

Philosophy (PHIL)

Courses

PHIL 1000. Philosophy at Northeastern. (1 Hour)

Intended for freshmen in the College of Social Sciences and Humanities. Introduces freshmen to the liberal arts in general; familiarizes them with their major; helps them develop the academic skills necessary to succeed (analytical ability and critical thinking); provides grounding in the culture and values of the University community; and helps them develop interpersonal skills—in short, familiarizes students with all skills needed to become a successful university student.

PHIL 1101. Introduction to Philosophy. (4 Hours)

Introduces students to philosophy by acquainting them with the theories and arguments of classical and contemporary philosophers and by teaching skills of constructing and analyzing arguments. Emphasizes philosophical inquiry. Topics include the basis of morality, free will vs. determinism, the existence of God, the problem of suffering, and the nature of knowledge.

Attribute(s): NUpath Ethical Reasoning, NUpath Societies/Institutions

PHIL 1102. Introduction to Contemporary Moral Issues. (4 Hours)

Focuses on current controversial issues and moral debates. Specific topics vary but include subjects like abortion, euthanasia, global poverty, economic justice, affirmative action, gender relations, animal rights, the environment, the death penalty, war, cloning, and same-sex marriage. Offers an opportunity to learn to apply both the methods of philosophical analysis and various ethical and political theories to these controversies.

Attribute(s): NUpath Ethical Reasoning, NUpath Societies/Institutions

PHIL 1104. Goddesses, Witches, Saints, and Sinners: Women and Religion. (4 Hours)

Introduces and examines the theory that Near Eastern and European religions were originally goddess centered through analyses of image, text, and ritual in the ancient world. Explores scholarship about the patriarchalization of these primal religions. Includes a consideration of scripture such as the Hebrew Bible, Greek Testament, and Qu'ran, as well as noncanonical texts.

Attribute(s): NUpath Difference/Diversity, NUpath Interpreting Culture

PHIL 1105. Science and Pseudoscience. (4 Hours)

Examines the distinction between science and pseudoscience, how scientific theories change over time, the limits of scientific explanation, and whether or not scientific practice is rational and objective. What makes a theory scientific? Does culture influence scientific reasoning? What separates Einstein's theory of relativity and astrological horoscopes? Covers a variety of topics in the history of science such as the Copernican revolution and the practice of psychoanalysis. Also covers contemporary issues regarding the scientific status of IQ tests, intelligent design theory, and others.

Attribute(s): NUpath Interpreting Culture, NUpath Natural/Designed World

PHIL 1110. Introduction to Religious Studies. (4 Hours)

Examines the methods, disciplines, and theories employed in the academic study of religion. Focuses on major theories of religion employed in the discipline of religious studies, including historical, psychological, anthropological, and sociological approaches. Introduces students to the primary methods of research in the academic study of religion.

Attribute(s): NUpath Difference/Diversity, NUpath Interpreting Culture

PHIL 1111. Introduction to World Religions. (4 Hours)

Offers a historical and thematic overview of the most widely recognized religions in the world today: Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism. Focuses on the formative periods and historical developments of the great religions, ritual practices, and the differing ways in which they answer the fundamental religious questions. Considers ways in which religious practitioners have attempted to understand the nature of the world, human society, and a person's place within them.

Attribute(s): NUpath Difference/Diversity, NUpath Ethical Reasoning

PHIL 1112. Debating Ethical Controversies. (4 Hours)

Introduces students to the fundamentals of moral theory; ethical reasoning; social and political philosophy; as well as theories of social, political, and institutional change. Emphasizes in-depth ethical analysis and evaluation of the issues studied, their social and historical sources and context, as well as the way in which responses to them can and should lead to institutional and policy changes. Offers students an opportunity to be selected for an off-campus competitive debate experience. This course is modeled after the Intercollegiate Ethics Bowl debates on current social and ethical issues.

Attribute(s): NUPath Ethical Reasoning, NUPath Societies/Institutions

PHIL 1115. Introduction to Logic. (4 Hours)

Covers the fundamentals of (formal) deductive and inductive logic. Begins with a thorough treatment of Boolean (i.e., truth-functional or propositional) logic, which provides the foundation for both mathematical and statistical reasoning. Discusses various applications of Boolean logic, including the reconstruction and evaluation of (natural language) deductive arguments. Covers inductive-logical reasoning, such as the fundamentals of the probability calculus and its applications to inductive (ampliative) inference. Offers students an opportunity to understand both deductive (e.g., mathematical) and inductive (e.g., statistical) reasoning.

Attribute(s): NUPath Analyzing/Using Data, NUPath Formal/Quant Reasoning

PHIL 1120. Understanding the Bible. (4 Hours)

Introduces students to the Old and New Testaments of the Bible in its social, political, and cultural contexts.

Attribute(s): NUPath Interpreting Culture, NUPath Societies/Institutions

PHIL 1130. Comparative Ethics. (4 Hours)

Focuses on how traditions imagine the moral life in cross-cultural contexts. Topics may include ideals of human flourishing, notions of virtue and vice, and conceptions of self and community. Offers students an opportunity to learn methods of philosophical analysis and argumentation in cross-cultural contexts.

Attribute(s): NUPath Difference/Diversity, NUPath Ethical Reasoning

PHIL 1133. Selling Spirituality. (4 Hours)

Emphasizes the ethical consequences of extracting religious practices from racialized communities (including communities associated with Indigenous and Asian traditions). Explores how the marketing of religious practices as “spiritual” contributes to systematic forms of racism and Orientalism. Discusses a wide range of case studies including yoga, mindfulness, and plant psychedelics. Readings include social history, court cases, ethnographies, and media analysis.

Attribute(s): NUPath Difference/Diversity, NUPath Ethical Reasoning

PHIL 1145. Technology and Human Values. (4 Hours)

Studies philosophy of technology, as well as ethics and modern technology. Considers the relationship between technology and humanity, the social dimensions of technology, and ethical issues raised by emerging technologies. Discusses emerging technologies such as biotechnology, information technology, nanotechnology, and virtual reality.

Attribute(s): NUPath Ethical Reasoning, NUPath Societies/Institutions

PHIL 1160. Introduction to Economic Justice. (4 Hours)

Explores questions of economic justice from a philosophical perspective. Examines capitalism, what it is and what its ethical virtues and limitations are; if there are changes or alternatives to capitalism that would make our economic system more just; how much economic inequality we should consider morally acceptable; and in what ways racism and gender discrimination impact the fairness of our economy. Considers these questions by reading works in the history of philosophy while also engaging with contemporary philosophers writing about current challenges to economic justice, such as racism, gender discrimination, and economic inequality.

Attribute(s): NUPath Ethical Reasoning, NUPath Societies/Institutions

PHIL 1165. Moral and Social Problems in Healthcare. (4 Hours)

Introduces ethical theories and moral principles, and then uses these theories and principles to analyze the moral problems that arise in the medical context. Topics include euthanasia, medical paternalism, informed consent, patient confidentiality, the right to die, the ethics of medical research, abortion, the right to healthcare, distribution of scarce medical resources, and the ethical implications of health maintenance organizations.

Attribute(s): NUPath Ethical Reasoning, NUPath Societies/Institutions

PHIL 1170. Business, Ethics, and Human Rights. (4 Hours)

Examines the moral, social, and human rights implications of business for individuals and communities, both globally and domestically. Topics include corporate social responsibility, stakeholder theory, advertising, and gun violence, diversity and racism, CEO activism, affirmative action in the tech sector, the gig economy and employee rights, as well as human rights violations by multinational companies, including sweatshops and environmental harms. Examines the contributions of both big and small businesses to making the world a better place and considers policy that can work to that end.

Attribute(s): NUpath Ethical Reasoning, NUpath Societies/Institutions

PHIL 1180. Environmental Ethics. (4 Hours)

Focuses on a current ecological crisis and addresses the values that underlie our concern over this crisis, whether the values at issue are anthropocentric or biocentric. Explores the ethical implications these ecological concerns have for our individual lifestyles, and for our role as members of communities.

Attribute(s): NUpath Ethical Reasoning, NUpath Societies/Institutions

PHIL 1185. The Ethics of Food. (4 Hours)

Introduces the ethics of food. Elucidates a wide range of ethical issues associated with food production, processing, distribution, and consumption. Offers students an opportunity to develop skills in ethics and values analysis that can be applied to evaluate food-related practices and policies. Includes topics such as the ethics of different food systems, genetically modified crops, meat eating, hunting, food security, food justice, sustainability, synthetic meat, food advertising, food safety, and foodie culture.

Attribute(s): NUpath Ethical Reasoning, NUpath Societies/Institutions

PHIL 1195. Research Ethics. (4 Hours)

Addresses how to engage in scientific, medical, and technological research in an ethically responsible manner. Research is crucial to understanding social, environmental, and health problems, as well as to developing effective responses to them. If the paradigm of responsible research is too restrictive, the benefits of scientific progress and technological innovation can be delayed or unrealized. At the same time, researchers have a responsibility to protect research subjects, to appropriately engage with members of the community, and to avoid behaving in ways that undermine scientific research in the long run. Explores the many ethical dimensions of research, and introduces students to the ethical foundations and controversies that are central to developing appropriate ethical frameworks for engaging in research.

Attribute(s): NUpath Ethical Reasoning, NUpath Societies/Institutions

PHIL 1260. Apocalypticism in Film. (4 Hours)

Begins with an investigation of biblical texts that give rise to apocalypticism, definitions of apocalypticism, and an introductory exploration of the various ways in which apocalypticism has manifested itself in Western culture. Examines the diverse and changing presentation of apocalypticism in film and includes titles such as 'The Book of Eli,' 'The Day the Earth Stood Still,' 'Independence Day,' 'The Seventh Seal,' and 'Blade Runner.'

Attribute(s): NUpath Difference/Diversity, NUpath Interpreting Culture

PHIL 1271. Sex in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. (4 Hours)

Explores approaches to gender, social organization of sexuality and gender, sexual ethics, and marriage in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Explores various sources within each tradition that serve as normative foundations, contemporary cultural and sociological dynamics that challenge those foundations, and psychological/existential considerations for understanding the general nature of human sexuality. Addresses how these traditions understand gender and gender roles, seek to shape and control interactions between men and women, regulate sexual relations outside of and within marriage, view sexuality education, regard homosexuality, and examine historical and contemporary approaches to marriage, divorce, and parenting. PHIL 1271 and WMNS 1271 are cross-listed.

Attribute(s): NUpath Difference/Diversity, NUpath Ethical Reasoning

PHIL 1275. Hinduism, Buddhism, and Beyond. (4 Hours)

Examines Hinduism, Jainism, Theravada Buddhism, Mahayana Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, and Shinto within South Asia (India) and East Asia (China and Japan). Combines readings in primary source materials (the religious texts of these traditions) with secondary examinations of the historical and doctrinal developments within each tradition and region. This course intends to give students a context in which to examine the ways in which religions develop in interlocking sociocultural and political contexts and to provide a grounding in the lived experiences of these religious traditions.

Attribute(s): NUpath Ethical Reasoning, NUpath Interpreting Culture

PHIL 1280. Islam: Rituals, Traditions, and Debates. (4 Hours)

Explores Islam through its foundations narrative, rituals, doctrines, and ethical teachings. Presents Islam in terms of its diversity by focusing on a series of key debates in Islamic thought and practice from its early history to the present day in cross-cultural perspectives.

Attribute(s): NUpath Difference/Diversity, NUpath Interpreting Culture

PHIL 1285. Jewish Religion and Culture. (4 Hours)

Explores some of the rich variety of Jewish cultural expressions and interpretive traditions, including the Jewish life cycle (birth through death) and the calendar cycle (holidays and daily rituals). Judaism is an ancient, living religious civilization that has evolved continuously over the millennia and around the globe. Offers students an opportunity to become familiar with the major periods of Jewish history and study exemplary formative Jewish texts (from the Bible and its interpreters through rabbinic, legal, and later literatures). Studies the global diversity of Jewish traditions, cultures, and identities, including how Jewish religion and culture have been influenced by the communities in which Jews have lived and live. No prior knowledge of Judaism is necessary or assumed.

Attribute(s): NUpath Interpreting Culture, NUpath Societies/Institutions

PHIL 1290. Chinese Philosophy and Religion. (4 Hours)

Surveys the origins and development of the indigenous religious traditions of China, from the oracle bone divinations of the Shang Dynasty to the philosophical and religious traditions of Confucianism, Mohism, Yangism, Daoism, and Legalism. Identifies and elucidates those elements of ancient Chinese thought that have had the most lasting influence on the Chinese ethos and worldview. Studies the foundational texts of ancient China and also examines the relevant practices that helped to define the various traditions of thought. Focuses on how religious and philosophical ideas influenced the larger culture of Chinese life in regard to the arts, medicine, the social order, and government.

Attribute(s): NUpath Ethical Reasoning, NUpath Interpreting Culture

PHIL 1300. Knowledge in a Digital World. (4 Hours)

Examines the impact that information technologies (such as the internet, search engines, blogs, wikis, and smartphones); information processing techniques (such as big data analysis, machine learning, crowdsourcing, and cryptography); and information policies (such as privacy norms and speech restrictions) have on what we know and how much we know, as individuals and as a society. The digital world can enhance our ability to acquire knowledge by providing us with fast and cheap access to huge amounts of information. However, it can also undermine our cognitive abilities and provide us with inaccurate or misleading information. Studies normative frameworks from epistemology and ethics (such as epistemic value theory, the extended mind hypothesis, and moral rights) to evaluate these technologies and policies.

Attribute(s): NUpath Ethical Reasoning, NUpath Societies/Institutions

PHIL 1666. The Problem of Evil in Film. (4 Hours)

Seeks to answer the question, "What is evil?" Uses a variety of film genres to examine the definitions of evil in relation to concepts such as power, sin, hate, greed, envy, murder, neglect, fear, terror, tragedy, and "the Other." Studies the problem of evil from the perspectives of religious studies and philosophy. Examines the various explanations for evil from a variety of Western religious traditions and explores the presentation of ethical dilemmas and moral theory to assess the content of a variety of films. Studies film titles such as *The Dark Knight*, *The Exorcist*, *Silence of the Lambs*, *Frankenstein*, *Life Is Beautiful*, *Rear Window*, *Dr. Strangelove*, *Phone Booth*, *Crash*, *Star Wars*, and *The Wizard of Oz*.

Attribute(s): NUpath Difference/Diversity, NUpath Ethical Reasoning

PHIL 1667. Science Fiction and Film: Moral Dilemmas and Ethical Analysis. (4 Hours)

Explores how science fiction films function as mythical cautionary tales about moral dilemmas of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries and as projections about how these dilemmas may be resolved or continue in the future. Provides a framework for an ethical analysis and examines how themes such as manifest destiny, nationalism, utopia, good vs. evil, war, and concepts of "the Other" are presented in classic and contemporary film. Also shows how science fiction film sometimes reinterprets pre-existing stories from world cultures and world religious traditions, updating earlier moral dilemmas to the contemporary situation.

Attribute(s): NUpath Difference/Diversity, NUpath Ethical Reasoning

PHIL 1990. Elective. (1-4 Hours)

Offers elective credit for courses taken at other academic institutions. May be repeated without limit.

PHIL 2001. Ethics and Evolutionary Games. (4 Hours)

Surveys the basic ideas and principles from evolutionary game theory and how they can be applied to philosophical questions about ethical and social norms. Investigates how cooperation evolves and is maintained; where our sense of fairness comes from and how it affects the way we interact with others; why individuals are altruistic; and whether there is a rational basis for our most basic social norms. Basic ethical norms can involve cooperation, altruism, mutual aid, fairness, coordination, and communication. Evolution and game theory, the formal study of social interaction, have recently been applied to these areas in order to better understand how these norms can arise naturally. Prior completion of PHIL 1115, PHIL 1215, or the NU Core requirement for mathematical/analytical thinking level 1 recommended.

Attribute(s): NUpath Ethical Reasoning, NUpath Societies/Institutions

PHIL 2016. The Philosophy and Ethics of Lying and Deception. (4 Hours)

Examines lying and other forms of deception in a wide range of modern contexts from advertising to politics, using different theoretical approaches. Offers students an opportunity to use philosophical and economic theories to investigate what lying is, why people lie, when and why it is wrong to lie, how we can learn from other people even though they might be lying, and how social institutions affect—and are affected by—all of this lying. In modern society, we are confronted with lies, spin, fake news, and even “BS” on a daily basis. Since these forms of deception play such a central role in human life, many philosophers—including Plato, Augustine, and Kant—have studied the ontology, ethics, epistemology, economics, and logic of lying and deception.

Attribute(s): NUpath Ethical Reasoning, NUpath Societies/Institutions

PHIL 2143. Philosophy for Children. (4 Hours)

Explores big questions in philosophy—how should one conduct oneself, what does it mean to know something, are there object values in an aesthetic domain such as art? Offers students an opportunity to learn methodologies and tools of philosophical inquiry and apply them to works of children’s literature in order to be able to facilitate philosophical discussions in the elementary school classroom. Emphasizes creating a community of inquiry and learning how to devise and communicate different answers to philosophical questions at the elementary level. Students develop lesson plans to help engage young children in philosophical discussion and reflection.

Attribute(s): NUpath Creative Express/Innov

PHIL 2155. Human Rights. (4 Hours)

Offers students an opportunity to obtain a solid understanding of the political, philosophical, and legal dimensions of human rights as well as an overview of some of the current debates in human rights. Discusses the intellectual history of human rights and explores their philosophical and historical roots. Examines their legal and political dimensions and human rights laws and institutions. Explores in-depth a number of contemporary human rights issues including genocide, women’s rights, children’s rights, refugees, and torture.

Attribute(s): NUpath Ethical Reasoning, NUpath Societies/Institutions

PHIL 2230. Music and Religion. (4 Hours)

Explores the relationship between religion, sound, and musical expression using the lenses of gender studies, cultural studies, and performance theory. Emphasizes the interpretive and symbolic understandings of sonic expressions of religiosity, including chanting, mantra use, choir and congregational singing, and speaking in tongues. Seeks to familiarize students with some of the key sonic expressions within the Christian, Islamic, Hindu, and Buddhist traditions; to explore the methods of studying musical and sonic theology; and to analyze these traditions’ own debates about the use of sound and music in religious practice.

Attribute(s): NUpath Difference/Diversity, NUpath Integration Experience, NUpath Interpreting Culture, NUpath Writing Intensive

PHIL 2259. Sex, Gender, and Judaism. (4 Hours)

Introduces the representation of sex and gender in Jewish culture and religion. Explores varied representations of masculinity and femininity over time and place within Jewish communities; the role of biblical texts in the construction of Western conceptions of gender and sexuality; and how contemporary feminist, queer, and other sexual identities have influenced Jewish practices. Readings draw from a range of primary sources (memoirs, fiction, religious texts, etc.) and critical literature.

Attribute(s): NUpath Difference/Diversity, NUpath Interpreting Culture

PHIL 2301. Philosophical Problems of Law and Justice. (4 Hours)

Focuses on general questions about the law: What is the nature and proper scope of the law? How should the law be enforced and are there alternatives to punishment? How can laws be properly interpreted? Examples of legal controversies are related to the theories studied.

Attribute(s): NUpath Ethical Reasoning, NUpath Societies/Institutions

PHIL 2302. Philosophical Problems of War and Peace. (4 Hours)

Concentrates on ethical and philosophical issues about war and peace. Focuses on the nature and justification of war, moral questions about tactics in war, ideas for avoiding war, concepts of and strategies for attaining peace, and the morality of relations between nations.

Attribute(s): NUpath Ethical Reasoning, NUpath Societies/Institutions

PHIL 2303. Social and Political Philosophy. (4 Hours)

Focuses on basic questions about the nature of the state and the relationship of individuals to the state. What basis is there for individuals to obey the laws of the state? What conditions must a government meet to be legitimate? What justification can be given for democratic forms of government? Also examines what sorts of controls the state should exert over citizens, and what benefits citizens have a right to expect from the state. Includes readings from both classical and contemporary sources. Not open to freshmen students.

Attribute(s): NUpath Ethical Reasoning, NUpath Societies/Institutions

PHIL 2325. Ancient Philosophy and Political Thought. (4 Hours)

Examines the philosophers of classical Greece, primarily Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. These philosophers examined the nature of the material world, of the city, and of the person. The course takes up both the moral and political writings as well as the metaphysical writings. Devotes considerable attention to major works such as Plato's *Republic*. Some time is given to early Greek philosophers, to the Sophists, and to later developments. Requires written analysis of philosophical texts. PHIL 2325 and POLS 2325 are cross-listed.

Prerequisite(s): ENGL 1111 with a minimum grade of C or ENGL 1102 with a minimum grade of C or ENGW 1111 with a minimum grade of C or ENGW 1102 with a minimum grade of C or ENGW 1113 with a minimum grade of C or ENGW 1114 with a minimum grade of C

Attribute(s): NUpath Ethical Reasoning, NUpath Interpreting Culture, NUpath Writing Intensive

PHIL 2330. Modern Philosophy. (4 Hours)

Focuses on philosophical works written during the 17th and 18th centuries and considers their historical, social, and political contexts. Tackles fundamental questions about the nature of reality, self-knowledge, injustice, and the good life through the work of figures like René Descartes, Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia, Margaret Cavendish, John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Mary Wollstonecraft, and others. Considers the contributions of women and other underrepresented figures and philosophical developments in the Americas. Requires prior completion of one philosophy course.

Prerequisite(s): ENGL 1111 with a minimum grade of C or ENGL 1102 with a minimum grade of C or ENGW 1111 with a minimum grade of C or ENGW 1102 with a minimum grade of C or ENGW 1113 with a minimum grade of C or ENGW 1114 with a minimum grade of C

Attribute(s): NUpath Interpreting Culture, NUpath Societies/Institutions, NUpath Writing Intensive

PHIL 2390. Cults and Sects. (4 Hours)

Examines radical religious innovation in the United States from historical, legal, and cultural analytic perspectives. Focuses on minoritized groups such as the Shakers, Peoples Temple, the Nation of Islam, and the Church of Scientology. Offers students an opportunity to acquire critical investigative tools with which to better understand the complexities of lived religion.

Attribute(s): NUpath Difference/Diversity, NUpath Interpreting Culture

PHIL 2395. Japanese Buddhism. (4 Hours)

Surveys the major forms of Japanese Buddhism, from the earliest transmission of Buddhism to the maturation of Buddhist thought and practice during the Kamakura and Muromachi periods. Focuses not only on the major schools and figures of each period but also the ways in which Buddhism influenced and shaped Japanese culture. Examines, in particular, the formative influence of Buddhism on Japanese aesthetic sensibilities, samurai culture, and ritual. Focuses thematically on the religious practices that defined each school and how those practices were incorporated into a holistic religious vision.

Prerequisite(s): ENGL 1111 with a minimum grade of C or ENGL 1102 with a minimum grade of C or ENGW 1111 with a minimum grade of C or ENGW 1102 with a minimum grade of C or ENGW 1113 with a minimum grade of C or ENGW 1114 with a minimum grade of C

Attribute(s): NUpath Ethical Reasoning, NUpath Interpreting Culture, NUpath Writing Intensive

PHIL 2410. Possession, Sacrifice, and Divination in African Diasporic Religions. (4 Hours)

Examines religious thought and rituals and its Diaspora in a comparative context. Topics include traditional religions, Islam, Christianity, and Judaism in Africa, and the Diaspora. Emphasizes the transformation of religions practiced in Africa when African captives were forced into the three slave trades affecting the continent of Africa: trans-Saharan, Indian Ocean, and transatlantic.

Attribute(s): NUpath Difference/Diversity, NUpath Societies/Institutions

PHIL 2492. Indigenous Philosophy. (4 Hours)

Explores the work of philosophers from a variety of indigenous traditions. Showcases the diverse and rich contributions of these various traditions by engaging with film, poetry, and argumentative prose. Considers topics such as storytelling as philosophical method, locality as an ethical concept, struggles for tribal sovereignty, politics of blood quantum, environmental justice, decolonizing sex and gender, and indigenous futurism. Examines the place of indigenous thought in the modern nation-state and an increasingly global world. Requires prior completion of one philosophy course.

Attribute(s): NUpath Difference/Diversity, NUpath Interpreting Culture

PHIL 2990. Elective. (1-4 Hours)

Offers elective credit for courses taken at other academic institutions. May be repeated without limit.

PHIL 2991. Research Practicum. (2-4 Hours)

Involves students in collaborative research under the supervision of a faculty member. Offers students an opportunity to learn basic research methods in the discipline. Requires permission of instructor. May be repeated once for up to 4 total credits.

Attribute(s): NUpath Integration Experience

PHIL 3000. Interdisciplinary Methods for Politics, Philosophy, and Economics. (4 Hours)

Offers students an opportunity to learn to think, research, and write in an interdisciplinary way and bring together the core methods of the three disciplines constituting the PPE major: philosophy, political science, and economics. Examines issues such as housing, environmental justice, and immigration, among others, through an interdisciplinary lens. Students analyze how systemic racism, gender, and other power structures have created asymmetrical distribution of resources, power, and political opportunities and shaped institutions, policies, and outcomes. Includes a service-learning requirement that takes place across the semester. PPE majors should plan to take this course when the majority of the major core courses are complete.

Prerequisite(s): PHIL 1160 with a minimum grade of D-

Attribute(s): NUpath Integration Experience, NUpath Writing Intensive

PHIL 3050. Information and Uncertainty. (4 Hours)

Introduces the foundations of probabilistic inference, information theory, and their uses for drawing conclusions from noisy data. Applications include diagnosing diseases with inconclusive medical tests, locating autonomous vehicles when sensors are imperfect, and how best to make inferences with incomplete or partial information. Central topics include distinguishing deductive and probabilistic inference, philosophical interpretations of probability, fundamental justifications for the rules of probability, and key concepts of information theory. Introduces analytic and mathematical methods of analysis in these cases and contemporary computational (i.e., programming) techniques for implementing and applying theories of information and probabilistic inference.

Attribute(s): NUpath Analyzing/Using Data, NUpath Formal/Quant Reasoning

PHIL 3065. Bioethics in the Age of Big Data. (4 Hours)

Explores the ethical issues that arise in the application of emerging applications of AI and Big Data in health and healthcare, especially the ways in which those applications challenge and force us to rethink traditional bioethical frameworks and norms.

PHIL 3100. The Religious Worlds of Boston: Faith and Devotion in Urban Life. (4 Hours)

Examines the nature of religion and religious life in Boston, emphasizing the lived experience of the sacred in an urban setting. Offers students an opportunity to develop research methods based in ethnography, the analysis of texts, and the interpretation of material culture. Readings include works in the method and theory of religious studies, the practice of ethnography, and case studies of lived religion, especially those that focus on urban religion. Expects students to engage in fieldwork in Boston, examining the implicit religious dimensions of everyday life and particular religious communities. Assignments include field reports, analysis of the religious landscape of Boston, and a research paper on a designated religious community. Requires prior completion of one introductory-level course in the social sciences or humanities.

Attribute(s): NUpath Integration Experience, NUpath Interpreting Culture, NUpath Societies/Institutions

PHIL 3305. Philosophy of Emotions. (4 Hours)

Explores central philosophical questions about the emotions. Analyzes what an emotion is and if an emotion is more like a feeling, a belief, or a perception. Discusses if it is irrational to have an emotion that you think that you should not have and what it means for an emotion to be rational in the first place. What does it mean for an emotion to be morally good? How can we know when to trust an emotion? Emphasizes moral psychology and the contributions of neuroscience. Requires prior completion of two philosophy courses.

Attribute(s): NUpath Ethical Reasoning

PHIL 3333. Intercollegiate Ethics Bowl Competition. (1 Hour)

Offers students an opportunity to participate as members of Northeastern's Ethics or Bioethics Bowl team. Students work with their teammates in preparing for regional and national competitions. Preparation includes devising novel arguments for each competition's cases and weekly meetings with teammates leading up to the competition where students polish their arguments, rebuttals, and questions. Culminates with the option of traveling and participating in a regional and possible national debate competition. May be repeated up to seven times.

PHIL 3343. Existentialism. (4 Hours)

Examines existentialist philosophy in its greatest representatives, such as Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Camus, and Sartre. Focuses on central themes including self-alienation, inauthenticity, authenticity, and existential experiences. Requires prior completion of two philosophy courses.

PHIL 3360. Scientific Approaches to Philosophy. (4 Hours)

Explores scientific approaches to traditional philosophical questions and to what extent these classic questions can be addressed by contemporary scientific theories and methods. Surveys recent studies in psychology and neuroscience and their relation to free will, consciousness, and the self. Examines the connections between contemporary physics and philosophical questions about determinism, causality, and the nature of reality. Considers the role of scientific methods in addressing skepticism and the connection to the theory of knowledge. Finally, explores the relevance of the social and biological sciences in answering questions about society, ethics, and morality. Requires prior completion of two philosophy and/or science courses.

Attribute(s): NUPath Ethical Reasoning, NUPath Societies/Institutions

PHIL 3435. Moral Philosophy. (4 Hours)

Explores two basic questions: What sorts of things are good or bad? What actions are right or wrong? Covers major philosophical theories about the nature of morality—whether it is relative or absolute, whether it accords or conflicts with self-interest. Such classic theories as utilitarianism and Kant are examined as well as contemporary developments and debates. Requires prior completion of two philosophy courses.

PHIL 3460. Philosophy and Literature. (4 Hours)

Provides the student the opportunity to learn to recognize, appreciate, and criticize philosophical themes in literature. Includes readings from acknowledged classics by philosophical authors. Requires prior completion of two philosophy courses.

PHIL 3500. Sexuality, Gender, and the Law. (4 Hours)

Examines the legal regulation of gender and sexuality. Investigates concrete legal cases to study the history of constitutional interpretation and the current status of rights for women and sexual minorities. Focuses on important theoretical issues emerging in the writings of diverse feminist and queer legal scholars. Addresses debates over the value of conventional equality approaches in legal doctrine; equality vs. difference perspectives; ways in which legal language constructs gender and sexuality; the incorporation of sexuality and gender in ideologies of law; and the intersections of gender, sexuality, and race in legal doctrine and legal theory. PHIL 3500, POLS 3500, and WMNS 3500 are cross-listed.

Attribute(s): NUPath Ethical Reasoning, NUPath Societies/Institutions

PHIL 3512. Religion, Race, and Politics. (4 Hours)

Engages the intersections of religion, race, and political power through cultural history, ethnography, and lived religions. Explores the social and cultural categories of our historical and contemporary worlds. Examines how some peoples' histories have been centered, while others' histories have been marginalized. Explores religion as a social category that reproduces existing relations of power while alternatively supporting social revolution and change. Class engagements are centered on theories of power, understandings of difference, and changes in social structures over time, from the colonial period to the present (1500s–2000s).

Attribute(s): NUPath Difference/Diversity, NUPath Interpreting Culture

PHIL 3822. Philosophy of Race and Racism. (4 Hours)

Considers how philosophical tools can help us to understand the issues of race and racism. Controversies about these issues continue to play a crucial role in the public domain. Explores questions such as what is meant by the term race as a biological category; how has the meaning of "race" shifted with time and culture; what is racism (as well as racial injustice and racial discrimination and how should we understand its persistence in areas such as housing and policing); and what steps should be taken to end racism. Examines related phenomena, including xenophobia, ethnocentrism, and imperialism, as well as intersecting forms of oppression, such as sexism. Readings draw on both historical and contemporary sources. Requires two prior courses in philosophy or department permission to register.

Attribute(s): NUPath Difference/Diversity, NUPath Societies/Institutions

PHIL 3990. Elective. (1-4 Hours)

Offers elective credit for courses taken at other academic institutions. May be repeated without limit.

PHIL 4050. Artificial Intelligence and Society. (4 Hours)

Examines the societal impact of artificial intelligence technologies and prominent strategies for aligning these impacts with social and ethical values. Offers multidisciplinary readings to provide conceptual lenses for understanding these technologies in their contexts of use.

PHIL 4500. Theory of Knowledge. (4 Hours)

Focuses on questions about the nature and justification of claims to knowledge. Is there genuine knowledge? How do we tell when a belief or theory is sufficiently justified to count as knowledge? Discusses theories such as various forms of rationalism, empiricism, and skepticism. Requires careful reading of works by such influential thinkers as René Descartes, Bertrand Russell, A. J. Ayer, and T. S. Kuhn. Requires prior completion of three philosophy courses.

Attribute(s): NUpath Capstone Experience, NUpath Writing Intensive

PHIL 4510. Philosophy of Science. (4 Hours)

Focuses on the nature of scientific method, scientific theories, and scientific explanations. Examines the central question of why science is thought to provide the most reliable account of the nature of reality. Requires prior completion of three philosophy courses (PHIL 1115 or PHIL 1215 recommended) or permission of instructor.

Prerequisite(s): ENGL 1111 with a minimum grade of C or ENGL 1102 with a minimum grade of C or ENGW 1111 with a minimum grade of C or ENGW 1102 with a minimum grade of C or ENGW 1113 with a minimum grade of C or ENGW 1114 with a minimum grade of C

Attribute(s): NUpath Capstone Experience, NUpath Writing Intensive

PHIL 4515. Advanced Deductive Logic. (4 Hours)

Examines central results of formal deductive logic with a focus on first-order (predicate) logic. Topics include proof systems, decidability, computability, and metatheory.

Prerequisite(s): MATH 1215 with a minimum grade of D- or MATH 1365 with a minimum grade of D- or PHIL 1115 with a minimum grade of D-

PHIL 4516. Advanced Inductive Logic. (4 Hours)

Examines major views and results in contemporary inductive logic. Focuses on Bayesian epistemology including belief and credence, probability, updating, principles of rationality, theory of confirmation, and decision theory.

Prerequisite(s): PHIL 1115 with a minimum grade of D- or MATH 1215 with a minimum grade of D- or MATH 1365 with a minimum grade of D-

PHIL 4535. Philosophy of Mind. (4 Hours)

Seeks to show what puzzles and problems result from an honest attempt to answer these questions in a reasonable way: What is the relation between mind and body? Is the mental merely a function of bodily process and behavior, or does it somehow exist "over and above" the material? How are self-knowledge and knowledge of other minds achieved, and what is the relation between words and thoughts? Examines classical sources, such as Descartes and Locke, and contemporary sources, such as Wittgenstein and Putnam. Also seeks to arrive at some answers-however tentative or provisional-to these questions. Constantly challenges students to think and write well about these difficult subjects. Requires prior completion of three philosophy courses or permission of instructor.

Attribute(s): NUpath Capstone Experience, NUpath Writing Intensive

PHIL 4550. Philosophy of Economics. (4 Hours)

Explores the philosophy behind economics. Surveys central ideas in the foundations of economics and formal methods in economics, including utility theory, rational choice theory, game theory, and social choice. Explores applications of economic modeling to institutions, markets, and social interactions. Examines the philosophical significance of economic inquiry, including fact/value distinctions, the ideal of economic rationality, the nature of economic modeling, and the place of economics among the sciences. Requires prior completion of at least three philosophy and/or economics courses.

Attribute(s): NUpath Capstone Experience, NUpath Societies/Institutions, NUpath Writing Intensive

PHIL 4901. Topics in Philosophy Seminar. (4 Hours)

Focuses on one specific problem or issue in philosophy. Topics vary, and students may register for the course more than once. Requires prior completion of three philosophy courses. May be repeated without limit.

Attribute(s): NUpath Capstone Experience, NUpath Writing Intensive

PHIL 4903. Seminar in Religion. (4 Hours)

Examines topics including theodicy, cosmogony, contemporary issues in religion, and comparative ethics. Topics vary, and students may register for the course more than once. Requires prior completion of three philosophy or religion courses. May be repeated without limit.

Attribute(s): NUpath Capstone Experience, NUpath Writing Intensive

PHIL 4990. Elective. (1-4 Hours)

Offers elective credit for courses taken at other academic institutions. May be repeated without limit.

PHIL 4992. Directed Study. (1-4 Hours)

Offers independent work under the direction of members of the department on a chosen topic. Course content depends on instructor. May be repeated without limit.

PHIL 4994. Internship. (4 Hours)

Offers an opportunity for an internship. May be repeated without limit.

Attribute(s): NUpath Integration Experience

PHIL 5001. Global Justice. (4 Hours)

Explores the theoretical, political, and philosophical foundations of the obligations that underlie global justice. Theoretical approaches include human rights, human capabilities, cosmopolitanism, particularism, and universalism. Examines nationalism and the particular set of obligations that it generates. Following the theoretical component, the course considers social issues that arise in a global context: (1) the duties to the distant poor, (2) global philanthropy and problems of donee accountability, (3) global health and essential medicines and issues in environmental justice, and (4) issues in international law.

Attribute(s): NUpath Capstone Experience, NUpath Ethical Reasoning, NUpath Societies/Institutions, NUpath Writing Intensive

PHIL 5005. Information Ethics. (4 Hours)

Covers issues of justice and the public good in relation to the creation, collection, storage, analysis, processing, dissemination, and use of information. Discusses theories of justice and human rights, as well as ethical theories such as utilitarianism and principlism. Topics include intellectual and cultural property, freedom of expression, access to information, fair representation, and information privacy. Discusses how to create and use information technologies that promote individual flourishing and the public good while avoiding bias, exploitation, and manipulation.

Prerequisite(s): PHIL 1145 with a minimum grade of D- or PHIL 1300 with a minimum grade of D- or IS 1300 with a minimum grade of D- or graduate program admission

PHIL 5010. AI Ethics. (4 Hours)

Discusses artificial intelligence and the host of ethical issues it raises: decisions turned over to machine-learning algorithms can be opaque and unfair; autonomous vehicles promise to increase safety but raise challenges for assigning responsibility for accidents; diffusion of AI is likely to transform the labor market in unpredictable ways; and the data that powers machine-learning algorithms raise questions about privacy and security. In order to realize the benefits of AI while responsibly developing and implementing it, it is necessary to identify the ethical issues at stake and work to resolve them. This course takes up the philosophical and ethical questions essential to this project.

Prerequisite(s): PHIL 1145 with a minimum grade of D- or PHIL 1300 with a minimum grade of D- or IS 1300 with a minimum grade of D- or graduate program admission

PHIL 5110. Responsible AI. (4 Hours)

Covers the design, development, and deployment of artificial intelligence and how it interacts with a wide range of values including fairness, privacy, transparency, autonomy, and well-being. Offers students an opportunity to develop an understanding of the robust legal, regulatory, and ethical landscape of AI applications across domains and sectors to realize the promise of AI while promoting and protecting values, as well as instruction in the tools necessary to responsibly engage with AI.

PHIL 6962. Elective. (1-4 Hours)

Offers elective credit for courses taken at other academic institutions. May be repeated without limit.