Philosophy Courses – Spring 2027

PH 101 Introduction to Philosophy 3 Cr.

This course introduces students to the study and the practice of philosophy. Through the analysis of historical and contemporary texts, class discussions and lectures students gain an understanding of philosophy both as a discipline and as a way of asking—and attempting to answer—fundamental questions about ourselves and the world. The emphasis is both on learning about philosophy and on doing philosophy.

Open to first- and second-year students or by permission of instructor.
Fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirements.

PH 101-001	W/F	10:10–11:30	S. Kizuk
PH 101-002	T/TH	11:10–12:30	M. Trautmann

PH 112H The Cave: Philosophy in the Shadow 4 Cr.

An introductory philosophy course that looks at the powerful metaphor of philosophy as a way of emerging from the darkness of the cave into the light of day. Students will read seminal works in philosophy, each of which has a similar argumentative structure: being released from faulty preconceptions (our lives in the cave) in order to ascend toward intellectual illumination (the emergence from the cave), only to return to our previous lives (a return to the cave, but now wiser). While each of the authors reflects on this process in some way, they are rather diverse in how they understand the nature of philosophy and how philosophy might help us to live our lives. Proposals will include ascents toward ethics, religion, science, freedom, and social justice.

Fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement.

T/TH	9:10–11:00	R. Lilly

PH 204 Modern Philosophy: From Descartes to Kant 4 Cr.

An introduction to major thinkers and themes of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe. The dynamics of the Scientific Revolution - the collection of new discoveries and inventions and the evolving experimental methods in the early modern period - led philosophers to a profound reappraisal of fundamental issues such as the sources and limits of knowledge, the relation between mind and body, theories of human freedom and personal identity, and the apparently competing desires to explain the surrounding world in both natural and religious terms. Students will investigate how these philosophical developments led to distinctively modern ways of thinking about nature and the self. Primary documents will be read throughout.

Fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement.

T/TH	9:40-11:00 & M 9:05–10:00	L. Jorgensen

PH 207 Introduction to Logic 4 Cr.

An introduction to the basic concepts and methods of modern symbolic logic, with a focus on their application to proper reasoning. Students learn how to represent sentences in logical notation, to reconstruct arguments in that notation, to assess arguments for validity and soundness, and to prove conclusions from premises using a system of natural deduction. Students also learn to recognize common argument forms and common mistakes in reasoning (fallacies), are introduced to philosophical issues related to logic, and learn how symbolic logic is the basis for the digital computer.

Fulfills philosophy major requirement; satisfies prerequisite for CS 106; counts toward Biology.

T/TH 3:40–5:30 P. Murray

PH 212: Philosophy of Race 4 Cr.

Reasoned arguments about the status and meaning of race have been a part of philosophy since biology began separating itself from natural philosophy in the 17th century. For the most part, these arguments have taken two forms. Some philosophers contend that race is an essential category that must be taken account in any comprehensive account of human existence. Other philosophers assert that race is a secondary characteristic, whose discussion is not worthy of philosophical consideration in regard to what is the good for human beings. Recently, these positions have been somewhat complicated by thinkers who point out that, essential or no, the category of race tends to color, influence and maybe even determine the way in which we are able to live in the world and to think about it. Though this class will frequently refer to the history of philosophy, its will focus on relatively recent and contemporary arguments about the ontological, ethical, political status of race as well as on its practical effects. By exploring and critiquing historical and contemporary understandings of race, we will emerge from the class better able to understand the way in which this category functions to shape ourselves, our culture and our world.

Fulfills Humanistic Inquiry and Bridge Experience requirements. Counts toward Black Studies.

T/TH 12:20-2:10 W. Lewis

PH 222 Law, Property, (In)Humanity 4 Cr.

A study of the law from legal, philosophical, and human rights points of view. The focus will be on the philosophical conceptions of personhood and property that have been at the basis of property law for 300 years and that shape disadvantageously and in a material manner contemporary communities of color. Special attention is given to how American treaty and property law has been used an instrument of disenfranchisement and oppression of the Native American and African American communities. The challenge that modern property law poses for environmental activism is also considered.

Fulfills Bridge Experience and Humanistic Inquiry requirements. Flexible 4th credit hour.

T/TH 2:10–3:30 R. Lilly

PH 223 Love & Friendship 3 Cr.

What are love and friendship? What is the relation between self-love and love for others? How does one distinguish between infatuation and genuine love? Should we be monogamous? What role does vulnerability play in close relationships? Can love be an effective answer to oppression and social divisions? These are some of the questions that we will consider in this course. We will carefully "listen to," discuss, and analyze both the authors we read and our peers' interpretations of them. In addition, we will begin to form our own reasoned positions on the issues that we discuss, and practice community friendship in our daily interactions.

Fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement.

T/TH 12:40–2:00 S. Carli

PH 230 Introduction to Indigenous Philosophies 4 Cr.

This course is an introduction to basic issues, arguments, and methods of traditional and contemporary Indigenous philosophy. Geographically, our focus will include the intellectual traditions of North American Indigenous peoples. While the main aim of the course is not comparative, we will learn about the similarities and differences between the Western and Native American traditions. Areas to be covered in class include (but are not limited to): metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics. While covering these areas, we will actively engage issues affecting Indigenous struggles for self-determination and sovereignty today.

Fulfills Humanistic Inquiry and Global Cultural Diversity requirements.

W/F 12:20–2:10 S. Kizuk

PH 230 Naming the Way: Ancient Chinese Philosophy 4 Cr.

In this course, we will examine three distinct visions of "the way" — a path to personal or social harmony — articulated by three central philosophical traditions of Ancient China: Confucianism, Daoism, and (Chan) Buddhism. Through close readings of Kongzi, Mengzi, Xunzi, Laozi, Zhuangzi, Huineng, and more, we will explore some of the core philosophical questions that animated these lineages: How should we balance our obligations to those we love against the impartial demands of justice? If we want to be happy, should we strive to fulfill our desires, or should we attempt to rid ourselves of them? What is the nature of this "self" that we are so attached to? And most importantly, what is the way to a good life?

Fulfills Humanistic Inquiry and Global Cultural Diversity requirements.

M/W 10:10–12:00 M. Trautmann

PH 306 Nineteenth-Century Philosophy 4 Cr.

By the end of the 18th Century, all but the most reactionary philosophers believed that humans (or at least propertied white men) were equal and that legitimate government rested upon such person's explicit consent. Believing this was one thing but the actual history of revolts on behalf of such egalitarianism and especially the French Revolution when the guillotine enacted "the coldest, shallowest of deaths, with no more significance than cleaving a cabbage" made many rethink these convictions. If monarchy was untenable and democratic self-governance resulted in terror, then where to go? This seminar examines the diverse history of answers to this question and does so by focusing on how 19th century European and American philosophy began with the metaphysical, epistemological, and political problems and methods set for it in the modern period but then radically transformed these problems and their solutions under the pressures of empire, industrialization, urbanization, and scientific progress.

Fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement and the 300-level history of philosophy requirement for the major.
Prerequisite: PH 204 or permission of instructor.

M/W 10:10–11:30 W. Lewis

PH 330 Women in Early Modern Philosophy 4 Cr.

A study of seventeenth-century women philosophers. This course asks what happens to our understanding of seventeenth-century philosophy when women philosophers are not treated as marginal figures (as has too often been the case) but as central to the development of distinctively modern concerns regarding knowledge, nature, mind, embodiment, ethics, religion, education, and political freedom. Figures may include Marie de Gournay, Anna Maria van Schurman, Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia, Sor Juna Inés de la Cruz, Margaret Cavendish, Anne Conway, Mary Astell, and Lady Damaris Masham.

Fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement and the 300-level history of philosophy requirement in the philosophy major.
Prerequisite: PH-204.
T/TH 3:40–5:30 L. Jorgensen

PH 330 Recognition & Self 4 Cr.

A self is constituted through others and in concrete social contexts. It exists only if it is recognized. Therefore, selves are not self-sufficient; rather, they attain independence by negotiating relations of dependence with others. These are the fundamental ideas of some of the most important continental theories of self and society. They also inform contemporary discussions in a number of fields, including ethics, moral psychology and politics. Both are the focus of this course, which examines the notions of recognition and self, and their use in a variety of contexts.

Fulfills Humanistic Inquiry requirement.
Prerequisite: One course in Philosophy or permission of the instructor.

T/TH 9:10-11:00 S. Carli

PH 330 No Refuge: The Ethics of Immigration and Displacement 4 Cr.

Immigration lays bare and throws into question some of the most basic assumptions of political philosophy, while also raising vital ethical questions about how resources, opportunities, rights, and responsibilities should be distributed in an increasingly connected world. This course will examine and interrogate the natures of states, citizenship, and borders in the 21st century, particularly in light of the unprecedented movement of migrants and refugees across borders over the last decade, and the humanitarian and political crises it has engendered. Are borders justified? What kinds of normative distinctions do we make about the reasons for immigration, and are those distinctions well-founded? Do states have distinctive obligations to refugees, and what do those obligations consist in? How is citizenship transforming in the new millennium, and who do those transformations leave out?

Fulfills Humanistic Inquiry and Global Cultural Perspective requirements.
Prerequisite: one prior PH course or instructor permission.
M/W 2:30-4:20 M. Trautmann

PH 375 Senior Portfolio 4 Cr.

A capstone course in which students develop a portfolio of representative work in philosophy. Students will compile at least three research papers from previous course work, which will form the basis of their senior portfolio. The development of the portfolio will have at least three stages: (1) a re-envisioning and significant revision of a previous research paper, including doing further research into scholarly literature on the topic and with an opportunity to explore interdisciplinary connections; (2) the redevelopment of that paper into a short presentation; and (3) a reflection exercise in which students synthesize their work in the major, considering the ways their interests have developed over the course of their time at Skidmore and the ways in which these might inform their future endeavors. Open to senior Philosophy majors.

Prerequisite: senior philosophy major or permission of instructor.

T/TH 5:40-7:30 P. Murray