requirements: sophomore or higher standing. Same as RELS:2834.
- PHIL:2538 Minds and Machines** 3 s.h.  
Questions concerning artificial intelligence: What is a mind? What is the relationship between minds and machines? What distinguishes real minds from artificial minds? Could computers or robots think or have feelings? If we create something whose intelligence surpasses that of humans, do we have a right to control it? Are your smart electronic devices parts of your mind? How has the internet changed our lives? Do we survive, perhaps immortally, if we upload contents of our minds to the internet or cloud?
- PHIL:2542 Minds and Brains** 3 s.h.  
Nature of mind in the age of the brain; exploration of questions (How is the mind related to the brain? What do brain scans show? How does the brain process information? What is conscious experience? Is free will threatened by neuroscience? How are intuitive conceptions of memory, emotion, and other mental capacities changing?).
- PHIL:2603 Introduction to Symbolic Logic** 3 s.h.  
Main ideas and techniques of modern natural deduction with quantifiers (all, some, most, exactly one); relations and identity; topics in philosophy of logic including nature of logic, nature of functions, logical necessity, identity as a relation, and how we know logic.
- PHIL:3002 Ancient Skepticism** 3 s.h.  
Introduction to skeptical philosophy of Greek philosopher and physician, Sextus Empiricus (c. 160-210 A.D.); skepticism as a way of life and a form of philosophical therapy, skeptic's avoidance of dogmatism by suspension of belief, attaining suspension through discovery of opposing arguments on either side of any philosophical problem, skeptic's attack on ancient theories of ethics and logic, search for a criterion of truth, relation of skepticism to rival contemporary schools of medicine (Empiricists, Rationalists, Methodists); influence of the rediscovery of Sextus' writings on 17th century thinkers.
- PHIL:3112 Medieval Philosophy** 3 s.h.  
Introduction to St. Thomas Aquinas, William of Ockham, and Duns Scotus, three of the most brilliant philosophers of the high middle ages (11th through 13th centuries); their writing as Christians in (fascinated) reaction to philosophical systems of their pagan predecessors; how medieval philosophers wrestled with problems concerning possibility of free will and responsibility in face of divine omniscience and foreknowledge; existence of abstract universals in a world that is nonabstract and particular; nature and existence of God; skepticism and limits of human knowledge; nature of good and evil. Same as HIST:3412.
- PHIL:3143 Existentialism** 3 s.h.  
Main ideas of existentialism, including free will, authenticity, power, nihilism; emphasis on Jean Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger, Soren Kierkegaard, Albert Camus.
- PHIL:3318 Twentieth-Century Philosophy** 3 s.h.  
Exploration of fundamental issues that shaped philosophy in the past century; impact of the theory of evolution on philosophy; whether philosophy is a science; nature of truth and meaning; nature of necessity; nature of space, time, and being; John Dewey, Bertrand Russell, Gottlob Frege, Ludwig Wittgenstein, W.V.O. Quine, Saul Kripke, David Lewis.
- PHIL:3342 Multiculturalism and Toleration** 3 s.h.  
Evaluation of multiculturalism as a political policy and as a personal attitude of respect; individual and collective identity, gender justice, autonomy, toleration, multiculturalism and education; contested practices.
- PHIL:3430 Philosophy of Human Rights** 3 s.h.  
Examination of the concept of human rights; sources of human rights; how we justify calling some, while not other rights, "human rights"; applied issues in women's, children's, and anti-poverty rights.
- PHIL:3431 Aesthetics** 3 s.h.  
Issues regarding art, aesthetic judgment, and role of art in society; investigation of questions: What is art and what is good art? What is conceptual art? Are aesthetic judgments just a matter of taste, or are some opinions about art better than others? What features of artworks matter for making such judgments, and which don't?; issues pertaining to various arts including painting and sculpture, music, fiction and poetry, performance arts; introduction to artworks and artists.
- PHIL:3510 Neuroethics** 3 s.h.  
Issues that arise from advances in knowledge of brain-mind relations: cognitive neuroenhancement, neuroimaging-based lie detection and privacy, changing standards of moral and legal responsibility, justification of punishment, admissibility of neuroimaging in legal contexts.

- PHIL:3604 Introduction to Philosophy of Science 3 s.h.**  
Examination of basic questions regarding nature of science and scientific knowledge: When is a field of inquiry a science? What counts as evidence in a science, and why? In what sense, if any, is science objective? What are scientific laws, theories, and explanations? If scientific theories are never proven with certainty, are we justified in believing them to be true? Recommendations: background in science (psychology, biology, chemistry, physics).
- PHIL:3845 Buddhist Philosophy 3 s.h.**  
Theories and arguments concerning the Buddhist path to enlightenment. Same as RELS:3645.
- PHIL:3847 Philosophical Issues 3-4 s.h.**  
A philosophical topic or controversy.
- PHIL:3902 Workshop: Analytical Skills for the LSAT 3 s.h.**  
Guided preparation for pre-law students who plan to take the Law School Admission Test (LSAT); exercises in analytical thinking, analytical writing, problem solving; practice developing skills in logical reasoning; reflection on professional skills and goals.
- PHIL:3904 Workshop: Analytical Skills for the GMAT 3 s.h.**  
Guided preparation for undergraduate students who plan to enroll in a graduate business program and take the Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT); exercises in analytical thinking, analytical writing, problem solving; practice developing skills in logical reasoning; reflection on professional skills and goals.
- PHIL:3906 Workshop: Analytical Skills for the MCAT 3 s.h.**  
Guided preparation for students who plan to take the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT); exercises in analytical thinking, analytical writing, problem solving; practice developing skills in logical reasoning; reflection on professional skills and goals.
- PHIL:3908 Workshop: Analytical Skills for the GRE 3 s.h.**  
Guided preparation for students who plan to take the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) and attend graduate school; exercises in analytical thinking, analytical writing, problem solving; practice developing skills in logical reasoning; reflection on professional skills and goals.
- PHIL:3920 Philosophy in Public 1-3 s.h.**  
Engagement and service-learning; philosophical concepts are applied to and extracted from internship work in the community and beyond.
- PHIL:3950 Readings in Philosophy arr.**  
Independent study. Requirements: sophomore or higher standing.
- PHIL:4050 Topics in Buddhist Philosophy 3 s.h.**  
Buddhist theories and arguments concerning nature and existence of the self.
- PHIL:4152 Plato 3 s.h.**  
Introduction to metaphysics, epistemology, and moral theory of Plato; topics may include the philosophy of Socrates, Plato's theory of Forms, the tripartite soul, nature of virtue and moral education; Plato's cosmology and assimilation of human nature to the divine; close reading and interpretation of specific texts.
- PHIL:4153 Aristotle 3 s.h.**  
Introduction to metaphysics, epistemology, and moral theory of Aristotle; topics may include Aristotle's theories of matter and form, causation, motion, change, space, void, time; Aristotle's philosophy of biology and theory of the soul; unity of virtue, nature of action and choice; the syllogism; combines survey with close reading and interpretation of specific texts.
- PHIL:4258 Descartes 3 s.h.**  
Descartes' systematic philosophy and impact on current debates; topics may include skepticism, the confusion of everyday experience, the mind-body problem, innate ideas and empiricism, free will, nature and existence of God, science and religion, problem of evil, stoicism.
- PHIL:4260 Spinoza and Leibniz 3 s.h.**  
Comparative and critical examination of metaphysical and epistemological views of 17th-century rationalists, Baruch Spinoza and G.W. Leibniz; topics may include monism, panpsychism, space and time, free will and necessity, the confusion of everyday experience, incomplete versus complete ideas, nature and existence of God, stoicism, passions and emotions as objects of detached scientific investigation.
- PHIL:4263 Berkeley and Hume 3 s.h.**  
Comparative and critical examination of metaphysical and epistemological views of 18th-century empiricists, George Berkeley and David Hume; topics may include the theory of ideas, perception, skepticism, limits of knowledge, the mind-body problem, scientific and philosophical method, role of God in Berkeley's and Hume's philosophical systems.
- PHIL:4266 Kant 3 s.h.**  
Main ideas and major texts of Kant's metaphysics and epistemology; particular attention given to *Critique of Pure Reason*.
- PHIL:4346 Frege and Russell 3 s.h.**  
Major issues concerning Frege's revolution in logic, Cantor's taming of the infinite, and Russellian synthesis of these revolutions to form Logicist thesis that all of pure mathematics (including geometry) is a branch of the science of logic; central issues in the philosophy of language and analysis of logical form; Russell's theory of definite descriptions and his logicism as a paradigm for a philosophical solution to mysteries of existence, number, infinite, motion, and Zeno paradoxes.
- PHIL:4373 Heidegger 3 s.h.**  
Main ideas and major texts of Martin Heidegger; early and later periods; particular attention given to *Being and Time*; focus on Heidegger's analyses of Being and being-in-the-world.
- PHIL:4375 Rawls's Political Philosophy 3 s.h.**  
Major works by John Rawls, selected secondary readings; contractarianism, concept of justice, justice as fairness as an alternative to utilitarianism, Kantian foundations, comprehensive and political liberalism.
- PHIL:4377 Wittgenstein 3 s.h.**  
Main ideas and major texts of Ludwig Wittgenstein; early and later periods; particular attention given to *Tractatus, Philosophical Investigations*, and development of Wittgenstein's thought.

- PHIL:4379 Quine** 3 s.h.  
Evaluation of Quine's attempt to restructure philosophy so that ontological questions are questions of "what there is" and methods for answering such questions are methods of natural (empirical) sciences; central issues pertaining to Quine's thesis that this naturalization program also applies to physics, mathematics, logic; comparison of Dewey's pragmatist and evolutionary reconstruction in philosophy to that of Quine and others (e.g., Carnap, Russell, Wittgenstein); major themes involving Quine on set theory, modal logic, the *a priori*; and the thesis that meaning is translation and translation is indeterminate.
- PHIL:4480 Analytic Ethics** 3 s.h.  
Exploration of central meta-ethical questions: Are there objective values, and if there are, can we gain knowledge of what has such value? Should we always act so as to bring about the best consequences? If not, why not? Can we derive moral conclusions from scientifically established facts about the world? If not, does this undermine the idea that we can offer sensible arguments for ethical conclusions?
- PHIL:4481 Issues in Philosophy of Law** 3 s.h.  
Nature of law and legal interpretation; natural law theory and positivism; critical legal theories.
- PHIL:4482 Early Modern Ethics** 3 s.h.  
Thomas Hobbes' 1651 publication, *Leviathan*, set British moral philosophy on a new course, rejecting most of the presuppositions of theistic natural law theory, shocked and outraged many of his contemporaries, and set in motion a debate about the nature of morality that continues today in philosophical ethics; focus on debate between sentimentalists (Francis Hutcheson, David Hume, Adam Smith) who regarded morality as a matter of human attitudes and emotions, and rationalists (Samuel Clarke, Ralph Cudworth, Richard Price) who regarded morality as analogous to mathematics.
- PHIL:4485 Political Philosophy** 3 s.h.  
Political philosophy topics; may include obligation to obey the law, secession, nature of rights, limits of state power, just distribution of property, feminist criticisms.
- PHIL:4586 Topics in Metaphysics** 3 s.h.  
In-depth exploration of metaphysical problems: material constitution, persistence of objects and persons through time, problem of universals, mind-body problem, free will and determinism.
- PHIL:4587 Epistemology** 3 s.h.  
Theories of nature, structure, and extent of knowledge and rational belief; investigation of questions: Do we really know as much as we are inclined to think we do? Can we rule out the possibility that we are dreaming or being systematically deceived right now? And if we can't, what reason do we have for thinking that things are as they seem to us to be?
- PHIL:4588 Philosophy of Mind** 3 s.h.  
Foundational questions about the mind: What is the mind, and how is it related to the brain? What makes minds so special? How do we know if other animals, or even other people, have minds? Can things without brains, such as aliens or computers, think? What is consciousness? Are we mere machines, lacking free will, if neuroscientists can explain the mind?; recent research in related sciences including neuroscience, psychology, cognitive ethology (animal cognition).
- PHIL:4589 Philosophy of Language** 3 s.h.  
Main issues in contemporary philosophy of language; topics may include theories of meaning, truth, belief, interpretation, translation, speech acts, performatives, rule following, reference, naming, propositional attitudes, metaphor. Same as LING:4589.
- PHIL:4590 Foundations of Cognitive Science** 3 s.h.  
Cognitive science defined as the study of individual agency; its nature, mechanisms, and patterns; development of cognitive science from historical roots in psychology, computer science, neuroscience, philosophy, linguistics; key issues; motivations for and varieties of cognitive explanations; models of cognitive architecture; nature of information processing; relation between cognitive processes and experimental tasks; relation between cognitive and neural theories, models, explanations.
- PHIL:4691 Mathematical Logic** 3 s.h.  
Presentation of logic as the science that studies kinds of structure; different axiom systems, decidability, model theoretic semantics, Gödel's incompleteness theorems; topics include nature of logic, mathematics, type-theories, set-theoretical paradoxes.
- PHIL:4692 Modal Logic** 3 s.h.  
Presentation of systems of logic designed to capture concepts of necessity and possibility; different axiom systems, semantics, nonexistent objects; topics include nonclassical systems, nature of possible worlds, relevant entailment, transworld identity, and counterparts inhabiting parallel worlds.
- PHIL:4694 Philosophy of Science** 3 s.h.  
Issues in the nature of science and scientific knowledge considered in greater depth; nature of causation, kinds of relations that might hold between sciences and scientific theories, and varieties of explanation. Requirements: prior coursework in philosophy.
- PHIL:4798 Topics in Philosophy** 3 s.h.  
A single philosopher or philosophical problem.
- PHIL:4920 Research Practicum** 2-3 s.h.  
Collaborative research between student and faculty member.
- PHIL:5153 Aristotle: Seminar Discussion** 1 s.h.  
Introduction to metaphysics, epistemology, and moral theory of Aristotle; topics may include Aristotle's theories of matter and form, causation, motion, change, space, void, time; Aristotle's philosophy of biology and theory of the soul; unity of virtue, nature of action and choice; the syllogism; combines survey with close reading and interpretation of specific texts; seminar discussion for graduate students. Corequisites: PHIL:4153.
- PHIL:5266 Kant: Seminar Discussion** 1 s.h.  
Main ideas and major texts of Kant's metaphysics and epistemology; particular attention given to *Critique of Pure Reason*; seminar discussion for graduate students. Corequisites: PHIL:4266.
- PHIL:5377 Wittgenstein: Seminar Discussion** 1 s.h.  
Main ideas and major texts of Ludwig Wittgenstein; early and later periods; particular attention given to *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, *Philosophical Investigations*, and development of Wittgenstein's thought; seminar discussion for graduate students. Corequisites: PHIL:4377.

**PHIL:5480 Analytic Ethics: Seminar Discussion 1 s.h.**

Exploration of central meta-ethical questions: Are there objective values, and if there are, can we gain knowledge of what has such value? Should we always act so as to bring about the best consequences? If not, why not? Can we derive moral conclusions from scientifically established facts about the world? If not, does this undermine the idea that we can offer sensible arguments for ethical conclusions?; seminar discussion for graduate students. Corequisites: PHIL:4480.

**PHIL:5586 Topics in Metaphysics: Seminar Discussion 1 s.h.**

In-depth exploration of metaphysical problems: material constitution, persistence of objects and persons through time, problem of universals, mind-body problem, free will and determinism; seminar discussion for graduate students. Corequisites: PHIL:4586.

**PHIL:5588 Philosophy of Mind: Seminar Discussion 1 s.h.**

Foundational questions about the mind: What is the mind, and how is it related to the brain? What makes minds so special? How do we know if other animals, or even other people, have minds? Can things without brains, such as aliens or computers, think? What is consciousness? Are we mere machines, lacking free will, if neuroscientists can explain the mind?; recent research in related sciences including neuroscience, psychology, and cognitive ethology (animal cognition); seminar discussion for graduate students. Corequisites: PHIL:4588.

**PHIL:6100 Seminar: Ancient Philosophy 3 s.h.****PHIL:6200 Seminar: Modern Philosophy 3 s.h.****PHIL:6300 Seminar: Philosophical Analysis 3 s.h.****PHIL:6400 Seminar: Ethics 3 s.h.****PHIL:6510 Seminar: Metaphysics 3 s.h.****PHIL:6520 Seminar: Epistemology 3 s.h.****PHIL:6540 Seminar: Philosophy of Language 3 s.h.****PHIL:6620 Seminar: Philosophy of Science 3 s.h.****PHIL:6920 Philosophy Colloquium 1-3 s.h.**

Attendance and participation at departmental colloquia and precolloquium meetings; lunch with visiting speakers; weekly meetings to discuss background to topic and larger issues of professionalization.

**PHIL:7200 Research: History of Philosophy arr.****PHIL:7400 Research: Value Theory arr.****PHIL:7500 Research: Metaphysics and Epistemology arr.****PHIL:7600 Research: Logic and Philosophy of Science arr.****PHIL:7900 Thesis arr.**