

# PHILOSOPHY

*Faculty: Huff, Chair; Girdner.*

Socrates claimed that the unexamined life is not worth living. Why not? One reply is that since our unexamined opinions and values are often inseparable from who we are and how we conceive of ourselves, our satisfactions, our relations to others and reality itself, our lives, and the worth of our lives depend on our efforts to achieve greater understanding. The examination and critique of claims to truth and rightness is central to philosophical understanding, involving the gradual liberation from false beliefs and partial views of ourselves and our world. Because of this, it has an essential place in the liberal arts curriculum.

The aim of the philosophy department is to introduce students to the inquiries of important philosophers and to aid them in developing and in exercising their own critical, independent thought. To this end, philosophy courses encourage students to formulate issues and questions and to evaluate critically philosophers' arguments and their own in classroom discussion as well as in the writing of papers.

- Philosophy Major (<https://catalog.rmc.edu/programs/philosophy/philosophy-major/>)
- Philosophy Minor (<https://catalog.rmc.edu/programs/philosophy/philosophy-minor/>)

## PHIL 211 - Philosophical Problems (3 Hours)

This course is an introduction to the topic of personal identity as treated in the theory of knowledge and in metaphysics. Readings are contemporary and interdisciplinary. Topics include mind and body, memory, artificial intelligence, and cultural relativism. Offered fall term. C21:HC,HU.

## PHIL 212 - Ethics (3 Hours)

This course is an introduction to philosophy focused on ethical thinking. Its fundamental aim is to occasion the clarification of our thought concerning how to live, what sorts of persons to be, which kinds of actions and principles to affirm and which not in our relations to others. We will pursue this inquiry by reading classical texts, contemporary dialogues and essays on ethics, and decided cases in law. Our thinking about ethics will attend to three broad approaches to ethical situations: Utility, Rights and Duties, Virtue. Our discussion of these and other considerations will constantly attend to specific moral problems (e.g., abortion, sexual morality, affirmative action, animals, and the environment). Offered spring term. C21:GE,HU.

**Curriculum:** GE,HU

## PHIL 213 - Environmental Ethics (3 Hours)

This course addresses basic issues of environmental ethics: the value of ecosystems (both inherent and instrumental), human beings' treatment of animals and non-animal nature, the meaning and justification of moral obligations to species and to the environment, and the complex and profound ways in which our actions with regard to the environment affect our fellow human beings. We will apply moral theory to environmental problems in the enterprise of formulating an adequate ethical approach to our environment. Recommended: PHIL 212 and EVST 105. Offered every two or three years. C21:CL,HU.

**Cross-list:** EVST 213

**Curriculum:** CL,HU

## PHIL 214 - Health Care Ethics (3 Hours)

This course addresses fundamental issues of health care ethics at the intersection of health and ethical value in contemporary life. We examine the quality and meaning of life, duties and responsibilities, and the values of autonomy and independence as they emerge in real life experiences such as euthanasia, abortion, mental illness, organ scarcity, and reproductive control. Recommended: PHIL 212. Offered every two or three years. This course is not open to students who have taken PHIL 328.

## PHIL 216 - Organizational & Professional Ethic (3 Hours)

This course examines a range of important theoretical and practical aspects of organizational and professional ethics. It guides students to critically assess situations they may face across a diverse set of careers and professional roles and to respond in a thoughtful and responsible way to these situations. Students will explore these issues through relevant literature from philosophy and the social sciences, as well as real-world case studies from fields such as business, education, engineering, law, medicine, and public policy. C21:CL,HU.

**Curriculum:** CL,HU

## PHIL 220 - Philosophy East and West (3 Hours)

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to the classic philosophic traditions of Greece, Rome, India, China, and Japan. This introduction might consist of a study of representative texts or of a comparative analysis of central concepts and assumptions. Offered every two or three years. C21:GE,HU,NW.

**Curriculum:** GE,HU,NW

## PHIL 225 - Women's Nature (3 Hours)

A philosophical and psychological inquiry into the concept of women's nature. Topics include genetic determinism, moral development, sexuality, race, gender in communication, feminism and Christianity and gender and culture. Offered every two years.

## PHIL 228 - China from Confucius to Communism (3 Hours)

China is a major force in the world today, and intriguingly it has been governed by an official philosophy for over two thousand years. This course will study major figures, texts and movements in Chinese philosophy such as Confucius, Mencius and other Confucians; Laozi, Zhuangzi, and Daoism; Mozi and Han Feizi; and Communist thinkers such as Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping. Studying Chinese philosophy tells us a lot about China's culture, its position in the world, and its likely path in years to come. C21:GE,HU,NW.

## PHIL 234 - A Skeptic's Guide to College (3 Hours)

Many Americans doubt whether colleges and universities are delivering the right kind of education today. Is it worth the money? Is it preparing people for good careers? Are colleges stuck in a bubble out of touch with the real world? In this course we tackle head-on the question of what the value of college is and how we can better achieve it. We consider biting criticism and idealistic aspirations as we explore a wide range of views and evidence on this topic. We will reflect and debate together to help students make an informed decision about what is most worthwhile for them to achieve in four years of higher education. C21:CL,HU,OC.

## PHIL 251 - History of Western Philosophy: Ancient (3 Hours)

A study of classical philosophers who importantly shaped Western thinking and sensibility. Readings include the Pre-Socratics, Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, and Epictetus. Emphasis is placed on the writings of Plato and Aristotle. Offered fall term. C21:HC,HU.

**Curriculum:** HC,HU

**PHIL 252 - Modern & Postmodern Philosophy (3 Hours)**

What is knowledge, and how can we recognize the truth? Can there be objective values? In today's "post-truth" culture, some seem to feel no need to give evidence for their claims, and question the possibility of agreement even on basic facts. Others claim that truth is socially constructed, along with values, identities, and communities. Postmodern ideas and culture, which emphasize subjectivity and the personal experience of meaning, have roots in philosophical debates centuries ago that transformed ideas about the sources and production of knowledge—including modern science. This course will explore the roots of today's postmodernism in philosophers such as Descartes, Locke, Kant, Mill, and Marx, as well as developments like Existentialism, Nihilism, Pragmatism, Post-structural & Post-Colonial theory. Offered spring term. C21:GE,HU,WA.

**Curriculum:** GE,HU,WA

**PHIL 255 - Ancient Art of Happiness (3 Hours)**

What should we want out of life? Should we go for excitement, serenity, achievement, wealth, love, fame, or friendship? Even when we think we know the answer, we can often be wrong about what will make us truly happy. Trying to understand what happiness is, and how to achieve it, was central to classical Greek and Roman philosophy—including the work of Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, the Stoics, and Augustine—and their approaches are just as relevant today as ever. In this course we follow an energetic and creative debate across 800 years of ancient philosophy and discuss how we should answer these questions ourselves. C21: HC,HU

**Curriculum:** HC,HU

**PHIL 260 - Philosophy of Religion (3 Hours)**

This course investigates the relation between philosophy and religion and applies philosophic methods to such problems as the nature of religious experience, the nature of religious language, the question of the existence and nature of God, the problem of the reality of evil or suffering as it relates to assertions of the benevolence and omnipotence of deity, and the issue of the relevance of religious experience to human existence. Offered every two or three years. C21:HC,HU.

**Curriculum:** HC,HU

**PHIL 272 - Reason and Revelation (3 Hours)**

How far should we rely on human reason, and how far on divine revelation, for our understanding of the world? How do these sources of knowledge fit with each other and with our autonomy as individuals? This course explores tensions today between rationalist, scientific and religious fundamentalist worldviews by drawing on classic debates over reason and religious traditions within the Jewish, Christian, and Islamic traditions. We will explore the institutional authorities of religious and philosophical traditions along with the individual autonomy expressed in both logical reasoning and religious experiences, including mysticism, faith, and devotional practice. Students will encounter the thought and mutual influence among Christians such as Augustine, Aquinas, Kant and Kierkegaard; Jewish thinkers such as Maimonides and Halevi; and Muslims such as al-Farabi, al-Ghazali, and Averroes. C21:HC,HU,NW.

**Curriculum:** HC,HU,NW

**PHIL 274 - Philosophy of Science (3 Hours)**

This course examines science as a distinctive way of approaching the world with a unique methodology associated with truth. How is this view of science to be justified? What are its historical origins? Particular attention to the characterization of scientific objectivity and the views of knowledge and reality this entails. Topics include: logic and probability, rationality and irrationality, science and gender, relativism, objectivity and truth. Readings are primarily contemporary. Offered every two or three years.

**PHIL 281 - T: Special Topic (3 Hours)**

Taught by departmental staff and designed to meet the needs and interests of advanced students of philosophy and related majors. Topics vary but may be an intensive study of a major figure or movement in recent or contemporary philosophy.

**PHIL 308 - Feminist Theory (3 Hours)**

Critical examination of contemporary theories in feminism according to a variety of discourses on difference. Topics include: the politics of sexuality, black feminism, feminist theories of knowledge and reality, marginality, and Post-Colonial theory. Primarily philosophy with interdisciplinary readings, seminar format. Offered every three years.

**Prerequisite(s):** one course in philosophy

**PHIL 343 - Confucian Tradition (3 Hours)**

An in-depth study of the Confucian philosophical tradition, including both classical sources and neo-Confucian developments, guided by recent scholarship. We will explore debates within the tradition over questions such as the relationship between virtue and human nature and the authority of tradition versus individual insight. We will also consider Confucian thought's potential to address contemporary philosophical and practical challenges in both the East and the West. Recommended: PHIL 212 and/or PHIL 220. Offered every three years.

**Prerequisite(s):** one course in philosophy

**PHIL 363 - Social and Political Philosophy (3 Hours)**

A consideration of the justification of political authority, fundamental social principles and the social policies that follow from them. Issues considered include: anarchism and political authority, freedom, justice and equality, rights, as well as such contemporary social controversies as reverse discrimination, free expression and censorship, property rights, and social welfare. Recommended: PHIL 212. Offered every three years.

**Prerequisite(s):** one course in philosophy

**PHIL 370 - 19th Century European Philosophy (3 Hours)**

An introduction to the thought of several important 19th century philosophers: Hegel, Kierkegaard, Marx, Mill, Nietzsche, Freud. Central considerations: rationality/irrationality; objectivity/subjectivity; freedom/bondage; community/individuality; theory/practice; integration/alienation. Recommended: PHIL 252. Offered every two or three years.

**Prerequisite(s):** one course in philosophy

**PHIL 371 - 20th Century European Philosophy (3 Hours)**

This course focuses on the work of several important 20th century philosophers in different traditions: Existential Phenomenology, Logical Positivism, Structuralism/Post-Structuralism, and Postmodernism. Recommended: PHIL 252 or PHIL 370. Offered every two or three years.

**Prerequisite(s):** one course in philosophy

**PHIL 381 - Special Topics (3 Hours)**

Taught by departmental staff and designed to meet the needs and interests of advanced students of philosophy and related majors. Topics vary but may be an intensive study of a major figure or movement in recent or contemporary philosophy.

**Prerequisite(s):** consent of instructor

**PHIL 382 - Special Topics (3 Hours)**

Taught by departmental staff and designed to meet the needs and interests of advanced students of philosophy and related majors. Topics vary but may be an intensive study of a major figure or movement in recent or contemporary philosophy.

**Prerequisite(s):** consent of instructor

**PHIL 401 - Philosophy Capstone (1 Hour)**

Intensive writing of one's personal philosophy. Students examine their own beliefs about philosophical issues by reflecting on matters of importance to them to which they were exposed in their courses in philosophy. Students meet bi-weekly to share their writing and discuss their ideas. Offered yearly. C21:CS.

**Prerequisite(s):** permission of instructor and declared philosophy major

**Curriculum:** CS

**PHIL 404 - Freedom (3 Hours)**

A study of human freedom and how the causality of the human will is to be understood in light of the laws of nature. If humans are a part of the natural world, governed by the laws of biology, physics and chemistry, can we be free? Is freedom simply the ability to carry one's desires into action? To be truly free, must we also be free with respect to the contents of our wills? Contemporary readings from the analytic tradition will be combined with readings from the history of philosophy that provide both context and critical perspective. Recommended: PHIL 212 or PHIL 252. Offered every three years. C21:CC.

**Prerequisite(s):** one previous courses in philosophy

**PHIL 405 - Emotion (3 Hours)**

Traditional conceptions of objectivity devalue the influence of emotion in rationality. This course examines a variety of approaches to thinking that insist on the importance of feeling. Topics include: emotion as a kind of judgment, self-deception and the problem of self-knowledge, mind-body dualism, and the politics of emotion. Readings from cognitive psychology, ethics and moral psychology, cultural anthropology and feminist theories of knowledge. Recommended: PHIL 211 or PHIL 252. Offered every three years.

**Prerequisite(s):** one previous course in Philosophy

**PHIL 407 - Truth and Meaning (3 Hours)**

In both ordinary language and disciplinary specific languages, important questions arise regarding meaning. We do not always mean what we say and we can struggle to clarify what we mean. What, then, determines meaning? How is it related to truth? How do we know in cases of disagreement, ambiguity, and other languages? This course examines questions in the philosophy of language. Topics include: the relationship of language to the world, truth, intentionality, translation, speech acts, and body language. Readings are in primarily analytic and continental philosophy. Recommended: PHIL 252 or PHIL 260. Offered every three years.

**Prerequisite(s):** one previous course in philosophy

**PHIL 408 - Virtue (3 Hours)**

In ancient Greece, philosophical discussions of ethics typically centered on a notion of good character, or virtue. A virtuous person has good judgement of what to do, and desires to do it. This approach fell out of favor during the modern period as desire was given less attention, and Kantian and utilitarian approaches came to dominate philosophical ethics. In recent decades, however, there has been a strong revival. We will typically examine both historical sources for virtue ethics, such as texts by Plato and Aristotle, and contemporary work. Recommended: PHIL 212 or PHIL 251. Offered every three years. C21:CC

**Prerequisite(s):** one previous courses in Philosophy

**PHIL 450 - Internship in Philosophy (3 Hours)**

Students complement their classroom study of philosophy with practical experience in a career setting consistent with their goals, preparation, and interests. Students will complete tasks mutually agreed on by the student, the supervisor, and the instructor. Quarterly reports reflecting on the application of philosophy. Open to juniors and seniors who are majoring in philosophy. Application required; see Internship Program. C21:EL. A special fee (\$200) is charged for this course.

**Prerequisite(s):** three hours of upper level philosophy and permission of instructor

**Curriculum:** EL

**PHIL 455 - Directed Field Studies in Philosophy (3 Hours)**

This course provides an opportunity for interested students to gain practical experience with the application of philosophical principles to actual situations through field placement with an appropriate community agency. Open to juniors and seniors who are majoring in philosophy. Students must meet with the department chair and then submit a proposal for field study placement and anticipated goals at the time of registration of the course.

**Prerequisite(s):** six hours of upper level philosophy and permission of instructor

**PHIL 491 - Independent Study (3 Hours)**

The department staff offers programs of a tutorial nature for qualified students. At least a 3.25 cumulative quality point ratio and approval by the curriculum committee are required. Topics will vary and will be determined in part by the specific interests of the students.

**Prerequisite(s):** consent of instructor

**PHIL 492 - Independent Study (3 Hours)**

The department staff offers programs of a tutorial nature for qualified students. At least a 3.25 cumulative quality point ratio and approval by the curriculum committee are required. Topics will vary and will be determined in part by the specific interests of the students.

**Prerequisite(s):** consent of instructor

**PHIL 496 - Senior Project (3 Hours)**

Seniors may select an area of intensive study and write a thesis on some topic arising from that study. Consent of instructor required. Student earns a total of six hours for the full senior project experience (496, 497, and 498). C21:EL.

**Curriculum:** EL

**PHIL 497 - Senior Project (3 Hours)**

Seniors may select an area of intensive study and write a thesis on some topic arising from that study. Consent of instructor required. Student earns a total of six hours for the full senior project experience (496, 497, and 498). C21:EL.

**Curriculum:** EL

**PHIL 498 - Senior Project (3 Hours)**

Seniors may select an area of intensive study and write a thesis on some topic arising from that study. Consent of instructor required. Student earns a total of six hours for the full senior project experience (496, 497, and 498). C21:EL.

**Curriculum:** EL