

PHILOSOPHY DEPARTMENT

Goals

Philosophy is the cornerstone of a liberal arts education. It asks and searches for answers to some of the deepest, most personal questions that we all as human beings have had, such as: "Is there a God, and if so, why does evil exist?" "Do we really have free will in our actions?" "What is the ethical thing to do?" "How do I know for sure that I'm not living in a dream? How can I know anything?" "Is 'artificial intelligence' possible?" "What are the metaphysical building blocks of the world?" "What counts as a logical, rational answer?" and "What is the meaning of life?"

Moreover, philosophy will accept answers to these questions only if they can be rationally defended and are logically persuasive. As such, philosophy develops students' critical thinking skills. Students who have had a firm grounding in philosophy are ready to enter the world as rational, free-thinking, and critically reflective citizens and human beings.

Bachelors

- Philosophy, B.A. (<http://catalog.niagara.edu/undergraduate/programs-az/arts-sciences/philosophy/philosophy-ba/>)

Minor

- Philosophy, Minor (<http://catalog.niagara.edu/undergraduate/programs-az/arts-sciences/philosophy/philosophy-minor/>)

Courses

Students must successfully complete PHI 105 Reason & Responsibility before taking PHI 206 Ethics, and must complete PHI 206 Ethics before taking 300 or 400 level courses.

PHI 105 — Reason & Responsibility (3 credits)

An introduction to the critical method of philosophy and the logic which lies at its base. This method is taught by studying some of the classic problems in philosophy and being exposed to several of the most important philosophers in history. Topics may include: proofs of God, free will/determinism, problems of knowledge, metaphysics, personal identity, and the meaning of life.

PHI 206 — Ethics (H) (3 credits)

*Prerequisite PHI*105*

This course is designed to develop the student's ability to think critically about contemporary ethical issues, both personal and social. It constitutes a scientific investigation in order to develop a normative value system as a basis for distinguishing the good and evil in human conduct.

PHI 300 — Logic (H) (3 credits)

*Prerequisite PHI*105*

Logic, the science and art of reasoning, is a necessary tool for decision making in all areas of human reasoning. This course helps the student to develop reasoning skills through the principles and method of classical logic.

PHI 301 — Phi of the Human Person (H) (3 credits)

*Prerequisite PHI*105*

A historical and systematic investigation into the philosophical questions concerning man: the nature of sensory, intellectual, emotional, and volitional life; the spirituality and immortality of the soul; freedom of the will.

PHI 303 — Epistemology (H) (3 credits)

*Prerequisite PHI*105*

A historical and systematic study of the theory of knowledge to establish the existence of truth and certitude, their proper causes, and their effects in scientific knowledge.

PHI 304 — Social and Political Philosophy (H) (3 credits)

*Prerequisite PHI*105*

A study of classical, modern, and contemporary social and political theories; the values toward which the social process is directed; the power and authority of the state; law as an agent of social control; political obligations; the idea of justice.

PHI 305 — Philosophy of Science (H) (3 credits)

*Prerequisite PHI*105*

An investigation of the fundamental principles, properties, and causes common to the material universe; a historical development of the meaning and nature of science; the nature of the scientific method; genesis and emergence of the basic physical sciences from philosophy of nature.

PHI 306 — Metaphysics (H) (3 credits)

*Prerequisite PHI*105*

Investigates, both historically and systematically, the nature of metaphysical knowledge, the constitution and properties of being, causality, analogy, the existence and nature of Infinite Being, and allied questions.

PHI 308 — Philosophy of Mind (H) (3 credits)

Prerequisite Take PHI 105 and PHI 206

This course is a study of some central questions about the human mind and its place in nature. Topics will include: theories of the relation between mental states and physical states, artificial intelligence, the nature of mental representation, and the place of consciousness in a physicalistic worldview.

PHI 309 — Special Topics (H) (3 credits)

Prerequisite Take PHI 105 and PHI 206

This course offers in depth study of contemporary debates in philosophy. The course may focus on specific topics in different areas of philosophy or on debated issues in the study of the history of philosophy. May be taken up to three times with different course material.

PHI 310 — Ancient Philosophy (H) (3 credits)

*Prerequisite take phi*105*

A study of the main problems of philosophy in the thought of the Greeks and Romans.

PHI 311 — Medieval Philosophy (H) (3 credits)

*Prerequisite take phi*105*

A study of the main problems of philosophy in the thought of medieval philosophers.

PHI 312 – Modern Philosophy (H) (3 credits)*Prerequisite take phi*105*

A survey covering the development of the scientific method around 1640 (Descartes, Hobbes) to the birth of idealism around 1790 (Kant). The course will examine the debate between rationalists (Spinoza, Leibniz) and empiricists (Locke, Hume) over the nature of human knowledge. It will also examine counter-enlightenment thinkers such as Pascal, Rousseau, and Vico.

PHI 314 – Phenom & Existent (H) (3 credits)*Prerequisite PHI*105*

An introduction to the historical development of phenomenology and existentialism from its origins in the problems of classical idealism as developed in the writings of Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Husserl, Scheler, Heidegger, Marcel, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty and Ricoeur.

PHI 315 – Philosophy of Language (H) (3 credits)*Prerequisite take phi*105*

An examination of logical atomism, logical positivism, and contemporary British and American analytic movements through representative selections from the works of the early analysts such as Moore and Russell, logical positivists such as Ayer and Carnap, and linguistic analysts such as Wittgenstein, Ryle, Strawson, Wisdom, Quine, and Austin.

PHI 316 – Intro to Eastern Thought (H) (3 credits)*Prerequisite PHI*105*

An investigation into the principal mainstreams of thought which have most influenced the cultural trends and patterns of Eastern thought in general, with particular reference to the effects in India, China, Japan, and the Philippines.

PHI 318 – Philosophy of Art (H) (3 credits)*Prerequisite take phi*105*

This course will lead students to respond to the question: What is art? Students will examine many philosophical topics that bear on this question including the nature of beauty (aesthetics), the metaphysical significance of art, the nature of emotional expression, the relationship of art to culture, and art as political expression.

PHI 320 – Business Ethics (H) (3 credits)*Prerequisite take phi*105*

Through the application of general moral principles, this course develops the student's ability to think critically about the diverse, moral relationships that occur in the economic order. This course investigates the relationship of what is morally good and evil, to decision making in the field of business both at the corporate and individual levels.

PHI 321 – Philosophy of Religion (H) (3 credits)*Prerequisite Take PHI*105 PHI*206;*

A philosophical examination of religious beliefs and concepts. Topics to include the relationships between reason, faith, morality, and science. Arguments and evidence concerning the existence and nature of God will also be considered and evaluated, as will answers to questions such as: Should religious belief require evidence? What is to count as genuine evidence for truth about God?

PHI 322 – Biomedical Ethics (H) (3 credits)*Prerequisite Take PHI*105;*

Biomedical ethics studies the intersection of law, morality, science, and medicine as the human good is pursued for the person as patient of subject. Among the topics studied are medical-ethical codes, informed consent, advance directives, abortion, euthanasia, suicide, assisted suicide in the medical context, reproductive technologies, genetics, sterilization, and the delivery of health care.

PHI 323 – Environmental Ethics (H) (3 credits)*Prerequisite Take PHI*105 PHI*206;*

This course will introduce students to major topics in environmental ethics. Questions to be addressed include: does nature have intrinsic value? Is there a real distinction between the "natural" and the "non-natural"? What interventions in the natural world by humans are justified? Ought nature to be preserved or conserved?

PHI 324 – Animal Ethics (H) (3 credits)*Prerequisite PHI*105*

Are animals conscious? Can they suffer? Do animals have rights? Is it morally acceptable to eat meat? How should we resolve conflicts between human and animal interests? This course will consider these and other selected questions in animal ethics, and will offer opportunities for both philosophical and personal reflection on our relationship to animals.

PHI 325 – Philosophy of Law (H) (3 credits)*Prerequisite Take PHI*105 PHI*206*

This course is designed to develop the student's ability to think critically about the philosophical basis of law. Topics include the evaluation of opposing arguments on the distinction between natural law theory versus legal positivism, the relationship between the law and morality, rights theory, notions of responsibility, and punishment theory.

PHI 326 – Philosophy of Sport (3 credits)*Prerequisite Take PHI 105 and PHI 206*

This course examines contemporary debates in the philosophy of sport. How do we define sport? Why is it wrong to use performance-enhancing drugs? Is it wrong to strategically foul? Is it wrong to trash-talk? Is it wrong to run up the score? Can officials, strictly speaking, get a call wrong?

PHI 328 – Philosophy of Film (H) (3 credits)*Prerequisite PHI 105*

Film can both unveil reality and create fantasy. This opens many theoretical questions. Why should film be considered art? How do films relate to their subject matters and their audiences? Are films inherently political or psychological? Students will be introduced to these questions through readings of film theory and philosophy.

PHI 400 – Senior Seminar (WI) (3 credits)

Majors will complete an individually tailored research project commensurate with the skills of an advanced student in philosophy. The course will be conducted as an independent research project on a specific issue or problem of consequence as determined by the student and an adviser, and approved in consultation with the department.

PHI 403 – Honors Thesis I (3 credits)

Individual research of a substantive nature pursued in the student's major field of study. The research will conclude in a written thesis or an original project, and an oral defense.

PHI 404 – Honors Thesis II (3 credits)

Individual research of a substantive nature pursued in the student's major field of study. The research will conclude in a written thesis or an original project, and an oral defense.

PHI 499 – Directed Reading (3 credits)

Open to the superior junior or senior student whose project has been accepted for direction by a department faculty member and approved by the chairman.