Philosophy Department (PHL)

College of Arts, Social Sciences, and Humanities
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www.uwlax.edu/philosophy

The mission of the Philosophy Department of the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse is to nurture excellence in philosophy in thought and practice. This includes offering a broad range of classes, engaging in research that contributes to the body of philosophical knowledge, and providing service for the intellectual, ethical, cultural and professional development of students. The department offers professional expertise in meeting these important educational needs. Thematically and historically philosophy has been and should continue to be the cornerstone of university education. Philosophy addresses questions that are basic to human experience. Hence the Philosophy Department provides a broad base of classes, research and service for the intellectual, ethical, cultural and professional development of students.

The significant features of the Department of Philosophy at UW-La Crosse include its broadly prepared faculty and its diverse course offerings. The philosophy faculty members, all of whom have doctorates in philosophy, represent many different philosophical viewpoints and diverse competencies and interests. The coursework available in the Philosophy Program represents not only all of the important traditional areas of philosophy but also new interests and developments in the field.

Philosophy fosters creative and critical thinking and helps one to understand human thought through the ages as well as developing an insightful perspective on the present scene. Students often major in another discipline at the same time they are studying philosophy. This joint major program is excellent preparation for many programs of study beyond the baccalaureate degree including law, business, and medicine.

2019-20 Faculty/Staff

The following is the department’s faculty and staff as of the publication date of this catalog. This list will not be updated again until the next catalog is published in June.

Professor
Eric Kraemer
Sheryl Tuttle Ross

Associate Professor
Samuel Cocks
Mary Krizan

Administrative Support
Anna Meier

Majors
• Philosophy major - BA (http://catalog.uwlax.edu/undergraduate/philosophy/major-ba)
• Philosophy major - BS (http://catalog.uwlax.edu/undergraduate/philosophy/major-bs)

Minor
• Ethics minor (http://catalog.uwlax.edu/undergraduate/philosophy/ethics-minor)
• Philosophy minor (http://catalog.uwlax.edu/undergraduate/philosophy/minor)

Honors
• Philosophy honors program (http://catalog.uwlax.edu/undergraduate/philosophy/honors-program)

Courses
+PHL 100 Cr.3
Introduction to Philosophy
Are you looking for answers to life’s important questions? This course offers the student an introduction to the major views on important philosophic topics such as reality, personal identity, freedom, knowledge, morality, religion, and social justice. Offered Fall, Spring.

+PHL 101 Cr.3
Introduction to Logic
An introduction to logic, the science of valid reasoning. This course introduces the student to both formal and informal methods of reasoning and evaluating arguments. Offered Fall, Spring.

+PHL 120 Cr.3
Introduction to Ethics and Society: The Person and the Community
Introduces the major perspectives on ethics and its relationship to individuals and social responsibility. Specific contemporary moral and social problems are introduced, such as abortion, famine, war, and individual rights versus the collective rights of society. Offered Fall, Spring.

+PHL 200 Cr.3
Introduction to the Literature of Philosophy
An examination of the expression, development and conflict of the ideas and values in current and time-honored works of philosophy from major world cultures. Topics to be studied include religion, ethics, knowledge, personal identity, justice and freedom. Students cannot earn credit for the philosophy major/minor in both PHL 100 and PHL 200. Offered Occasionally.

PHL 201 Cr.3
Ethical Theory and Practice
An exploration of philosophical ethics, with attention paid to the philosophical methods of analysis and argumentation used to drive and evaluate moral theories and judgments. Topics may include the nature of moral truth (e.g., absolute truth, relativism, pluralism), prominent moral theories (e.g., virtue ethics, deontology, utilitarianism), important figures from the history of philosophy (e.g., Aristotle, Kant, J.S. Mill), an examination into the nature of virtues and values, principles of right action, and character. Students can expect to engage in a mandatory service learning project applying what they have learned in the classroom. Offered Annually.
PHL 200 Cr.3
History of Ancient Philosophy
Introduction to principle questions of philosophy and history of their analysis from the pre-Socratic period to the Renaissance. Offered Fall.

PHL 206 Cr.3
History of Modern Philosophy
Principal questions of philosophy, and history of their analysis from the Renaissance through the Enlightenment. Offered Spring.

+PHL 212 Cr.3
Search for Economic Justice
Using humanistic and social scientific approaches, students will explore movements for economic empowerment as a critical dimension of justice in the increasingly global world. Through a mixture of face-to-face, online, and experiential methods, students will examine connections between the individual and larger systems and between the local and the global. They will critically analyze economic and political structures and movements as they pertain to gender, race, ethnicity, and class. The course will be informed by the perspectives of philosophy, English, economics, political science, anthropology, and women’s, gender, and sexuality studies. Students may only earn credit in one of the following: ANT 212, ECO 212, ENG 212, PHL 212, POL 212, WGS 212. Offered Annually.

PHL 300 Cr.3
Topics in Philosophy
Study of a philosophical topic of special interest. Topics will vary according to the interests of the instructor. For the current content, consult the instructor or the department chair. Repeatable for credit - maximum six. Prerequisite: six credits in philosophy or permission of the department chair. Offered Occasionally.

PHL/PSY 301 Cr.3
Theory of Knowledge
An intensive examination of three major questions: (1) What are the principal grounds of knowledge? (2) How certain can we be of what we think we know? (3) Are there limits beyond which we cannot hope to extend knowledge? Strong emphasis is placed on the problems of perception, learning, and knowledge representation. Prerequisite: PHL 100 or PHL 101 or PHL 120 or PHL 205 or PSY 100. (Cross-listed with PHL/PSY; may only earn credit in one department.) Offered Alternate Years.

PHL 302 Cr.3
Symbolic Logic
This is an intermediate level course in formal logic, with an emphasis on proofs in first-order logic. Prerequisite: PHL 101 or MTH 151 or higher. Offered Spring - Odd Numbered Years.

PHL 303 Cr.3
Ethics and Meta-Ethics: Theory and Justification
We look for the ethical theory having the strongest justification. Topics include: is justification in ethics of a different kind than in matters of fact; are moral expressions definable; are moral claims true or false or only expressions of feeling; do only consequences count; are principles crucial for ethics; can at least some ethical claims be known to be true and justified; what is the best approach for resolving disagreement about ethical claims? Prerequisite: PHL 100 or PHL 101 or PHL 120 or PHL 200. Offered Fall.

PHL 307 Cr.3
Alienation, Freedom, and the Divine
What does it mean to experience alienation or unity, and how do these ideas concern the issue of freedom? This course will explore these themes through a study of the notions of personhood and community, consciousness and world, our relationship to nature and the divine, and the possibility of a "new" mythology. Standard metaphysical, ethical, epistemological, and aesthetic issues will be broached. The course will accomplish the latter through a study of the major figures of 19th century European philosophy including Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche. Prerequisite: three credits in philosophy. Offered Alternate Years.

PHL 310 Cr.3
Metaphysics
Metaphysics is the science of what it is to "be" something. Topics include: (1) how metaphysics differs from natural science, (2) in what sense is anything general, universal, particular, continuing, an event, a process, a substance, a relation, abstract, subjective, or objective, (3) in what ways possible worlds can differ from this one, (4) what kind of thing could have body and a mind, (5) what the difference between a thing and its parts in an arrangement is, (6) what is required for two seemingly different things to turn out to be the same thing, (7) how space and time differ from each other and other things, and (8) what natural laws and numbers are. Prerequisite: PHL 100 or PHL 101 or PHL 205 or PHL 206. Offered Occasionally.

PHL 311 Cr.3
Philosophy of Language
A survey of issues concerning the meaning of words. Their referential, syntactic and pragmatic features are explored. Description and causal theories of reference of names, description, indexicals, reflexives and kind terms and their relation to various theories of truth, necessity, and possibility are considered. The nature and roles of linguistic rules of use, competence and their relation to word, speaker and hearer meaning are explored in view of speech act theory. Prerequisite: PHL 100 or PHL 101 or PHL 120 or PHL 200. Offered Occasionally.

PHL 313 Cr.3
Philosophy and Science Fiction
The genre of science fiction allows one to reflect upon scenarios that are beyond the scope of actual human experience - whether by examining future contingent events, merely possible alternate universes, or employing technological innovations that have not yet been discovered. In this course, we will examine some of the difficult questions posed by philosophers through the scenarios depicted in works of science fiction. Topics include personal identity, time travel, artificial intelligence, and dystopia. Offered Spring.

ERS/PHL 321 Cr.3
American Indian Thought
Reflection on the Native American ways of thinking as manifest in the literature of various select tribes, on the essential characteristics of thinking commonly shared by Native Americans, and on the fundamental difference between the Native American ways of thinking and those of the dominant (white) culture. The “primal world” of Native American thought will be studied as an alternative to the western way of thinking. Prerequisite: ERS 100. (Cross-listed with ERS/PHL 321; may only earn credit in one department.) Offered Occasionally.
PHL 323 Cr.3
Phenomenology and Existentialism
This course will approach the topics of conscious experience and human existence from the standpoint of two major schools of European philosophy: phenomenology and existentialism. Questions we will consider are: What is it that makes human existence unique? How is it that we come to experience a meaningful world? How does communication and empathy with others occur? Additional themes to be addressed include what it means to be a self or person, the human experience of anxiety, and our relationship to time and death. Prerequisite: three credits in philosophy. Offered Alternate Years.

PHL 326 Cr.3
Philosophical Concepts in Literature
This course explores how literary technique is used in philosophical texts and how philosophical issues are addressed in various literary forms. Students discuss issues such as love, death, evil, tragedy, identity, fortune, and the good life. Prerequisite: PHL 100 or PHL 200 or CHI 305 or ENG 200 or ENG 201 or ENG 202 or ENG 203 or ENG 204 or ENG 206 or GER 399 or MLG 299 or RUS 305. Offered Occasionally.

PHL 330 Cr.3
Philosophy of Food: The Dining Experience
This course explores the aesthetic, ethical and existential features of the dining experience. Beginning with the pleasure features of food it moves to discussion on the relation of the disgusting and delicious, of the role of taste and food taboo, the proper relation of food and beauty, the question of whether food can constitute art, the relation of food and the sexual, and the role of the aesthetic in unpacking ethical evaluation of food choices. Phenomenological accounts are provided of the experiences of eating disorders and models of thinness and obesity. Next it looks at the metaphysics and epistemology of establishing criteria for nutritional value, the ideology of nutritionism, analysis of functional foods, the defenses/critiques of genetically modified organisms (GMO) and so-called Frankenfoods. Further it investigates ethical discourse on eating behavior, ethical arguments for vegetarianism, veganism, carnism and omnivorism, and gendered accounts of proper eating behavior. Lastly, philosophical arguments about appropriate ethical responses to world hunger are evaluated as well as development of arguments about the proper role of being a world food citizen. Offered Spring.

PHL 331 Cr.3
Philosophy of Religion
An examination of religion and religious experience. Topics considered are: theories of the proper description of God, arguments for and against the existence of God, theories of the nature of the soul, arguments for and against the existence of souls and reincarnation, the role and evidential power of religious experience and organized religion in justified belief. Prerequisite: PHL 100 or PHL 101 or PHL 200. Offered Fall.

+PHL 332 Cr.3
Philosophy of the Arts
An examination of production, appreciation, and criticism of art. Topics may include the nature of art, the nature of beauty, the function(s) of art (if any), the moral status of works of art, aesthetic evaluation, the antimony of taste, the paradoxes of fiction, tragedy, and horror, and public financing of art. Theories may include the imitation/representation theory, expressionism, formalism, aesthetic experience theory, and institutional theory. Offered Annually.

PHL/PSY 333 Cr.3
Philosophy of Mind
A study of the nature of the mind from both philosophical and psychological perspectives. The course will focus on important attempts to solve the mind-body problem, how mind and body are related and also will address the related problems of consciousness, intentionality, free will and personal identity. Prerequisite: PHL 100 or PHL 101 or PHL 200 or PSY 100. (Cross-listed with PHL/PSY; may only earn credit in one department.) Offered Alternate Years.

PHL 334 Cr.3
Philosophy of Science
An examination of such topics as the attempt to demarcate science from pseudo-science, the nature of scientific inference, the structure of scientific explanation, scientific reduction and the unity of science, the interplay between theory and observation in science, the realism/anti-realism debate, objectivity of science, and the relationship between science and religion. Offered Fall.

+PHL 335 Cr.3
Multicultural Philosophy in the United States
This survey course will examine philosophical ideas and systems that are generated from a wide range of cultural traditions found in the United States. The aim of this search will be to broaden and deepen understanding and appreciation of the diversities of philosophies in the United States. Offered Alternate Years.

+PHL 336 Cr.3
International Multicultural Philosophy
This survey course will examine philosophical ideas and systems that are generated from a wide range of cultural traditions world wide. The aim of this search will be to broaden and deepen our understanding and appreciation of the multiplicity of philosophical perspectives which are part of an increasingly diverse, interconnected, and globalized world. Prerequisite: PHL 100 or PHL 200. Offered Alternate Years.

PHL 337 Cr.3
Social and Political Philosophy
An examination of differing philosophical views about humanity and human nature with respect to our social and political life. Topics may include the question of political legitimacy, the function of the state, the possible rights and obligations of citizens vis-a-vis the state, general concepts of justice/rights, liberty, equality, and community (as well as possible specific conceptions of these terms), and how social goods should be distributed. The application of these topics to contemporary social and political debates. Offered Alternate Years.

PHL 339 Cr.3
Medical Ethics
Examination of the principal moral problems that arise in the medical context including abortion, euthanasia, cloning, stem cells, human and animal experimentation, and the allocation of scarce medical resources. Offered Occasionally.

PHL 340 Cr.3
Ethics in the Workplace
Ethical issues in the conduct of business will be examined by focusing on case studies in business that raise ethical issues. A variety of ethical concepts and decision-making matrices will be used to illuminate the ethical features of business decisions and their effects on employees and society. The goal is to improve ability to identify factors and considerations that can play a role in improving the ethical character of one's work-life. Offered Occasionally.
Environmental Ethics
Philosophical reflections on humanity’s relationship to the natural world. The course will examine classic American perspectives (e.g. Leopold, transcendentalists), Asian perspectives, Native American perspectives, and contemporary environmental philosophies such as social ecology, deep ecology, and ecofeminism. Course discussions will include the historical roots of the contemporary environmental crisis, the development of a personal environmental philosophy, and the role of a citizen in advancing environmental awareness and responsible land and water use. Prerequisite: ENV 201 or 3 credits of philosophy. Offered Alternate Years.

Philosophy of Love, Sex and Friendship
An examination into the nature of a variety of kinds of love including love of knowledge, love of friends, erotic love, and parental love. Philosophical consideration of topics such as the nature of desire, the politics of desire, sexual intercourse, adultery, monogamy, polygamy, homosexuality, and the obligations of friends as well as institutions of marriage and parenthood. Offered Alternate Years.

Asian Philosophy
Introduction to the main questions found in the Asian philosophical traditions. We will read Indian, Chinese, and Japanese philosophers, with a special emphasis on Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Daoism. Questions will be centered in ethics, epistemology, and metaphysics. Conceptual connections will be made with Western philosophical traditions. Offered Alternate Years.

Philosophy and Film
An investigation into the philosophy of film and the philosophy within film. Topics may include personal identity, knowledge, technology, ideology, morality, emotions, and truth. Offered Annually.

Zen Buddhism
This course will explore the development of Zen Buddhism through an analysis of Indian, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean texts. Themes we will discuss include the enlightenment experience, the nature of reality and knowledge, the student/teacher relationship, koan practice (i.e. “the sound of one hand clapping”), and the relationship of Zen philosophy to ethics and aesthetics (poetry, painting, etc.). The course will make a point to situate Zen within the overall philosophical environment of China and Japan. Prerequisite: three credits in philosophy. Offered Alternate Years.

Neuroethics
Neuroethics is a study of the ethical, social and political impact of neuroscience, including the ways in which neurotechnology can be used to predict or alter human behavior and the implications of our understanding of brain function for society. As such students will be asked to integrate neuroscientific knowledge with ethical and social and political thought. Our understanding of the brain, as the organ of the mind, has implications for broader philosophical problems, such as the nature of free will, moral responsibility, self-deception, and personal identity. Prerequisite: PHL/PSY 333. Offered Annually.

On Humor and Happiness
What is happiness? Is it something that we should devote our lives pursuing? What is the relationship between happiness and other sorts of experiences we value? Can happiness ever be wrong or mistaken? What makes something funny or amusing? What is the relationship between humor and happiness? Is comedy just tragedy plus time? Is it okay to laugh at morally reprehensible jokes? This class will address these questions and include study of the philosophy of emotions, in particular the emotion of happiness and the experience of laughter as it relates to the various theories of comedy and humor. Prerequisite: sophomore standing or three credits in philosophy. Offered Alternate Years.

Wilderness Philosophy
The intention of this course is to investigate the many different ways in which wilderness is defined and understood within environmental philosophy. The approach will be broad and will cover a variety of themes. Our desire is both to clarify the positive characteristics of the wilderness idea while also recognizing its significant flaws and hazards. The moral implications of the wilderness concept will be given special attention. A variety of different philosophical perspectives will be utilized. Prerequisite: ENV 201 or three credits in philosophy. Offered Alternate Years.

Advanced Topics in Philosophy
Study of a philosophical topic of special interest. Topics will vary according to the interests of students and the instructor. For the current content, consult the instructor or the department chair. No more than six credits in PHL 494, 495, and 497 are applicable to a philosophy major or minor. Repeatable for credit - maximum 6. Prerequisite: junior or senior standing; nine credits in philosophy. Consent of department. Offered Occasionally.

Individual Study in Philosophy
Directed reading and research under the supervision of an instructor. No more than six credits in PHL 494, 495, and 497 combined are applicable to a philosophy major or minor. Repeatable for credit - maximum six. Prerequisite: 12 credits in philosophy, Consent of department. Offered Fall, Spring.

Integrative Seminar
Integration of programmatic themes and methods in the major. May be taken for honors credit. Prerequisite: 18 credits including PHL 100 or PHL 200; PHL 101; PHL 201 or PHL 303; PHL 205; PHL 206. Offered Fall.

Apprenticeship in Philosophy
This course allows students to combine their individual talent and achievement with academically relevant experiential learning. This course will provide majors and minors in philosophy the opportunity for a variety of significant work, service, and leadership tasks related to philosophy. This is a hands-on course which complements and enhances other academic work. No more than six credits in PHL 300, PHL 494, PHL 495, and PHL 497 are applicable to a philosophy major. Repeatable for credit - maximum six. Prerequisite: open to all students with 18 credit hours in philosophy who are in good standing. Consent of supervising instructor. Consent of department. Pass/Fail grading. Offered Fall, Spring.