

Philosophy Department (PHL)

College of Arts, Social Sciences, and Humanities

Department Chair: Samuel Cocks

4112 Centennial Hall; 608.785.8424

Email: scocks@uwlax.edu

www.uwlax.edu/academics/department/philosophy (<https://www.uwlax.edu/academics/department/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.

2024-25 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 July.

Professor

Samuel Cocks

Sheryl Tuttle Ross

Assistant Professor

Daniel Schneider

Assistant Teaching Professor

Stewart Eskew

Administrative Support

Chris Boldon

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 students an introduction to important conversations about philosophical topics such as the nature of reality, personal identity, freedom, knowledge, morality, religion, and social justice with the aim of students developing their own well-considered views. Offered Fall, Spring.

+PHL 101 Cr.3

Introduction to Logic

This course offers students an introduction to several methods of logic: the science of reasoning. In this course, students examine the nature of statements and arguments, identify rules for distinguishing good arguments from bad, learn methods for constructing and testing proofs, and practice good reasoning in general. 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

This course is 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. Contemporary moral problems will help elucidate each of the theoretical positions. Offered Annually.

PHL 205 Cr.3

History of Ancient Philosophy

Almost all the questions and puzzles in the continental and analytic traditions of philosophy today can be sourced to developments in the philosophy of Ancient Greece. In this course, students read ancient texts from pre-Socratic thinkers such as Pythagoras, Heraclitus, and Parmenides. Students also read several dialogues of Plato, explore the metaphysics of Aristotle and the stoicism of Epictetus. Students discuss the differences between science and myth, philosophy and religion, opinion and knowledge, and explore questions about the nature of reality, its oneness and plurality, the nature of justice, and the purpose of life. Offered Fall.

PHL 206 Cr.3

History of Modern Philosophy

In this course, students explore the thinking of several important enlightenment philosophers whose work either led to, or gave interpretation to, the so-called "European Enlightenment." Students examine how these thinkers approached questions about mind and body, the foundations of knowledge, primary and secondary qualities, and the scientific image of human beings and nature. 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: ECO 212, ENG 212, or PHL 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

This course is an intensive examination of the central philosophical questions surrounding the nature of knowledge, truth, and justification. Topics may include the difference between knowledge, wisdom, and know-how; analyses of knowledge, truth, and justification; the nature of misinformation; disagreement; the structure and sources of justification; the insights and limits of cognitive science; the role of human evolution in our understanding of the world; knowledge of abstract entities (e.g., principles of logic, mathematics, or morality); knowledge of the self and other minds; social cognition; and issues concerning the lived-experience of marginalized groups. (Cross-listed with PHL/PSY; may only earn credit in one department.) Offered Annually.

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, Justification, and Objectivity

This course is an examination of classic and contemporary issues in the field of meta-ethics. Topics include addressing questions concerning the meaning of moral claims and principles, moral objectivity, moral psychology and motivation, moral disagreement, the nature of moral knowledge and justification, and the nature of moral reasons. Offered Fall.

PHL 304 Cr.3

Ethics of Artificial Intelligence

This course is an examination of the principal moral problems that arise in the development and use of artificial intelligence technology. Topics include an introduction to the principles of autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice, the nature of AI, as well as the ethical complexities surrounding various issues in AI ethics including responsibility, transparency, AI as a rights holder, moral personhood, data collection, the attention economy, human enhancement, and AI consent. Offered Annually.

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.

PHL/RGS 319 Cr.3

Indigenous Thought

This course draws from sources authored by Indigenous scholars, organizers, and artists to examine historical and contemporary turns in Native American and Indigenous thought. We consider how theories and methodologies that emerge from Native American communities intervene on dominant (colonial) approaches to philosophy and theory. The course combines theoretical and applied readings with personal reflection to develop a critical consciousness of key topics in Native American and Indigenous studies such as land, agency, and decolonization. (Cross-listed with PHL/RGS; may only earn credit in one department.) Prerequisite: sophomore standing. (Cross listed with PHL/RGS; 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 330 Cr.3

Philosophy of Food: The Dining Experience

This course explores the aesthetic, ethical and existential features of food. Topics may include the ethics of hunting; whether food can be art; the Tao of food; the phenomenology of terroir, localism, and cosmopolitanism; whether manners are a moral or aesthetic good; and whether certain foods are Veblen goods. Offered Fall.

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 120 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. (Cross-listed with PHL/PSY; may only earn credit in one department.) Offered Fall.

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 examines philosophical ideas and systems that are generated from a wide range of cultural traditions found in the United States. The aim of this course is to broaden and deepen understanding and appreciation of the diverse philosophical contributions made by a wide range of historically marginalized thinkers. This course focuses on philosophical contributions from Black American, Indigenous, Asian-American, and Latinx thinkers, women, members of the LGBTIQ community, and persons with disabilities. Offered Alternate Years.

+PHL 336 Cr.3

International Multicultural Philosophy

This survey course examines philosophical ideas and systems that are generated from a wide range of cultural traditions worldwide through the medium of film. The aim of this search is 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. 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

This course is an examination of the principal moral problems that arise in the clinical and non-clinical medical context. Topics include an introduction to the principles of autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice, as well as the ethical complexities surrounding various issues including paternalism and patient autonomy, healthcare decisions regarding children, the role and responsibilities of surrogate decision-makers, truth-telling and confidentiality, clinical trials, abortion, reproductive and genetic technologies, euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide, public health, and justice in health care. Offered Occasionally.

PHL 341 Cr.3

Environmental Ethics

This course is an examination of the moral status of the natural environment. Theories including classical normative philosophy (e.g., virtue theory), ecocentrism, deep ecology, and eco-feminism are discussed. Topics surrounding animal rights, environmental justice, and the importance of biodiversity are considered. Throughout the course, students reflect upon what it means to have an appropriate relationship with the environment. Offered Alternate Years.

PHL 342 Cr.3

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.

+PHL 349 Cr.3

Asian Philosophy

This course is an examination of the main questions found in the Asian philosophical traditions. Students read Indian, Chinese, and Japanese philosophers, with a special emphasis on Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Daoism. Questions are centered in ethics, epistemology, and metaphysics. Topics include: (right) conduct and virtue; the nature of reality, mind, and self (e.g., what is a self, what is a person?); the Middle Way; individual and social well-being; and the notions of interdependent arising, emptiness, and enlightenment. Conceptual connections are made with Western philosophical traditions. Offered Alternate Years.

PHL 355 Cr.3

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.

PHL 360 Cr.3

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. Offered Alternate Years.

PHL 410 Cr.3

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.

PHL 420 Cr.3

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 those 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.

PHL 425 Cr.3

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.

PHL 494 Cr.3

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.

PHL 495 Cr.1-3

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.

PHL 496 Cr.3

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 Spring.

PHL 497 Cr.1-3

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.