

Faculty

Cyrus W. Banning
Professor Emeritus

Juan E. De Pascuale
Associate Professor

Daniel Kading
Professor Emeritus

Ronald E. McLaren
Professor Emeritus

Andrew W. Pessin
Associate Professor

Joel F. Richeimer
Chair, Associate Professor

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
PHIL 200 Ancient Philosophy
PHIL 210 Modern Philosophy
One course from each of the three core areas (see "Core Area Courses" below)

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

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

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 245 Philosophy of Natural Science
 PHIL 340 Sartre and Merleau-Ponty

Metaphysics

PHIL 215 Nineteenth-Century Philosophy
 PHIL 240 Philosophy of Religion
 PHIL 410 Seminar on Metaphysics

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 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)

Pessin, staff

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 Logic

◆ PHIL 105 (1/2 unit)

Staff

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.

Introduction to Ethics

PHIL 110 (1/2 unit)

Staff

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.

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.

Philosophy of Religion

PHIL 240 (1/2 unit)

Pessin

In this course we will subject the concept of "God" to rigorous philosophical analysis, examining both historical and contemporary work. Among the topics we will cover: arguments for theism and atheism; the objections raised to them, and replies to these objections; the divine attributes—omnipotence, omniscience, benevolence, perfection, simplicity, and so on—and the puzzles arising from them; the problems of reconciling God and His attributes with the existence of evils, or with our free will, or with scientific explanations; the problem of understanding the causal relationship between God and the world; the nature of miracles; and the question whether belief in God without evidence may be rational. In short, we will examine whether it's possible to develop a coherent and satisfying concept of "God." Prerequisite: PHIL 100.

Philosophy of Natural Science

PHIL 245 (1/2 unit)

Richeimer

One of the greatest human achievements is scientific knowledge. But what is scientific knowledge? Is it different from other kinds of knowledge? Should we take scientific claims as literally true or as useful fictions? What status should we accord scientific work? We will examine the answers to these questions offered by the Logical Positivists, the Popperians, Kuhn, Quine, Lakatos, and Boyd. On the way, we will consider the issues surrounding induction, explanation, theoretical entities, laws, observation, reductionism, and so on. No formal background in the natural sciences is assumed. Prerequisite: PHIL 100 or permission of instructor.

Seminar on Metaphysics

PHIL 410 (1/2 unit)

Pessin

The content of this course varies but includes such topics as the nature and scope of reality, causality, space, time, existence, free will, necessity, and the relations of logic and language to the world. Traditional topics such as the problems of substance and of universals may be discussed. Much of the reading will be from contemporary sources. Prerequisites: This course is for junior or senior philosophy majors; others may be admitted with permission of the 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)
Staff

See first-semester course description.

Practical Issues in Ethics

◆ PHIL 115 (1/2 unit)
Staff

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.

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 conception 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.

Nineteenth-Century Philosophy

PHIL 215 (1/2 unit)
Staff

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.

Sartre and Merleau-Ponty

PHIL 340 (1/2 unit)
Richeimer

The two most important philosophers in post-World War II France were Jean-Paul Sartre and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. They initiated a debate that was and still is immensely influential both in and out of academia. Sartre worked out the implications of a consciousness-centered methodological individualism. The result was a new analysis of human freedom that equated freedom with "consciousness-raising." This had a tremendous influence on the political left, feminist thought, existentialism, postmodernism, and many forms of psychotherapy.

Merleau-Ponty challenged Sartre's mind's eye view with a brain-body's eye view of human behavior. Such a view replaced consciousness as guiding human behavior with an account of how any embodied functional system can self-adapt to its environment.

Merleau-Ponty's account was not limited to human behavior, but was generalizable to a range of self-maintaining systems. Merleau-Ponty explored this primarily in terms of the psychology of perception, in neuroscience, and in an analysis of film as a psychological phenomenon. Prerequisite: PHIL 100 or permission of instructor.

Junior Honors Seminar: Philosophical Analysis

PHIL 398 (1/2 unit)
Staff

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)
Staff

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.

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.