

Department of Philosophy

Spring 2027 Undergraduate Course Descriptions

101 Logic, Reasoning, & Persuasion

Kang, sections 01, 02

Logic is the study of how to reason correctly. This course is designed to introduce a variety of logical concepts and tools of critical thinking. Based on the principles of reasoning from formal and informal logic, we will learn how to critically examine philosophical and other theoretical issues concerning the nature of reality, knowledge, value and more. Learning objectives are as below:

1. Argument analysis: Acquiring skills of identifying parts of arguments (premises, conclusions, inferences); identifying mode (induction, deduction, analogy, etc.); reconstructing/diagramming arguments to reveal the logical structure
2. Argument evaluation: Becoming capable of a systematic evaluation of an argument; assessing the acceptability of premises/reasons; accurately evaluating the relevance of premises/reasons; making judgments about the sufficiency of grounds for a conclusion/contention/thesis.
3. Terminology/theory: Understanding and correctly using the definitions & conceptual foundations of logical analysis: validity, soundness, rhetoric, syllogisms, fallacies, other formal argument patterns.
4. Metacognition: Developing the skills of critical and logical thinkers such as ability to shift perspective, awareness of bias/cognitive limitations, commitment to understanding & transparency, and valuing logic over rhetoric.
5. Application: Acquiring substantial transference of technical ability to contexts outside the classroom.

Hutchens, sections 03, 04

This course is a general introduction to the basic mechanics of critical thinking, understood to mean the systematic evaluation and formulation of beliefs by rational standards. We will learn about the important roles critical thinking plays in formulating viable study habits and in evaluating problems one encounters outside the classroom. We will master an understanding of deductions, in respect of their soundness and validity, as well as inductions, in terms of their cogency, strength and general role in empirical experience and scientific experimentation. Some time will be spent addressing the difference between formal and informal fallacies.

A great deal of the semester will be spent working with propositional logic (translation, truth tabling, and enthymemes) and categorical logic (translation, squares of opposition, Venn diagramming).

Derstine, sections 05, 06

An argument is a series of statements, one set of which (the premises) is intended to provide either logically conclusive or strong support for another statement (the conclusion). In this course, we will study the logical structure of argumentation in ordinary language, with an emphasis on the relation of logic to practical (and controversial) affairs in politics, criminal justice, religion and ethics. We will also examine and learn to spot traditional informal fallacies —e.g., “begging the question”— which, although formally valid, are still instances of bad reasoning. Discussions explore the nature of validity, truth, meaning, and evidence in relation to the evaluation of arguments.

Birolli Abrahao, section 07

Development of skills in reasoning. Consideration of what an argument is, how arguments go wrong, and what makes an argument valid. Application of techniques for clarifying meaning; evaluating and constructing arguments.

103 Introduction to Philosophy

Piven, section 01

Philosophy is the love of wisdom. Over the eons great minds have contemplated the nature of the soul, the genesis of good and evil, the existence of God, the workings of the universe, and the way we perceive reality. How does one know good from evil? Are we really social animals? Can one prove or disprove the existence of God? Is there a soul distinct from the body? Does one truly have free will? This course introduces students to some of the great ideas in world philosophy, exploring the metaphysics and ethics of the Greeks, the skepticism of Descartes, the transcendental philosophy of Kant, the atheism of Nietzsche, and the existentialism of Sartre.

Baldino, section 02

Philosophy begins in a sense of wonder – a wonder about the very world itself and our own conspicuous existence in it. This class is an introduction to the field of inquiry that arises out of this sense of wonder, and it is an invitation to the student to convert that sense of wonder into specific questions and ways of addressing those questions.

The questions we will consider focus on the possibility of truth and value, the existence of God, ethics, metaphysics, epistemology, and theory of mind. Questions like: *How is knowledge possible and what justifies our beliefs? Is there a God? Do we have free will? What is the nature of the mind and how does it differ from matter? How should we treat one another, what is of value, and how should we live our lives?* The ways of addressing these questions will be through reading original works of philosophy, discussing openly and impartially these works with one another, critically examining the ideas presented, and (if all goes well) developing our own thoughts about the issues under discussion.

This introduction to philosophy will have been a success if, by the end of the course, you are able to think of yourself as a philosopher – as someone open to thinking philosophically and about philosophical questions, and connecting ideas from philosophy to the things you encounter, experience, think about, and hope for in your everyday life.

Rotolo, section 03

This course introduces the major topics, problems, and methods of philosophy and surveys the writings of major historical figures in the field. Topics of discussion include the nature of philosophy; the nature and limits of human knowledge; the scope and limits of human freedom; the differences between right and wrong conduct; the nature of the good life; and the meaning and value of human existence.

Kaspar, section 04

Philosophy examines the most general features of reality. But what is reality? Can we know reality? And what exactly are we? More directly, what is a human being? This course introduces students to ways of addressing these perennial human questions. Our focus in this course is on the philosophical issues that are most pressing for you: What kind of being are you? How do you fit into the vast scheme of things? What can you truly know? Our guides through these difficult and perplexing matters are some of the greatest philosophers in Western thought: Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, and Locke.

Cho, section 05

This course is organized thematically around some of the central questions in philosophy, rather than focusing on individual philosophers. These questions include: What is knowledge? Do we have free will? What is the relationship between the mental and the physical? What makes an action morally right or wrong? What constitutes well-being?

Bridges, section 06

Development of skills in reasoning. Consideration of what an argument is, how arguments go wrong, and what makes an argument valid. Application of techniques for clarifying meaning; evaluating and constructing arguments.

104 Introduction to Philosophy - Writing Intensive

Lin, sections 01, 02, 03, 04

In this course we will examine some of the central questions of philosophy. What can we know? What is the basic structure of reality? Does God exist? Do we have free will? What is the nature and content of morality?

105 Current Moral and Social Issues

Fonth, section 01

In this course, we will critically examine several contemporary issues in moral and social philosophy. Towards that end, we will investigate issues in biological, racial, and AI ethics. Some questions we will consider are: Is abortion immoral? Can institutions be racist? Is AI-generated art theft? We will also examine the nature of social construction more broadly, making sense of what it means to say that an entity is socially constructed as well as investigating whether the social world is as real as the natural world.

Kamm, section 02

This class will begin with an introduction to ethical theory. After that it will focus on reasoning about some practical moral issues related to current affairs. Among the topics to be discussed are famine relief, abortion, war, torture, pandemics, climate change, and immigration. Readings will be primarily by contemporary philosophers. Students will be expected to submit questions and participate in online discussion about the readings at a class website. There will be in-class midterm and final exams.

McCrossin, section 03

According to the [Course Catalog](#), we are to “[a]pply of moral theory to selected contemporary issues[, ...] includ[ing] abortion, infanticide, euthanasia, punishment, equality, sexism, racism, affirmative action, privacy, obligations to the world’s needy, treatment of animals, drug use, and the meaning of life.” One strategic approach would be to develop or simply adopt this or that

moral theory, or array of moral theories, and then apply it to the issues at hand. In an effort to resist losing the forest for the trees, however, one might instead focus more immediately on the issue at hand, with only the most basic commonsense “moral theory,” as, for example, the variety of moral virtues we have at our disposal in managing our common challenge, which is to balance individual rights and the common good, not only lawfully, but with *morally-grounded* lawfulness? In this spirit, we will imagine ourselves as, “Current Social *as* Moral Issues.”

We want to resist four additional pitfalls as well. It is not uncommon, on the one hand, to conflate the question of what is or isn’t moral with the question of what is or is not legal, hindering us in both arenas. Even once we distinguish them, on the other hand, we may still forget that we strive to resolve moral issues in order to resolve legal ones, in that order. In addition, even once we recognize this, we may still address moral issues in isolation, one by one, rather than as coalescing helpfully into overlapping arcs. Finally, even if we resist all of this, we may still neglect the richness of popular culture, as it addresses, deliberately or otherwise, with varying degrees of subtlety, a wide variety of moral issues.

This is the landscape we will explore, hope to clarify, in as cooperative, conversational a way as possible. In addition to anticipating being actively involved in a semester-long conversation, participants should anticipate periodic writing.

Sorensen, section 04

This will primarily be a course on applied ethics, though we will discuss political, social, legal, scientific, and metaphysical issues as well. We regularly form judgments about what is right and wrong and about who is and isn’t a good person. While we may have strong views about moral and social issues, what kinds of arguments and reasons do we have for holding them? Are our moral beliefs rational?

We will start with looking at meta-ethical and normative ethical theories. With an understanding of the different theoretical standpoints, we will then move forward to applying these theories to the real world. Throughout the course, we will read and discuss articles written by not only moral philosophers, but journalists, academics, and scientists as well. We will engage with the following topics: procreation, abortion, euthanasia, animal rights, extreme poverty, gun control, immigration, gender in sports, the death penalty, genetic engineering, and de-extinction.

Rotolo, section 05

Application of moral theory to selected contemporary issues. Possible topics include abortion, infanticide, euthanasia, punishment, equality, sexism, racism, affirmative action, privacy, obligations to the world's needy, treatment of animals, drug use, and the meaning of life.

107 Introduction to Ethics

Kalef, sections 01, 04

This course will introduce students to the skills and practices of philosophical reasoning in ethics, emphasizing the importance of principled thinking, curiosity, and intellectual integrity. Students will learn to avoid common errors in moral thinking. The course will conclude by exploring the plausibility of a general moral theory.

This will be a strictly electronics-free course.. To promote learning and an academic community, and to protect the privacy of all students, no electronics may be used in class. Also, I will not use AI in any way in the preparation of the course. Neither should a student use AI in any way in taking the course.

Kaspar, section 02

Ethics is the study of human conduct. Its aim is not to study how humans actually conduct themselves. Instead it studies how humans *ought* to act. Modern ethics focuses on how we ought to morally act. In this course we'll study prominent modern moral theories, as well as contemporary moral issues such as abortion and poverty. Near the end of the semester we'll discuss how to bring whole-life issues into moral inquiry. Lastly, we'll examine a set of difficult contemporary moral cases and use all of our ethics tools to solve them.

Sharpe, section 03

What does it mean to be a good person? What does it mean to live well, or act rightly? These are among the most basic philosophical questions, and the field of ethics is here to help us figure out how to answer them for ourselves. Ethics asks us to consider what we ought to do and how we know. In this course, we will focus primarily on systems of ethics that purport to tell us what's right and wrong, good and bad, and why. We'll evaluate the reasons they give for their answers on their own merits and in dialogue with each other. We'll look at divine command views, natural law views (like that held by the Stoics), hedonist views, consequentialist views (like Mozi's and Mill's), deontological or duty-based views (like those found in Kant and the Bhagavad Gita) and character-based views (like those found in Aristotle and among the Ojibway people). No antecedent familiarity with philosophy is required or expected.

109 Introduction to Formal Reasoning and Decision Making

Bialek, section 01

Resolving differences of opinion isn't always impossible. Figuring out what you should believe isn't just a matter of checking what's true. Deciding what you should do doesn't have to be left up to your whim. Formal tools have been (and continue to be) developed that enable us to talk very precisely about the strength of arguments and of evidence, the rationality of beliefs we have, and the value of choices we make. This course will introduce students to some of those formal tools—specifically: logic, probability, and decision theory—focusing on their application, but also looking at the limits to their application and their potential for expansion and sophistication. Assessment in the course will be based on a mixture of exams, reading/discussion assignments, and quizzes.

Kang, section 02

Logic is the study of how to reason correctly. It helps us understand what it takes for the arguments and inferences to work, and clarify why they fail if they don't succeed. In this course, we will learn the basics of formal logical systems that are used to model inference and rational decision-making. We will explore the basics of deductive logic – the analysis of category related arguments, translations and analysis of truth-functional sentential logic and quantitative predicate logic – to understand the nature of valid inference. Then we will study the features of inductive inference, specifically probability and theories related to decision making.

By the end of the course, the student is expected to understand the structure of systematic inference. The student is also expected to critically discuss the issues on the reasonable choice in various contexts including but not limited to moral, religious decision, computation and the function of mind, and the decision of A.I or machines. This course satisfies the quantitative and formal reasoning core curriculum requirements

Kofi, sections 03, 04

This course is an introduction to the study of correct reasoning and rational decision-making. The course is divided into two parts. The first part is exclusively concerned with deductive reasoning. We will study deductive reasoning through a formal language and system of truth-functional logic. The second part of the course is concerned with probability and decision-making. We will study probability through a formal theory of probability. We will then use probability theory as a foundation for studying some basic ideas of decision theory.

201 Introduction to Logic

Baldino, section 01

Logic is considered a branch of philosophy because it is part of the essence of philosophy that we try to ensure that the conclusions we draw follow from the premises we give. Logic functions in a similar way in mathematics, where the premises we state are mathematical assumptions and the conclusions we draw are theorems, and in computer science, where the premises are about states of computational systems and the conclusions are the consequences of such states. In fact, ensuring that conclusions follow from assumptions or premises is essential to all reasoning, whether in an academic setting or in everyday life.

In this introduction to logic, we will focus on describing a language for formally representing assumptions and conclusions and on determining whether the arguments constructed with these formally represented propositions are examples of acceptable reasoning. By doing so, we will be developing tools that will be of use in all our activities as rational agents.

Kalkus, section 02

This course is an introduction to symbolic logic. Logic is the study of correct reasoning and symbolic logic studies reasoning using formal languages. We will begin with propositional logic, which will enable us to represent various connective terms and allow us to evaluate inferences. We will focus on determining the validity of arguments and the processes involved in derivations using truth tables, semantic tableaux, and natural deduction proofs. Then, we will turn to predicate logic, which subsumes propositional logic, but affords us additional tools to both represent terms such as “something” and “everything”.

Skiles, section 03

This course will introduce you to the basics of modern formal deductive logic and its applications to everyday reasoning, to philosophy, and to the numerous theoretical and practical disciplines that draw upon it (e.g. mathematics, computer science, and linguistics). Topics to be covered include: basic notions in formal logic such as validity, soundness, the logical modalities, ambiguity, and the use vs. mention distinction; truth-functional connectives; using a formal language to represent patterns of deductive reasoning in natural language; the syntax, semantics, and basic metatheory of truth-functional logic and first-order logic; constructing proofs in Fitch-style natural deduction systems; and rudimentary set theory.

Pohlmann, section 04

This course will introduce you to the basics of modern formal deductive logic and its applications to everyday reasoning, to philosophy, and to the numerous theoretical and practical disciplines that draw upon it (e.g. mathematics, computer science, and linguistics). Topics to be covered include: basic notions in formal logic such as validity, soundness, the logical modalities, ambiguity, and the use vs. mention distinction; truth-functional connectives; using a formal language to represent patterns of deductive reasoning in natural language; the syntax, semantics, and basic metatheory of truth-functional logic and first-order logic; constructing proofs in Fitch-style natural deduction systems; and rudimentary set theory.

Wolf, section 05

This course will introduce you to the basics of modern formal deductive logic and its applications to everyday reasoning, to philosophy, and to the numerous theoretical and practical disciplines that draw upon it (e.g. mathematics, computer science, and linguistics). Topics to be covered include: basic notions in formal logic such as validity, soundness, the logical modalities, ambiguity, and the use vs. mention distinction; truth-functional connectives; using a formal language to represent patterns of deductive reasoning in natural language; the syntax, semantics, and basic metatheory of truth-functional logic and first-order logic; constructing proofs in Fitch-style natural deduction systems; and rudimentary set theory.

210 Philosophy of Language

Pietroski, section 01

What is a language? Is English *a* language, or is there a family of English languages? Why are children so good at acquiring languages that seem so diverse? What's so special about these languages (like English, Japanese, ASL, Urdu, Navajo, ...) and human children? Do other animals—perhaps even bees—have languages of their own? Are there languages of thought? What are words? Does 'dog' have the same meaning as 'chien' in French? What are meanings? Why does 'ready to eat' have more than one meaning, while 'eager to eat' and 'easy to eat' are less ambiguous? How do we know what sentences mean, and what they don't mean, even if we haven't previously heard or read them? How is written English related to spoken English? How can we use words and sentences to convey information, ask questions, make requests, tell jokes, and so on? What's a metaphor? How is it possible to communicate "indirectly", as when we speak sarcastically or criticize by using "faint praise"? How are sentence meanings related to episodes of people using sentences to make claims that are true or false? How are word meanings related to episodes of people using words to refer to things? How are we able to talk about things that don't exist, like unicorns? What are names? Do they have meanings of a special kind? Do

words like ‘this’, ‘I’, ‘here’, and ‘now’ have meanings of a special kind? Unsurprisingly, the course will not provide definitive answers to these questions. But one goal is to introduce you to some relevant literature and help you understand the questions well enough to appreciate some answers that have been offered—and then pursue the issues further if you are so inclined. Another goal is to focus on what some philosophers have said about language as a case study of how the intellectual tools of philosophy can be useful in the study of human nature, while recognizing that an interdisciplinary toolkit is required to answer the interesting questions about language that philosophers have highlighted.

220 Theory of Knowledge

Jenkin, section 01

Do you really know as much as you think you do? This course investigates what knowledge is, what makes it valuable, and how much of it we really have. We’ll consider various ways our knowledge can go awry, including conspiracy theories, echo chambers, unconscious biases, racialized ignorance, harmful beliefs, and more. We’ll study these topics not only through a philosophical lens, but also a psychological one: what is it about human minds that makes us fall victim to so many epistemic pitfalls? And is there any hope for avoiding them?

225 Introduction to Philosophy of Science

Lange, section 01

The discoveries that scientists make and the methods by which they make them raise a host of interesting philosophical questions, some of which we will explore in this course. These questions included: Are scientific theories distinguished from pseudoscience by being testable against our observations? By what logic do our observations support or disconfirm various scientific theories? Can we prove our best scientific theories to be true? Or are they “merely theories”? (Or is there another option?) Are we ever justified in making predictions about the future on the basis of observations drawn exclusively from the past? If so, why? What does it mean for one event (for instance, the collision of the Earth with some large rocky body millions of years ago) to be responsible for causing the occurrence of another event (such as the extinction of the dinosaurs) and for explaining why it occurred? What makes a given regular pattern that we might notice (such as the fact that every piece of copper is electrically conductive) not just a giant coincidence, but a law of nature? Do the wholesale revolutions in scientific thought that have occasionally occurred (such as the Copernican Revolution in astronomy) amount to rational and inevitable responses to overwhelming evidence? If not, how can they nevertheless be rational? We will look at these and other questions, settling some of them and trying to make some progress on the others. This course presupposes no background in

philosophy or in science, just a willingness to think seriously about the logical foundations of scientific reasoning. The readings consist of short, self-contained bits of philosophy chosen especially for their accessibility to students new to philosophy. There will be a final exam, a midterm exam, five multiple-choice worksheets concentrated in the first half of the course (as preparation for the midterm), and online brief take-home, open-book quizzes on the readings (to ensure that you read them!).

249 Bioethics

Van Oeveren, section 01

This course introduces students to some of the central issues and frameworks in bioethics. Areas such as life sciences, health care and health care policy, medicine, the environment, and our interaction with non-human animals raise a host of ethical problems. Issues that we may discuss include informed consent, doctor-patient confidentiality, end-of-life and beginning-of-life decisions, genetic testing, synthetic biological intelligence (living human brain cells on computer chips), access to health care, organ donation and transplantation, medical research, the use of animals in research, pandemics, allocation of research funds, privacy in health care, etc.

Although these issues are very different from each other, we can often ask very similar questions about them: what is it, how do we get it, when should we get it, why should we get it, and who should provide for it? For example: what is informed consent, and how can it be established? When is it required, and why? And who must provide the conditions such that informed consent can indeed be given?

In trying to answer such questions, we'll rely on a variety of ethical frameworks that will be introduced at the beginning of the course, such as consequentialism, virtue ethics, and deontology. Students will be evaluated on some combination of class exercises and participation, exams, and written work.

255 Introduction to Social and Political Philosophy

Piven, section 01

What is the proper form of governance? What kind of rights and liberties do we deserve? How can we establish and maintain a fair and just society that satisfies human needs, enables human beings to thrive, and protects us from corruption, crime, malfeasance, bigotry, and other forms of harm? What are the moral entitlements and obligations of citizens? This course surveys works of classic and contemporary philosophy to explore what kind of society and government we should have. These works of social and political philosophy further involve theories of human nature and

motivation, thus necessitating forms of governance and regulation that maintain a lawful society. So this course will investigate the gamut of social problems and human proclivities to determine what causes our propensities for corruption, prejudice, inequality, discrimination, and violence, and hence, what modes of society and government exacerbate or ameliorate subjugation, deprivation, tyranny, and injustice.

260 Philosophical Ideas in Literature

Camp, section 01

In this course we will explore philosophical themes centering around the self by comparing classic and contemporary philosophical and literary texts. What does it take to have a mind, or embodied knowledge? To understand others' experiences, or one's own? What role do words and stories play in constructing selves? When is myself authentic, and when should I trust myself, as against others? When should I sacrifice myself? We will use these thematic explorations to investigate the different ways that philosophy and literature work to express ideas and engage audiences, and what differences this makes to the ideas expressed and the understanding they offer.

302 Plato and Aristotle

Skiles, section 01

This course introduces some of the main elements in the thought of Plato and Aristotle, widely considered the two most influential philosophers in the Western tradition. One goal of the course will be to compare, contrast, and critically evaluate their views on some of the most fundamental topics in metaphysics, epistemology, the philosophy of mind and language, the philosophy of religion, and normative theory. Another goal will be to understand how the views of Plato and Aristotle continue to influence Western philosophy and culture in profound ways up through the present day.

303 Metaphilosophy

Sharpe, section 01

One of the few things philosophers agree on is that philosophers disagree on what, exactly, philosophy is. This makes coming to other conclusions about philosophy difficult (to say the least). What exactly does a philosopher do, and how do they do it? Argumentation would seem to be central to the philosophers toolkit, but what counts as an argument, and how do different forms of argument work? We'll examine lots of views on what philosophy is (or might be), explore some forms of argumentation (including, potentially: *reductio ad absurdum*, argument by

analogy, and transcendental arguments), and conclude by thinking about other metaphilosophical topics like whether philosophy is a science and whether there can be progress in it. Prior exposure to philosophical topics and methods of philosophical argumentation is essential.

308 Hume, Kant, and the Eighteenth Century

McCrossin, section 01

Some major works of Hume and Kant with some attention to other 18th-century philosophers. Comparison of views on the structure of consciousness, space and time, the limits of knowledge, the foundations of natural sciences, mathematics, and metaphysics.

329 Minds, Machines, and Persons

Maurer, section 01

Comparison of the nature of the human mind and that of complex machines. Consequences for questions about the personhood of robots.

Sorensen, sections 02, 04

In this course, we will study competing philosophical theories about the nature of the mind and mental phenomena—intentionality, mental representations, and consciousness—and what these theories tell us about the possibility of creating machines with minds like ours. We will begin with some of the most foundational metaphysical issues in the philosophy of mind. Then, we will examine the foundations of computational cognitive science and artificial intelligence research. Next, we will look at attempts to understand and explain mental representations *naturalistically*. Lastly, we will discuss the metaphysical and ethical issues surrounding the possibility of mind uploading, mind extension, and the creation of super-intelligent AI.

Here are some of the questions that we will raise and try to answer:

- What distinguishes mental phenomena from nonmental phenomena?
- What is the metaphysical relation between the mind and brain?
- Can intentionality be naturalized?
- What is consciousness? Is consciousness just a complex state of the brain or is it something more than that (e.g. a *nonphysical* entity or property)?
- Is it possible to build machines (e.g. digital computers) that have minds like ours?
- Are our smartphones and laptops (literally) extensions of our minds?

- In the future, will it be possible to “upload” our minds to a cloud server? Will the uploads be *us* or just a clone of us? Is there a relevant difference between these two options?

Lennon, section 03

This course will introduce students to basic issues in the philosophy of mind, with a particular focus on whether machines might ever be said to have minds. We’ll introduce the mind-body problem, and the two ‘marks of the mental’, intentionality and consciousness. We’ll then look at a particularly promising theory of intentionality which says that cognition is a matter of computation. We’ll then consider recent proposals that some artificial intelligence (AI) models, large language models, have both folk psychological states, like beliefs and desires, and consciousness. Finally, we’ll consider whether we might one day have moral duties to AIs in light of their supposed mentality.

Perrine, section 06

A thousand years ago machines were clunky and inelegant, composed of pounded metal and wood. The differences between what a machine and a person could do was bright as day. No longer. The last few decades have seen massive developments in machines, thanks in no small part due to computers. Modern machines are not only ubiquitous in modern society, but necessary to successfully navigate it. Further, modern machines—in the form of computers and generative AI—can produce works of art that rival trained human persons. The line between person and machine has become blurred. In this course, we’ll examine these issues in three parts. In the first part, we’ll explore ways in which human persons—in particular, their minds—might be similar to machines. In the second part, we’ll explore ways in which machines—specifically, computers and AI—are similar to persons. And in the third, we’ll explore the ethical significance of the blurring of the line between person and machine.

Skolits, section 07

Comparison of the nature of the human mind and that of complex machines. Consequences for questions about the personhood of robots.

Egan, section 08

What is a mind? What does it take to think, to understand, to be conscious? These are old philosophical questions, but recent advances in artificial intelligence have given them new urgency and given us new cases to think about. This course investigates the central problems of philosophy of mind — the nature of mental states, the relationship between mind and body, the puzzle of consciousness — through the lens of a striking comparison: human minds and large

language models do many of the same things, but their internal architecture is radically different. What should we make of that? We'll study the classic theories (behaviorism, functionalism, identity theory, dualism) and the major challenges to them (the Chinese Room, the hard problem of consciousness, the knowledge argument), engaging with both canonical texts (Turing, Dennett, Chalmers, Nagel, Searle, Block, Jackson) and current research on AI and cognition. Students will also learn how LLMs actually work and engage with hands-on computational tools. No background in philosophy or computer science is required.

341 Ethics Through History

Sharpe, section 01

Over the centuries, different human groups have thought about their obligations in different ways. Different thinkers within those groups have understood our moral and social obligations to each other through various extraordinarily different lenses. This course takes up those different perspectives and seeks to understand the underlying moral thinking behind each of them, probing their similarities and their differences. This course usually examines philosophers from: ancient Greece and Rome, antiquity on the Indian subcontinent, classical China, feudal Japan, and modern Europe. This course is reading-intensive and focuses on textual interpretation.

345 Philosophy & the Law

Hutchens, section 01

Our primary task is to explore the status and role of law as it figures in philosophical discourse. We will be examining the place of law, legality, and legislation within certain coordinates of conceptual space: on one axis, we are concerned with the nature of law at the confluence of ethical and political theory; and on the other, we will investigate the interplay between the individual (in respect of its potential for self-legislation) and society (in its need for a law-bound order). We will also consider law in relation to the distinction between constituent and constitutive power, in key works in the classical philosophical tradition.

348 Topics in Medical Ethics: Medical Ethics and Health Policy

Barchi, section 01

Students will examine the origins of contemporary research ethics, discuss paradigm studies that contributed to modern day rules and regulations, and participate in case-based discussions of more than thirty real and fictional cases with their peers. Particular attention is given to ethical issues arising in research involving vulnerable populations and research in international settings.

352 Plato

Yadin-Israel, section 01

In 1929, Alfred North Whitehead wrote that “the safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato.” This course offers a survey of Plato’s writings, examining the development of his thought, with an emphasis on the doctrine of the Forms. The primary goal of the course is to introduce Plato’s writings, and a significant amount of class time will be devoted to discussion and analysis of the primary sources. We will also devote considerable time to discussing scholarship on Plato. All readings are in English and no prior familiarity with the topic is assumed.

359 Art & the Mind Brain

Jenkin, section 01

How does the human mind experience, interpret, and understand art? This course investigates these questions from the perspectives of philosophy and cognitive science. These questions have long been studied in philosophy, but recent growth in the cognitive science of art gives us new tools for deepening and refining our answers. Studying the ways our minds respond to art also sheds light on the fundamental workings of the mind and brain. This course considers questions such as: What is aesthetic experience? Why do different observers see the same work of art differently? What determines our enjoyment of art? Can art help cultivate our emotions? What qualifies a good critic? How should we adjudicate aesthetic disagreements? We will discuss these questions in the context of various art forms, including modern art, horror films, tragic literature, street art, breakup songs, and more.

367 American Philosophy

McCrossin, section 01

According to the Course Catalog, ours is a “[s]tudy[,] in its historical setting[,] of inquiry into the nature of experience, truth, goodness, and society by American philosophers including [the likes of] James, Peirce, Dewey, Royce, Lewis, and Whitehead.”

In the process, we will want to distinguish “American Philosophy” from “Philosophy in America,” historically and philosophically. The latter begins in colonial times, unsurprisingly, and persists throughout the eighteenth century as a provocative, but nonetheless not overly distant variant of British and European philosophies—what is sometimes referred to as the “Enlightenment in America.” This changes early in the nineteenth century, when the former begins in earnest, with the advent of American Transcendentalism, succeeded toward the middle of the century, bringing American Philosophy all the more distinctly into view, by Pragmatism,

now dubbed Classical Pragmatism, as distinguished from its twentieth-century counterpart, Neo-Pragmatism. We will work together to develop a systematic sense of this trajectory, and an answer, however provisional, to a nagging question: Has American Philosophy, having arisen in reaction to Philosophy in America, returned to its less distinctive origins, and if so, does this matter?

In addition to active participation, participants should anticipate periodic writing.

369 Buddhist Philosophy

Huang, section 01

This class introduces some of the foundational ideas of Buddhist philosophy. We start with the received teachings of the historical Buddha on the Four Noble Truths and the nature of the self. Then, we survey subsequent developments of philosophical ideas in the Buddha's teachings in the Indian subcontinent, focusing on the two major schools of Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism, Madhyamaka and Yogācāra. Through close readings of important primary texts, we reconstruct some of the foundational Buddhist doctrines, such as dependent origination, emptiness, and the ethics of compassion, anchored by a particular focus on Buddhist theories of mind and cognition. Working across metaphysical, epistemological and soteriological perspectives, we try to understand how Buddhist accounts of mind and knowledge inform ethical practice and spiritual liberation.

370 Contemporary Philosophy of Religion

Piven, section 01

After the proclaimed death of God, theologians and religious scholars clamored to justify and dissect faith, belief, ritual, the sacred, dogma, theodicy, apophatic theology, and religion. With the loss of faith came a loss of the ground of meaning, being, and self, while a rain of new gods, new religions, newly forged ultimate meanings and experiences of the numinous. A progressive series of losses inspired new searches for religious meaning and experience, something to fill the void once sustaining cosmologies collapsed. This course will examine contemporary philosophies of religion and diverse texts that tease apart the foundations of religious faith, experience, doctrine, and dogma. The course will examine theologies that deconstruct beliefs and literalisms, the apices and nadirs of spiritual yearning, despair, and even violence.

397 Junior Advanced Seminar

Camp, section 01

This is an intensive course for philosophy majors and minors who have shown talent for philosophy, centered on understanding what original philosophical research is, how it is done, and how to succeed at it. We will accomplish this by *consuming* philosophy: reading and observing presentations by working philosophers; by *producing* philosophy: writing and presenting it to others; and by *assessing* philosophy: reflecting on the value and impact of individual works and on the practices of academic philosophy more generally. This course is designed to prepare students for further, independent philosophical research in, e.g., a senior thesis; but it will be valuable for any student wishing to engage in original philosophical thinking. Admission is at the permission of the instructor.

404 Spinoza

Lin, section 01

In this course, we will study the philosophical system of Benedict de Spinoza, one of the most influential and controversial thinkers of the early modern period (c. 1600–1800). Traditionally grouped with Descartes and Leibniz as a rationalist, Spinoza developed a distinctive account of God, nature, and human freedom that continues to challenge readers today. We will examine his metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, and political philosophy, paying particular attention to the connections among them. Questions will include: What is the relationship between God and nature? How are mind and body related? What does human freedom mean in a world governed by necessity? And how can understanding ourselves and the world contribute to a good life? The course is intended for advanced undergraduates with some background in philosophy.

407 Intermediate Logic I

Bialek, section 01

It's easy when you first encounter logic to assume—or, at least, trust your teacher—that it, roughly speaking, just works. More precisely, you trust that it correctly does what it sets out to do, even if “what it sets out to do” isn't necessarily specified with the same formal rigor that logic demands of itself. We might want to be sure, for example, that our logical operators are able to express everything we think they should, or that every valid argument schema is provably valid. This class begins that process by introducing and applying formal tools (such as set theory and inductive proofs) to confirm that the familiar propositional and first-order predicate logics and their proof systems work in the ways that we want and expect.

412 Epistemology

Schellenberg, section 01

Topics such as belief, certainty, justification, knowledge, and skepticism are examined in detail.

415 Metaphysics

Sartorio, section 01

This class will be structured around three (interrelated) topics and debates in contemporary analytic metaphysics: the nature of causation, dispositions, and free will. The readings will be all contemporary sources. Prior exposure to philosophical problems and the methods of analytical philosophy is essential for this class.

426 Philosophy of Physics: Quantum Mechanics

North, section 01

There is no question that quantum mechanics is empirically successful. What the theory says about the world, however, remains controversial. In this course we will look at several different theories of quantum mechanics and examine a range of philosophical issues that arise for them, in a way that does not presuppose any background in the physics. In the first few weeks, we will review some of the phenomena that led to quantum mechanics, and the basic mathematical formalism and postulates of the standard theory. Then we will turn to alternative theories. Topics include the measurement problem; nonlocality; the physical ontology of different theories; the ontological status of the wavefunction; the nature of probability; quantum mechanics and scientific realism. Throughout, our focus will be on understanding the nature of the world according to the different theories, and how they account for the empirical phenomena.

441 Ethical Theory

Kalef, section 01

This seminar will explore the core questions of metaethics. Specifically: is morality objective? Are moral properties a part of the natural world? How can moral beliefs be justified? Are moral utterances best understood as statements of fact? What is the relationship between moral beliefs and moral motivations? Finally, why be moral?

This will be a strictly electronics-free seminar. All students should make sure to obtain a paper copy of the text. Also, I will not use AI in any way in the preparation of the course. Neither should a student use AI in any way in taking the course.

465 Phenomenology and Existentialism

Dover, section 01

This course will explore some key concepts and texts of the phenomenological and existential traditions, with particular attention to themes of embodiment, anxiety, mortality, and freedom. Prior acquaintance with these traditions will be helpful but is not required. Readings will include texts from Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Sartre, Beauvoir, and Fanon.