

# Philosophy

HUMANITIES DIVISION

## Faculty

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The great philosophers seek to answer the most basic questions about the world and our place in it. Can we distinguish between what is real and what is unreal? What is knowledge? What are the roles of reason, perception, and feeling in shaping our relations with the world and with each other? What does it mean to be a person? What is the value of art? What are we to think about religion?

Many philosophical questions are inescapable. How is one to live one's life? What are good and bad, right and wrong? How do we acquire obligations? How are we to make moral decisions? In every life, such questions arise, and everyone assumes one answer or another. To attempt to articulate your answer and to search for better answers is to become a philosopher.

Original works of the great classical and contemporary philosophers are used in all courses. Texts are analyzed critically in order to understand what is being said and judge their merit. In class discussion and in written work, we raise questions, develop additional ideas, and construct new arguments. Classes in philosophy are generally small and usually emphasize discussion and dialogue. Students are encouraged to engage in critical thought and to come to their own conclusions.

Nearly all courses are designed to be of interest and accessible to both majors and nonmajors. Look for the ♦ symbol, which designates those courses particularly appropriate for first-year or upperclass students new to the philosophy department curriculum.

Regardless of background, students should normally take **the introductory course**, PHIL 100, before they take any other philosophy course at Kenyon. Each member of the philosophy faculty offers a section of the introductory course. This course serves as an introduction to the subject through the reading of original works by major philosophers. Although many of our texts derive from earlier centuries and from classical Greece, we are concerned with what is of timeless and present importance in them. We emphasize classroom discussion, focusing on interpretation of the texts and consideration of the philosophical

issues raised by them. We assign several short papers and we give a final examination.

**Other courses that may be taken without prerequisites** are PHIL 105, Introduction to Logic; PHIL 115, Practical Issues in Ethics; PHIL 200, Ancient Philosophy; PHIL 210, Modern Philosophy; PHIL 225, Existentialism; and PHIL 240, Philosophy of Religion.

**Intermediate-level courses include** PHIL 120, Symbolic Logic; PHIL 245, Philosophy of Science; PHIL 250, Philosophy of Social Science; PHIL 215, Nineteenth-Century Philosophy; PHIL 300, Nietzsche; and PHIL 330, Contemporary Political Philosophy.

PHIL 335, Wittgenstein, and PHIL 315, Phenomenology, are among the **more advanced courses**. Although the seminars—PHIL 400, Contemporary Ethics; PHIL 405, Theory of Knowledge; and PHIL 410, Metaphysics—are primarily for majors, they may be of interest to other advanced students as well.

## Requirements for the Major

### 1. Course Requirements

- 4 1/2 units of philosophy, including the following courses:  
PHIL 100 Introduction to Philosophy  
PHIL 105 Introduction to Logic  
**or** PHIL 120 Symbolic Logic

In addition, the following courses are required:

PHIL 200 Ancient Philosophy  
PHIL 210 Modern Philosophy

- One course from each of the three core areas (see “Core Area Courses” below)
- Two additional 1/2-unit courses in philosophy of the student’s choice

## 2. Senior Exercise

All students must successfully complete the Senior Exercise (see description below).

## 3. Friendly Advice

Here are some tips on course planning. PHIL 100 is normally the first course. PHIL 105 or PHIL 120, PHIL 200, and PHIL 210 should normally be taken as early as possible. PHIL 400, PHIL 405, and PHIL 410 should normally begin no earlier than the second semester of the junior year.

Students who expect to do graduate work in philosophy should take PHIL 120.

## Requirements for Honors Majors

Central to the Honors Program is a series of three related courses culminating in a thesis at the end of the senior year. The first of these courses, PHIL 398, is designed to acquaint the student with contemporary methods of philosophical thought as a preparation for writing a thesis, as well as to help in finding and developing a suitable thesis topic. The second, PHIL 497, enables the student to pursue the search for and development of a suitable topic. By the second semester of the senior year, the student should have the background necessary for writing an honors thesis in PHIL 498. Students interested in the Honors Program should submit a written request to the chair of the department before the second semester of their junior year.

## 1. Course Requirements

- 5 units of philosophy, including the following courses:

PHIL 100 Introduction to Philosophy

In addition, the following courses are required:

PHIL 120 Symbolic Logic  
PHIL 200 Ancient Philosophy  
PHIL 210 Modern Philosophy  
PHIL 215 Nineteenth-Century Philosophy  
PHIL 398 Junior Honors Seminar  
PHIL 497 and 498 Senior Honors

For normal sequence of courses, see “Friendly Advice,” above

- One course from each of the three core areas (see below), one of which must be a seminar

## 2. Senior Exercise

All honors candidates must successfully complete the Senior Exercise (see description below).

## 3. Honors Thesis and Oral Examination

Upon completion of the thesis, an outside examiner and a department faculty member will read the honors thesis and participate in an oral examination on it.

## 4. Divisional Approval

The candidate must meet the requirements of the College and of the Humanities Division for admission to and retention in the Honors Program.

## Core Area Courses

There are three core areas: ethics, epistemology, and metaphysics. The courses that may be selected to satisfy the core area requirements are listed below under the core area they satisfy. Additional courses may be announced.

### Ethics

PHIL 110 Introduction to Ethics  
PHIL 400 Seminar in Contemporary Ethics

## Epistemology

PHIL 405 Seminar on the Theory of Knowledge  
PHIL 262 Philosophy of Perception

## Metaphysics

PHIL 205 Medieval Philosophy  
PHIL 215 Nineteenth-Century Philosophy

## Senior Exercise

The Senior Exercise consists of a comprehensive essay examination with questions drawn from Modern Philosophy, Ancient Philosophy, and core area courses.

Students with a grade point average of 3.5 and above in the major, however, have the option of writing a paper in place of sitting for the examination. The paper option is designed as an opportunity for the student to display and refine his or her philosophical skills, as well as engage in close philosophical dialogue with a faculty member. It consists of the writing of a paper under the close supervision of a faculty member, who guides the paper from its earliest stages as a mere proposal, through several drafts, until the final, polished version. The exercise concludes with the student delivering the paper before an audience of majors and faculty members and then, typically, replying to questions raised by the audience. This discussion also gives the student the opportunity to expand upon his or her ideas. The written work and oral work are evaluated as a unit.

## Graduate School Considerations

Philosophy majors interested in attending graduate school are strongly encouraged to select PHIL 120 to satisfy the logic requirement, and to select PHIL 400, PHIL 405, and PHIL 410 to satisfy the core area course requirement. Such students should also consult with a faculty member as early as possible.

## Synoptic Majors

Philosophy courses are often suitable for inclusion in synoptic majors, and the department welcomes such majors.

## Off-Campus Studies

Philosophy majors who wish to do so are generally able to participate in off-campus study programs, particularly if they begin their major programs as sophomores.

## Requirements for the Minor

The minor in philosophy consists of the following:

- 2 1/2 units of work in the department, including the following courses:
  - PHIL 100 Introduction to Philosophy
  - PHIL 105 Introduction to Logic or PHIL 120 Symbolic Logic
- One course from the history sequence (PHIL 200, or PHIL 210, or PHIL 215)
- Two additional 1/2-unit courses in philosophy of the student's choice

## First-Semester Courses

### Introduction to Philosophy

- ◆ PHIL 100 (1/2 unit)  
*De Pascuale, Geisz, Lucht*

The primary aim of this course is to acquaint the student with the spirit, methods, and problems of philosophy. An attempt is made to show the range of issues in which philosophical inquiry is possible and to which it is relevant. Major works of important philosophers, both ancient and modern, will be used to introduce topics in metaphysics, theory of knowledge, ethics, and other traditional areas of philosophical concern. Enrollment limited.

### Introduction to Ethics

- PHIL 110 (1/2 unit)  
*Sadler*

This course examines major Western ethical theories such as utilitarianism, Kantianism, and virtue ethics, along with meta-ethical debates such as "Is morality relative?", "Is all action based on self-interest?", and "If God is dead, is anything permissible?" Emphasis is on classical texts. Prerequisite: sophomore standing or 1/2 unit in philosophy.

### Practical Issues in Ethics

- ◆ PHIL 115 (1/2 unit)  
*Sadler*

This course examines moral issues we face in private and public life from a philosophical point of view. It considers issues related to topics such as abortion, capital punishment, suicide, the moral status of nonhuman animals, illegal drug use, world hunger, and pornography. There is a strong emphasis on discussion. This course is suitable for first-year students.

### Symbolic Logic

- ◆ QR PHIL 120 (1/2 unit)  
*Richeimer*

This course presents an introduction to modern formal logic. The nature of deductive reasoning is examined through the study of formal systems, representing the principles of valid argument.

### Ancient Philosophy

- PHIL 200 (1/2 unit)  
*Richeimer*

Ancient Greek philosophy is not only the basis of the Western and the Arabic philosophical traditions, but it is central for understanding Western culture in general, whether literature, science, religion, or values. In this course, we examine some of the seminal texts of Greek philosophy, focusing on the work of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. But we also examine the work of the pre-Socratics (such as Heraclitus, Zeno, and Democritus) and the Sophists (such as Protagoras and Gorgias). This is a lecture/discussion course. It is recommended that students complete

PHIL 100, but there are no formal prerequisites for this course.

### Nineteenth-Century Philosophy

- PHIL 215 (1/2 unit)  
*Lucht*

This course follows the rise and fall of German idealism. The German idealists attempted to demonstrate the unity of all experience and knowledge by formulating all-encompassing philosophical systems. We will study the most elaborate of these attempts—Hegel's encyclopedic system of philosophy—and then turn to a succession of critics: Marx, who argued that philosophical reflection could not unify experience; Schopenhauer, who argued that no such unity can be found in life; and Nietzsche, who argued that we must create our own unified experience. Throughout the course, we will focus on these philosophers' understanding of the idea that we are alienated and their prescriptions for how to overcome such alienation.

The readings in this course are extraordinarily difficult, and it is strongly recommended that students have some previous experience with the history of philosophy. Prerequisite: sophomore standing or above.

### Existentialism

- PHIL 225 (1/2 unit)  
*De Pascuale*

Existentialism is one of the most influential philosophical movements in modern culture. Unlike other recent philosophies, its impact has extended far beyond the cloistered walls of academia into literature (Beckett, Kafka, Ionesco), art (Giacometti, Bacon, Dadaism), theology (Tillich, Rahner, Buber), and psychology.

Existentialism is at once an expression of humanity's continual struggle with the perennial problems of philosophy (knowledge, truth, meaning, value) and a particularly modern response to the social and spiritual conditions of our times (alienation, anomie, meaninglessness).

In this course, we will study existentialism in its complete form as a cultural and philosophical move-

ment. After uncovering the historical context from which this movement emerged, we will view the “existential” paintings of de Chirico and Munch; read the fiction of Kafka, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, and Beckett; and closely study the thought of Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Sartre. Among the topics we shall examine are alienation, authenticity, self-knowledge, belief in God, the nature of value, and the meaning of life. No prerequisite, but PHIL 100 or RELN 111 is desirable. Enrollment limited.

**Philosophy of Art**  
PHIL 230 (1/2 unit)  
*De Pascuale*

This course is a seminar/workshop in which we will attempt to philosophically scrutinize the delightful, complicated, and varied world of art.

The philosophy of art is not art history, art appreciation, or art criticism. It is, instead, that division of philosophy in which we critically examine the assumptions made by artists and the appreciators, historians, and critics of art. In philosophy of art, we try to define art, establish general criteria for distinguishing what is important or unique in art works, understand creativity, and ascertain the role of art in human life and society.

The aim of this course is to enable us to see and hear more clearly the kinds of objects that art presents for our contemplation and experience, so that we may come to know more and feel more. The first half will be spent reading and discussing the theories of Bell, Tolstoy, Aristotle, Collingwood, Langer, Hanslick, and others. The second half of the course will largely be spent viewing, hearing, feeling, reading, and otherwise experiencing art works and philosophically questioning that experience. We shall discuss the nature of art, the ontology of objects of art, and the problems of the interpretation and criticism of art. No prerequisite. Enrollment limited.

**Philosophy of Mind**  
PHIL 260 (1/2 unit)  
*Geisz*

This course surveys major issues in philosophy of mind. What is the relationship between mind and body? Are mind and body separate substances? Is the mind identical to the brain? Is the mind similar to a computer? What are the prospects for artificial intelligence? Are there mental representations? Can consciousness be studied scientifically? Readings will include classic and contemporary sources. Prerequisite: one previous philosophy course or permission of instructor.

**Seminar: Theory of Knowledge**  
PHIL 405 (1/2 unit)  
*Geisz*

This course will explore key topics in epistemology, the study of knowledge. What is knowledge? What—if anything—can we know about the world? How is knowledge related to belief? To sensory experience? To reason? To science? Do gender, race, and class affect knowledge and our conceptions of it? Topics also include debates about naturalized epistemology, internalism/externalism, and the connections between epistemology and issues in metaphysics and philosophy of mind. Readings will include classic and contemporary sources. Prerequisites: junior standing or higher and philosophy major/minor status, or permission of instructor.

**Individual Study**  
PHIL 493 (1/2 unit)  
*Staff*

Prerequisites: permission of instructor and department chair.

**Senior Honors**  
PHIL 497 (1/4 unit)  
*Staff*

Prerequisite: permission of department chair.

## Second-Semester Courses

**Introduction to Philosophy**  
◆ PHIL 100 (1/2 unit)  
*Richeimer, Sadler*

See first-semester course description.

**Introduction to Logic**  
◆ PHIL 105 (1/2 unit)  
*Lucht*

This course presents an introductory examination of the nature of reasoning. The nature of language, inductive and deductive arguments, and fallacious reasoning will be explored. Emphasis will be on providing the student with the basic tools necessary to identify and evaluate both formal and informal reasoning.

**Medieval Philosophy**  
PHIL 205 (1/2 unit)  
*Pessin*

Philosophically speaking, the period between the eleventh and sixteenth centuries was a remarkably fertile one which both warrants and rewards close study. In this course we will examine some of the major thinkers and themes from the Jewish, Muslim, and Christian late medieval traditions, with an emphasis on understanding both how the medievals synthesized the wisdom of Aristotle with their dominant religious concerns and how they developed the world view against which early modern philosophy (seventeenth to eighteenth century) must be understood. Prerequisite: two philosophy courses, including either Phil 200 or 210.

**Modern Philosophy**  
PHIL 210 (1/2 unit)  
*Pessin*

This course examines seventeenth-through eighteenth-century philosophy. Major emphasis will be placed on Descartes, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, and Kant, but we will also stop in on figures such as Malebranche, Arnauld, and Reid. We will stress metaphysical and epistemological issues throughout. It wouldn't be unfair to say that Descartes sets the agenda by creating a certain concep-

tion of the mind and the nature of knowledge, while each of the subsequent figures works out various implications of that conception. As such, the course content takes something of a narrative form, where we start with a certain optimism about knowledge, work our way into a deepening skepticism, only to be rescued at the end (by a rescuer whose price may not be worth paying). There are no official prerequisites, but PHIL 100 is recommended.

### **Philosophy of Perception**

PHIL 262 (1/2 unit)  
*Richeimer*

We all depend on perception to live our lives. It is so much part of our lives that it is taken for granted and seems not worth noticing. Yet perception is not well understood. When one examines the differences in perception among humans, what one takes for granted becomes problematic. When one includes animal perception and robotic perception, perception becomes mysterious. We will examine various ways of understanding perception: biological, computational, ecological, cultural, and rational. In so doing, we hope to gain some insight into a process that makes up much of our lives and provides the basis for much what we know. Prerequisite: sophomore status or higher.

### **Special Topic: Environmental Philosophy**

PHIL 292 (1/2 unit)  
*Lucht*

If, as many scientists and philosophers claim, humanity finds or soon will find itself in the midst of an environmental crisis, then it is imperative to inquire into both the causes of that crisis and its possible solutions. In this class, we shall investigate the philosophical background of attitudes contributing to the possibility of conduct resulting in environmental devastation, and we shall inquire into alternative ways of conceiving of human being, nature, and the relations holding among them. We shall study a

variety of positions, including deep ecology, ecofeminism, social ecology, theories of sustainable development, and libertarian environmentalism. No prerequisites. Enrollment limited.

### **Kierkegaard on Being Human**

PHIL 305 (1/2 unit)  
*De Pascuale*

Often regarded as the originator of existential inquiry, Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) wrote a captivating poetic and philosophical literature concerning human existence. Taking the human hunger for meaning as his point of departure, Kierkegaard examined the rational and emotional depths of human life in its aesthetic, moral, and religious modes of expression.

In this course we will read a large part of what Kierkegaard called "my authorship" in order to understand his way of doing philosophy and to examine his portrayal of the spiritual landscape. Kierkegaard's probings into the value dimensions of life—for example, happiness, pleasure, boredom, despair, choice, duty, commitment, anxiety, guilt, remorse, hope, faith, love—encourage his readers to think about their own lives and their relations with others. In examining Kierkegaard's ideas, therefore, the student should expect to be challenged personally as well as intellectually. Prerequisites: PHIL 100, PHIL 225, or permission of instructor. Enrollment limited.

### **Philosophy and Feminism**

PHIL 355 (1/2 unit)  
*Sadler*

This course examines different feminist theories about the nature and causes of gender difference and the role gender plays in ordering society; explores the conceptual grounds for distinguishing between sex and gender; considers feminist interpretations of the philosophical canon; and addresses gender as a tool of analysis in ethics, epistemology, metaphysics, and philosophy of science. Prerequisite: one course in philosophy or permission of the instructor. Enrollment limited to fifteen students.

### **Special Topic: Postmodernism**

PHIL 392 (1/2 unit)  
*Lucht*

Leveling a deep critique against traditional commitments to the authority of reason and the primacy of objectivity and essences, postmodern thought has resulted in a sustained questioning of foundational assumptions and methodological commitments across the entire range of academic inquiry. In this class, we shall study the challenges postmodern thinkers pose to philosophy, as well as confront critically the commitments and assumptions orienting the work of those thinkers themselves. We shall focus our attention on three of the most important postmodern thinkers: Jacques Derrida, Jean-Francois Lyotard, and Michel Foucault. However, we shall look also at the influence of postmodern thought on other fields, notably art, film, and literature. There are no prerequisites, but the class is closed to first-year students. Enrollment is limited.

### **Junior Honors Seminar: Philosophical Analysis**

PHIL 398 (1/2 unit)  
*De Pascuale*

This course will examine one or more major philosophical issues in contemporary form. We will seek both to comprehend the problem(s) and to understand and apply contemporary techniques of philosophical analysis. Students will be expected to present reports in the seminar. The course is intended for junior honors candidates and those interested in honors. The topic(s) for this year will be announced. Prerequisite: junior honors candidacy.

### **Seminar on Contemporary Ethics**

PHIL 400 (1/2 unit)  
*Sadler*

This course examines the foundations of moral knowledge, the nature of value, and moral reasoning. Recent ethical theories and anti-theories are considered. Twentieth-century writers are emphasized. Prerequisites: junior and senior philosophy majors or minors.

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**Individual Study**

PHIL 494 (1/2 unit)

*Staff*

Prerequisites: permission of instructor  
and department chair.

**Senior Honors**

PHIL 498 (1/4 unit)

*Staff*

Prerequisite: permission of instructor  
and department chair.