

# AS.150 (PHILOSOPHY)

## AS.150.100. Philosophy of Sport. 3 Credits.

This course introduces students to philosophical methods by bringing them to bear on the topic of sports and games. We will explore questions about what it is for a certain practice to be a game or a sport (the metaphysics of sport) as well as questions about fair play, performance enhancement, gender equity, and commercialism and corruption in sports (the ethics of sports).

Area: Humanities  
Writing Intensive

## AS.150.101. Freshman Seminar: Climate Ethics. 3 Credits.

It is no secret that the threat of global climate change raises difficult scientific, technological, and policy questions. However the threat of global climate change also raises profound ethical questions. For instance, what do present generations owe future generations? Who if anyone should bear more of the burden of mitigating climate change—rich countries or individuals, those more historically responsible for greenhouse gas emissions, those who currently emit the most, or some other group? What exactly is the right distribution? What do residents of relatively-unaffected countries owe to those displaced by climate change? Are we obligated to accept them as refugees, or is it permissible to refuse them entry? Do those countries most responsible for climate change owe reparations to those most affected by it? Do oil companies? Although these and other ethical questions have figured less prominently in public debate and discussions by policymakers in recent years, they are arguably more important because more fundamental: after all, it is ultimately our ethical stances that determine which scientific, technological, and policy questions we think matter and how we think about them. In this class, we will focus on these and other, related ethical questions raised by the threat of global climate change, connecting them where possible with related questions in political philosophy, ethics, and policy.

Area: Humanities

## AS.150.109. Philosophy of Information and Data. 3 Credits.

Information and data have become a large part of almost every industry. From technology companies to marketing, from physics to the newsroom, the collection, analysis and interpretation of information and data is central. However, there are a number of philosophical issues that arise in such interpretation. In this course we will investigate these issues. Topics will include foundational issues in information theory, statistical paradigms and probability and the epistemology of machine learning. Emphasis will be placed on critical thinking and clear argumentation.

Area: Humanities, Natural Sciences

## AS.150.111. Philosophic Classics. 3 Credits.

The course introduces students to philosophy by critically examining selected texts in the Western philosophical tradition. Philosophers whose ideas will be examined include Plato, Descartes, Rousseau and Nietzsche.

Area: Humanities  
Writing Intensive

## AS.150.112. Philosophical Problems. 3 Credits.

An introduction to philosophy through several central problems. This year's topics are free will, death, time, and race.

Area: Humanities

## AS.150.116. Mortal Questions. 3 Credits.

What is the meaning of life? Is the question well-formed? What does living well require? Does death give human life meaning? What does it mean to say that life is 'absurd'? Are we free to do as we choose? What should we make of human nature or the human condition in light of the great and ever more pervasive technological advances of the present epoch? Will we transform our nature? In light of threats of environmental catastrophes spurred by global warming, nuclear war and the like, what do we make of our daily lives and the activities that compose them? Do those equipped with the relevant capacities and apprised of the relevant information bear a moral obligation to the communities of which they are members? Crucially, these questions require us to reflect deeply on our human values. To address these questions, we will read selected works of philosophers ranging in time from Plato to the present – including both analytic and continental philosophers, men and women, the canonized and otherwise.

Area: Humanities  
Writing Intensive

## AS.150.118. Introduction to Formal Logic. 3 Credits.

An introduction to symbolic logic and probability. In the first two parts of the course we study formal ways of determining whether a conclusion of an argument follows from its premises. Included are truth-functional logic and predicate logic. In the third part we study the basic rules of probability, and learn how to make probability calculations and decisions in life. Co-listed with AS.150.632 (for graduate students) (01-F 11:00-11:50am).

Area: Humanities, Quantitative and Mathematical Sciences

## AS.150.122. Mortal Questions. 3 Credits.

What is the meaning of life? Is the question well-formed? What does living well require? Does death give human life meaning? What does it mean to say that life is 'absurd'? What is free will, and do we have it? What should we make of human nature or the human condition in light of the great and ever more pervasive technological advances of the present epoch? Will we transform our nature? In light of threats of environmental catastrophes spurred by global warming, nuclear war and the like, what do we make of our daily lives and the activities that compose them? Are we living as we ought to? Crucially, these questions and others like them require us to reflect deeply on our human values. To address these questions, we will read selected works of philosophers ranging in time from Plato to the present.

Area: Humanities

## AS.150.130. Dystopian Dreams - Utopian Ideals. 3 Credits.

In this course, we will be exploring fundamental questions of philosophy through the lenses of dystopias (in film, television, and literature) as well as utopias (in literature and philosophy). What is human nature? Do we still have duties if the world goes crazy? And do our lives maintain their meaning if we give up the notion of God? In this course, we'll be holding up dystopian and utopian mirrors to delve into questions about our everyday reality.

Area: Humanities

**AS.150.135. Freshman Seminar: The Philosophy of Race and Racism. 3 Credits.**

The twin specters of race and racism have perennially dominated nearly every aspect of American social, economic, and political life. In this course, we will try to appreciate the nature and scope of this dominance by addressing fundamental questions about the natures, functions, and manifestations of race and racism in contemporary American life. Topics include: the 'metaphysics' of race, conditions of racial membership, the moral harms introduced by racism, the psychology of racial bias, and institutional forms of racism.

Area: Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences

**AS.150.136. Philosophy & Science: An Introduction to Both. 3 Credits.**

Philosophers and scientists raise important questions about the nature of the physical world, the mental world, the relationship between them, and the right methods to use in their investigations of these worlds. The answers they present are very different. Scientists are usually empiricists, and want to answer questions by experiment and observation. Philosophers don't want to do this, but defend their views a priori. Why? Can both be right? Readings will present philosophical and scientific views about the world and our knowledge of it. They will include selections from major historical and contemporary figures in philosophy and science. The course has no prerequisites in philosophy or science.

Area: Humanities, Natural Sciences

**AS.150.140. Minds, Bodies, and Persons. 3 Credits.**

This course is a philosophical exploration of the mind and its relation to the body, personhood, and artificial intelligence. First, we will consider competing definitions of the mind and how it fits into the world. From here, we will engage with the concept of human personhood through an examination of what it takes to remain the same person over time. We will also be considering whether machines could ever have minds in the same way that human persons do, as well as the metaphysical and practical implications of mind uploading. Through testing the boundaries of cognition and personhood through technology, we hope to bring the relationship between minds, bodies, and persons into clearer focus.

Area: Humanities

**AS.150.191. Freshman Seminar: Feminism. 3 Credits.**

Historical and contemporary readings in feminist philosophy.

Area: Humanities

Writing Intensive

**AS.150.193. Philosophy of Language Seminar: Proper Names and Definite Descriptions. 3 Credits.**

In talking with each other, we often use proper names like 'Juliet' and definite descriptions like 'The most beautiful fresco in Italy' to pick out persons and objects in our world. But what do these expressions mean exactly? In this seminar, we'll slowly and carefully work through some classic philosophical texts that address this issue. These texts will provide an introduction to the philosophy of language, and to analytic philosophy in general.

Area: Humanities

Writing Intensive

**AS.150.194. Freshman Seminar: Skepticism Ancient and Modern. 3 Credits.**

Can we gain knowledge of reality, or is everything a matter of opinion? Does it matter? Why do we want (or need) knowledge anyway? Questions like this have been the stock in trade of philosophical skeptics throughout the entire history of our Western philosophical tradition. This class will involve close readings of some classic works on the topic of skepticism with a view to understanding some of the main arguments for (and against) skepticism: how they work and how they may have changed over time. Readings include selections from Sextus Empiricus, Descartes, Hume and Wittgenstein.

Area: Humanities

Writing Intensive

**AS.150.196. Freshman Seminar: Being A Good Person. 3 Credits.**

In this seminar we explore the virtue ethics tradition and its pursuit to figure out what it means to be a good person. We creatively read the canonical tradition as well as less familiar texts in race & gender studies as well as fiction.

Area: Humanities

Writing Intensive

**AS.150.201. Introduction To Greek Philosophy. 3 Credits.**

A survey of the earlier phase of Greek philosophy. Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle will be discussed, as well as two groups of thinkers who preceded them, usually known as the pre-Socratics and the Sophists.

Area: Humanities

**AS.150.205. Introduction to the History of Modern Philosophy. 3 Credits.**

An overview of philosophical thought in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. We shall focus on fundamental questions in epistemology (knowledge, how we acquire it, its scope and limits), metaphysics (the ultimate nature of reality, the relation of mind and body, free will), and theology (the existence and nature of God, God's relation to the world, whether knowledge of such things is possible): all questions that arose in dramatic ways as a result of the rise of modern science. The principal philosophers to be discussed are Descartes, Locke, Hume and Kant, though we shall also make the acquaintance of Spinoza, Leibniz and Berkeley.

Area: Humanities

**AS.150.206. Introduction to Ethics. 3 Credits.**

How should one live? Can we establish firmly the truth of moral claims? Or is morality an invention of society? We will be exploring the works of Aristotle, Kant, and Mill, as well as looking into some more contemporary readings. Further, we will be making connections and discussing how the questions relate to bioethics and business

Area: Humanities

**AS.150.207. Philosophy and Schizophrenia. 3 Credits.**

Area: Humanities, Natural Sciences, Social and Behavioral Sciences

**AS.150.210. Minds, Consciousness, and Computers. 3 Credits.**

This course is a philosophical exploration of the mind and its relation to the body, personhood, and artificial intelligence. First, we will consider competing definitions of the mind and how it fits into the world. We will also be considering whether machines could ever have minds in the same way that human persons do, as well as the metaphysical and practical implications of mind uploading.

**AS.150.215. Business Ethics. 3 Credits.**

What is a responsible business practice? Do corporations have responsibility as 'moral agents'? What is the relation between business and environment? In this course we will investigate the relationship between business practices and ethical thinking by analyzing and assessing philosophical arguments about the moral status of business. We will start by reading philosophical texts that offer an analysis of moral practices, decision-making procedures, and moral theories. In particular, we will read historical text by Aristotle, Hume, Adam Smith, Mill, Marx, and Keynes. Then we will see how these philosophical concepts and theories can be applied to the contemporary world of business. The main goal of this course is to critically evaluate the philosophical foundations and justifications for business and economic systems, and how these applies to specific issues as workplace discrimination, ethics of advertising, environmental destruction and consumer protection.

Area: Humanities

**AS.150.216. Minds and Machines. 3 Credits.**

The course is a philosophical introduction to the topic of artificial intelligence. We will examine such questions as whether machines can think and whether we can build robots that have emotions, personalities and a sense of self. In doing so, we will touch upon a closely connected question: is the human mind itself a machine?

Area: Humanities, Natural Sciences

**AS.150.219. Introduction to Bioethics. 3 Credits.**

Introduction to a wide range of moral issues arising in the biomedical fields, e.g. physician-assisted suicide, human cloning, abortion, surrogacy, and human subjects research. Cross listed with Public Health Studies.

Area: Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences  
Writing Intensive

**AS.150.220. Introduction to Moral Philosophy. 3 Credits.**

An introduction to moral philosophy through in-depth and critical reading of selected texts from the history of philosophy. The philosophers whose texts will be discussed include Plato, Aristotle, Kant and Nietzsche.

Area: Humanities

**AS.150.223. Formal Methods of Philosophy. 3 Credits.**

For better or for worse (and we think better), during the last century or so, philosophy has become infused with logic. Logic informs nearly every area of philosophy; it is part of our shared language and knowledge base. Vast segments of literature, especially in contemporary analytic philosophy, presuppose basic competence in logic and a familiarity with associated formal methods, particularly set theoretical. The standard philosophy curriculum should therefore guarantee a minimum level of logic literacy, thus enabling students to read the literature without it seeming like an impenetrable foreign tongue. This course is an introductory survey of the formal methods that a contemporary philosopher should be familiar with. It is not mathematically demanding in the way that more advanced courses in metalogic and specialized topics may be. The emphasis is on basic comprehension, not on mathematical virtuosity.

Area: Humanities

**AS.150.231. Philosophical Intuitions. 3 Credits.**

At least according to a prevalent conception, analytic philosophers frequently appeal to intuitions - immediate opinions we come to have about cases or claims. In this course, we will discuss three questions that naturally arise: (1) How can we define intuitions and what underlies them? (2) Do philosophers really appeal to intuitions as frequently as many seem to think? (3) Which role should intuitions play in philosophy?

Area: Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences

**AS.150.235. Philosophy of Religion. 3 Credits.**

Can one prove or disprove the existence of God? What is the relation between reason and faith? Are science and religion at odds with one another? We will consider historically significant discussions of these questions as well as important contemporary writings.

Area: Humanities

**AS.150.236. Contemporary Moral Issues. 3 Credits.**

In this course, we will discuss ethical controversies related to some of the issues currently debated in the public sphere: homosexuality, sexism, racism, immigration, abortion, cloning, genetic enhancement, war, terrorism, torture, and others. Our goal will be to explore how major philosophical theories in ethics approach these controversies, and how they can help us understand and resolve these controversies.

Area: Humanities

**AS.150.237. Foundations of Modern Political Philosophy. 3 Credits.**

This course is an introduction to modern political philosophy through an intensive study of the classic texts. The focus will be on the nature and limits of political authority under modern social conditions. Authors included are Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau and Mill.

Area: Humanities

**AS.150.238. Philosophy, Science Fiction, and Human Nature. 3 Credits.**

This is an introduction to philosophy through themes in science fiction. Particular emphasis will be on philosophical questions related to what it means to be a human such as personal identity, free will, the nature of mind, and the nature of knowledge.

Area: Humanities

Writing Intensive

**AS.150.240. Intro-Political Philosop. 3 Credits.**

Area: Humanities

Writing Intensive

**AS.150.245. Philosophy of Mind. 3 Credits.**

Our minds are often thought to be exhaustively and intimately known to us. Despite this philosophers deeply disagree about the natures of the mental states and events which make up our minds. And there is equally little agreement as to what makes such states and events count as mental in the first place. This course will investigate the nature of different aspects of mind and their interrelations. Students will explore debates and puzzles about the nature of perception, memory, imagination, dreaming, pain and bodily sensation, emotion, action, volition and those states commonly classed as propositional attitudes: knowledge, belief, desire and intention. This will put us in a position to ask what if anything unifies such phenomena as mental.

Area: Humanities

**AS.150.253. Introduction to Philosophy of Psychology. 3 Credits.**

Psychology is the study of mind and behavior, and philosophy of psychology is the study of the foundations of psychology. Foundational issues in psychology addressed by philosophy of psychology come in the form of the following questions. What is the nature of mental representation? What is the basic architecture of the mind, and is it innate? Can psychological theories proceed in abstraction from the environment? The purpose of this course is to introduce students to these and related questions and the various answers they've been given.

Area: Social and Behavioral Sciences

**AS.150.254. Philosophy and Memory. 3 Credits.**

This course is designed as a survey of the major philosophical questions about memory, with a particular emphasis on the way in which these questions are affected by recent empirical evidence from psychology and the neurosciences. The course is divided into four main parts, exploring the topics of concern: 1. Memory and Representation 2. Memory and Reconstruction 3. Memory, Time and Personal Identity 4. Memory, Ethics and Politics In addressing these questions, we will read some of the major philosophical works concerning memory published in the last 100 years, but we will also investigate the emerging theoretical and experimental paradigms coming from psychology and the neurosciences.  
Area: Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences

**AS.150.256. Is There Progress in Science?. 3 Credits.**

In this class we will consider the problems related to the progress of science. First, we will discuss the problem of theory change: is there a way to compare different scientific paradigms and to assess their progressiveness? Next, we will deal with a more specific question: does history of science provide evidence that our best current theories are approximately true? Indeed, are we even justified in thinking that our scientific theories gradually approach truth?

**AS.150.260. Introduction to Metaphysics. 3 Credits.**

Metaphysics addresses fundamental questions about the nature and structure of reality. This course will offer an introduction to metaphysics, and a survey of metaphysical debates about topics including time, causation, personal identity, God and free will.  
Area: Humanities

**AS.150.269. Freshman Seminar: Philosophy of Human Rights. 3 Credits.**

This course introduces students to the methods of philosophical inquiry and writing via an exploration of philosophical questions about the foundations of human rights, the modern human rights culture, and the relationships between human rights, civil rights, group rights, and women's rights. No background in philosophy will be assumed, as the aim of the course is to teach philosophical methods while examining the language and practice of human rights, which have been central to the post-WWII global order.  
Area: Humanities  
Writing Intensive

**AS.150.300. Prometheus Editorial Workshop. 1 Credit.**

Prometheus is an international undergraduate philosophy journal published by students at Johns Hopkins University. The purpose of the journal is to promote philosophic discourse of the highest standard by offering students an opportunity to engage in open discussion, participate in the production and publication of an academic journal, and establish a community of aspiring philosophers. Students enrolled in this workshop will act as the staff readers for the journal. For more information, please visit [www.prometheus-journal.com](http://www.prometheus-journal.com). Prerequisite: MUST have taken one philosophy course.  
Area: Humanities

**AS.150.301. Majors Seminar: Truth. 3 Credits.**

A philosophical exploration of the nature of truth, looking at different theories of truth and related questions about science, morality, logic and rational disagreement.  
Area: Humanities

**AS.150.304. The Ethics of Human Experimentation. 3 Credits.**

This course will explore ethical theory, key historical events, and operational requirements of research involving human beings. Weekly discussions will focus on seminal literature and case studies that highlight conceptual and practical challenges related to informed consent; research ethics review; risk/benefit analysis; justice/fairness; globalization of research; participation of vulnerable populations; clinical equipoise; obligations to research participants and communities during studies and after research is completed; and deception in psychological and behavioral research. The course will also explore the emergence and development of the rules governing the protection of human subject research.  
Area: Humanities

**AS.150.307. Plato's Phaedrus. 3 Credits.**

This is a reading course. Together we will do a close reading of one of Plato's masterpieces, the Phaedrus. We will also use this text to address general questions of interpretation, such as how to approach a philosophical classic, how to discern its underlying idea, etc.  
Area: Humanities

**AS.150.316. Puzzles and Paradoxes. 3 Credits.**

The course is a survey of puzzles and paradoxes of truth, belief, knowledge, meaning, confirmation, rational action, and vagueness. Specific puzzles and paradoxes include, among others: Russell's paradox, the Liar paradox, Moore's paradox, the Skeptical paradox, Newcomb's paradox, and the Sorites paradox. Besides being fun to think about, these puzzles and paradoxes touch on many areas of philosophy, including philosophy of language, logic, metaphysics, and epistemology. When introducing each puzzle or paradox, attention will be paid to its history and significance. In addition to this exposure to some of the many domains of philosophy, students will gain analytical skills applicable well beyond philosophy.  
Area: Humanities

**AS.150.317. Undergraduate Seminar for Philosophy Majors: Can Everything Be Explained?. 3 Credits.**

We will study various philosophical theories about the nature of explanation, reduction, and speculation.  
Area: Humanities

**AS.150.325. Philosophy of Oppression and Resistance. 3 Credits.**

Human social structures can be oppressive in either explicit or covert forms, even in societies highly committed to just democratic ideals. The course will investigate what it means for an individual, practice, or institution to be oppressive, and will explore the concrete mechanisms which can underlie racialized and gendered forms of oppression in particular. Special attention will be given to the political and moral problems raised by hate speech, pornography, propaganda, ideology, and material inequality. Finally, we will discuss how social agents can resist explicit and covert oppression in a way that is conducive to the realization of just ideals.  
Area: Humanities  
Writing Intensive

**AS.150.326. Philosophy of Art: A Historical Introduction. 3 Credits.**

A reading of a number of important texts from the history of philosophy dealing with topics in the philosophy of art. Particular attention will be given to the German aesthetic tradition, and especially to Hegel's aesthetics, although the most important ancient Greek contributions will be considered as well. In particular, we will read Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, Kant, Schiller, early German Romantics, and Hegel, as well as selected secondary literature. No previous coursework in philosophy or history of art is required.  
Area: Humanities

**AS.150.328. Plato's Myths. 3 Credits.**

Rather than writing long treatises, Plato wrote dialogues. These play-like works construct a conversation into which the reader is drawn. Plato's characters might be well-known for offering rigorous arguments, but they often tell each other, and the reader, quite fanciful stories. While philosophers tend to give more attention to the arguments, we will focus on the stories. We will encounter stories about the city of Atlantis, the Greek gods, love, the soul, and the afterlife.

Area: Humanities

**AS.150.330. Decisions, Games & Social Choice. 3 Credits.**

We investigate rational decision making at the individual and group level. In the first section of the course on decision theory, we consider how a single rational agent will act in a choice situation given her knowledge, or lack thereof, about the world and her particular risk profile. In the second section on game theory, we explore different kinds of competitive and cooperative strategic interactions between agents, and we define different kinds of solutions, or equilibria, of these games. We also apply game theory to the study of morality, convention, and the social contract. In the final section of the course on social choice theory, we turn to group decision making with a focus on the impossibility results of Arrow and Sen.

Area: Humanities

**AS.150.331. Themes from the Philosophy of Religion. 3 Credits.**

Religion has always been a contested and extensively debated topic throughout the history of philosophy, and the topics from the philosophy of religion are still relevant today. In this course, we will look at several of those topics: what is religion? Do we have reason to believe or not believe in God? How does God relate to the world (or are there many Gods)? How can we understand religious practice? And what role (if any) should religion play in our society?

Area: Humanities

**AS.150.340. The Philosophy of Psychology. 3 Credits.**

This course will explore a range of philosophical issues in cognitive psychology. Topics include the nature of psychological explanation, the computational theory of mind, the relationship between psychology and neuroscience, consciousness, intentionality, nativism/empiricism, and mental architecture. This course is intended for both philosophy students and any student interested in the mind-brain sciences.

Area: Humanities

**AS.150.351. The Philosophy of Race and Racism. 3 Credits.**

The twin specters of race and racism have perennially dominated nearly every aspect of American social, economic, and political life. In this course, we will try to appreciate the nature and scope of this dominance by addressing fundamental questions about the natures, functions, and manifestations of race and racism in contemporary American life. Topics include: the 'metaphysics' of race, conditions of racial membership, the moral harms introduced by racism, the psychology of racial bias, and institutional forms of racism.

Area: Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences

**AS.150.355. Philosophy of Law. 3 Credits.**

In this course we will examine major issues in the philosophy of law, including the nature of law, the role of the Constitution in legal decisions, and the justification of punishment. No previous knowledge of law or philosophy is required.

Area: Humanities

**AS.150.356. Political Philosophy and Public Health Ethics. 3 Credits.**

In 2015, Rand Paul generated controversy by insisting that parents should have complete discretion over whether to vaccinate their children. When pressed to come up with a defense for this policy, Paul replied, 'The state doesn't own your children. Parents own the children, and it is an issue of freedom and public health.' His rationale for his policy proposal and the responses to it hint at several fundamental questions about the role of the State as it pertains to producing health, as well as more practically oriented questions concerning policy. In this seminar, we will consider both sorts of questions. We will consider the merits of and objections to various policies such as cigarette bans, mandatory seatbelt or helmet laws for motorists, taxes for sugary beverages, and prohibitions of the private sale of organs. We will also ask more philosophical questions: When discussing public health, what constitutes 'the public'? And how should we connect public health and policy measures to salient concepts such as legitimacy, justice, coercion, manipulation, paternalism, autonomy, liberty, privacy, and parental rights? In asking these questions, both at the level of policy and more philosophically, we will engage with a variety of political theories, including various strands of feminism, anarchism, libertarianism, perfectionism, critical race theory, leftist theories, broadly consequentialist theories, and public reason liberalism. Must have some background in philosophy or bioethics.

**Prerequisite(s):** AS.150.219 OR AS.150.220 OR AS.150.237 OR AS.150.240

Area: Humanities

**AS.150.400. Simone de Beauvoir. 3 Credits.**

Seminar on Beauvoir's moral philosophy, covering the major works of the 1940s. Readings will include selections from *The Blood of Others*, *Pyrrhus and Cineas*, *All Men are Mortal*, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, and *The Second Sex*. Open to graduate students and advanced undergraduates. (Beginning undergraduates should contact Professor Kosch.) No prerequisites.

Area: Humanities

Writing Intensive

**AS.150.401. Greek Philosophy: Plato and His Predecessors. 3 Credits.**

A study of pre-Socratic philosophers, especially those to whom Plato reacted; also an examination of major dialogues of Plato with emphasis upon his principal theses and characteristic methods. Cross-listed with Classics.

Area: Humanities

Writing Intensive

**AS.150.402. Aristotle. 3 Credits.**

A study of major selected texts of Aristotle.

Area: Humanities

Writing Intensive

**AS.150.403. Hellenistic Philosophy. 3 Credits.**

A study of later Greek philosophy, stretching roughly from the death of Aristotle to the Roman imperial period. Epicureans, Stoics, and Sceptics will be the main philosophical schools examined.

Area: Humanities

Writing Intensive

**AS.150.404. The Idea of Power. 3 Credits.**

The Idea of Power surveys seminal texts in the history of political thought on the nature, promise, and dangers of political and social power; it also critically engages contemporary texts on race and gender power relations

Area: Humanities

**AS.150.407. Enlightenment and Alienation. 3 Credits.**

Why does the increase in enlightenment not correlate with an increase in morality and happiness? Jean-Jacques Rousseau raised this question in the middle of the 18th century and it remains a pressing question today. The course will examine the issue in Rousseau, Hegel, Marx, and Adorno, as well as in the contemporary work of Richard Moran and Rahel Jaeggi.

Area: Humanities

**AS.150.408. The Ethics of Climate Change. 3 Credits.**

In this course we consider ethical issues related to climate change and climate change policy. These include issues about how we ought to distribute the burden of mitigation and adaptation, what we owe to future generations and to the non-human world, and about our responsibilities as individuals (with respect, for example, to our diets). We briefly consider geoengineering and issues related to the widespread reliance on cost-benefit analyses in climate policy.

Area: Humanities

**AS.150.409. Wittgenstein On Certainty. 3 Credits.**

Wittgenstein's *On Certainty* consists of four notebooks containing remarks on knowledge, certainty, doubt and truth. In this course, we will undertake a close study of Wittgenstein's notes, critically examining competing interpretations of Wittgenstein's ideas and the different use of those ideas have been taken up in current debates about philosophical skepticism.

Area: Humanities

**AS.150.410. The Philosophy of Afrofuturism I. 3 Credits.**

The main goal of speculative fiction is to render a familiar world slightly unfamiliar to then ask familiar questions in new ways. Afrofuturism as a genre of sci-fi, fantasy, and horror written by and about black people, applies this ethic to the problems of race, broadly speaking. In this course we survey major texts to philosophically inquire into phenomena like incarceration, slavery and its lingering effects, and colonialism among other themes.

Area: Humanities

Writing Intensive

**AS.150.412. Kant's Critique of Practical Reason. 3 Credits.**

A historical and systematic study of Kant's ethics and philosophy of religion, with special attention to his *Critique of Practical Reason*.

Area: Humanities

**AS.150.417. Kant's 'Critique Of Pure Reason'. 3 Credits.**

An examination of the philosophy of Immanuel Kant, with emphasis on *The Critique of Pure Reason*.

Area: Humanities

**AS.150.418. Hermeneutics and Critical Theory. 3 Credits.**

An introduction to two of the most important and influential schools in twentieth-century German philosophy. This course examines the works of four leading representatives of these schools, i.e. Heidegger, Gadamer, Horkheimer, and Habermas.

Area: Humanities

**AS.150.419. Kant's Critique/Judgment. 3 Credits.**

This course will examine closely and in detail the aesthetic and teleological parts of Kant's third masterpiece, *The Critique of the Power of Judgment*.

Area: Humanities

**AS.150.420. Mathematical Logic I. 3 Credits.**

Mathematical Logic I (H,Q) is the first semester of a year long course. It introduces the two notions of validity and provability for both sentential logic and first-order predicate logic, showing in each case that there is a system of derivation such that any argument is valid if and only if the conclusion is provable from the premises. The result is non-trivial since validity is a semantic notion involving the preservation of truth, while a proof is a finite syntactic object whose correctness can be effectively decided. The goal of the course, however, is to learn how to formulate mathematical theories in first-order logic and to explore various of their properties (or lack thereof) such as completeness, decidability, axiomatizability, finite axiomatizability, and consistency. The course concludes with a brief introduction to model theory and the interpretability of one theory in another, which is the basis for relative consistency proofs in mathematics.

Area: Humanities, Quantitative and Mathematical Sciences

**AS.150.421. Mathematical Logic II. 3 Credits.**

Gödel's two incompleteness theorems regarding, first the Euclid set a precedent for the codification of mathematics by axiomatizing the set of geometric truths. An obvious question that arises is whether all branches of mathematics are axiomatizable, especially fundamental ones, such as arithmetic. In the late nineteenth century, what became known as Peano arithmetic was proposed as an axiomatization. The essential feature of an axiomatization is that, although one might have an infinite number of axioms, as does Peano arithmetic, one must have a decision procedure for determining whether a given proposition is or is not an axiom. In 1931, Gödel proved the astounding result that, not only is Peano arithmetic incomplete in the sense that it does not entail all arithmetic truths, but any attempted axiomatization of arithmetic is incomplete, and thus the set of arithmetic truths must be undecidable. Subsequently, Alfred Tarski showed the set of arithmetic truths is not even definable. Also, by finding a finitely axiomatizable undecidable subtheory of Peano arithmetic, Alonzo Church was able to show that there is not even an effective procedure for determining whether a given sentence is a logical truth. Finally, in his 1931 paper, Gödel argued a second incompleteness theorem, viz., that any theory strong enough to express its own consistency, as he showed Peano arithmetic to be, cannot prove its own consistency unless it is inconsistent. We will cover these and other results that have had a profound effect on the foundations of mathematics. It remains an open question whether so basic a theory as Peano arithmetic is consistent.

**Prerequisite(s):** AS.150.420

Area: Humanities, Quantitative and Mathematical Sciences

**AS.150.422. Axiomatic Set Theory. 3 Credits.**

A development of Zermelo-Fraenkel set theory (ZF), including the axiom of choice (ZFC), a system in which all of mathematics can be formulated (i.e., entails all theorems of mathematics). Although, we'll do an exposure to transfinite ordinals and cardinals in general so that you can get a sense for how stupendously "large" these can be, the main thrust concerns certain simple, seemingly well-posed conjectures whose status appears problematic. For example, the Continuum Hypothesis (CH) is the conjecture that the cardinality of the real numbers is the first uncountable cardinality, i.e., the first cardinality greater than that of the set of natural numbers. Equivalently, there is no uncountable subset of real numbers strictly smaller in cardinality than the full set of reals. (You'd think that if there were one, you would be able eventually to find such.) Cantor thought that CH is true, but could not prove it. Gödel showed, at least, that if ZFC is consistent, then so is ZFC+CH. However, Paul Cohen later proved that if ZFC is consistent, then so is ZFC + the negation of CH. In fact, CH could fail in astoundingly many ways. For example, the cardinality of the continuum could be (weakly) inaccessible, i.e., of a cardinality that cannot even be proved to exist in ZFC (although the reals can certainly be proved to exist in ZFC). So, are there further, intuitively true axioms that can be added to ZFC to resolve the cardinality of the continuum, and CH is definitely true or false? Or, as Cohen thought, does CH simply lack a definite truth value?

Area: Humanities, Quantitative and Mathematical Sciences

**AS.150.423. Theory of Knowledge. 3 Credits.**

An advanced introduction to the central problems, concepts and theories of contemporary philosophical epistemology (theory of knowledge). Topics to be explored will include: what is knowledge (and why do we want it?); theories of justification (foundationalism, the coherence theory, etc.); externalism and internalism in epistemology; skepticism, relativism and how to avoid them. Reading from contemporary sources.

Area: Humanities

**AS.150.426. Philosophy and Disability. 3 Credits.**

In this course, we will consider various philosophical issues related to disability. What counts as a disability? What obligations do we have, both as individuals and as a society, to people with disabilities? What counts as respecting people with disabilities, and what counts as unjustifiable discrimination against them?

**Prerequisite(s):** AS.150.219 OR AS.150.220

Area: Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences  
Writing Intensive

**AS.150.427. Aristotelian Philosophical Psychology. 3 Credits.**

What did philosophy of mind look like before Descartes? It centered on study of the soul (psuche), or philosophical psychology. This course will focus on Aristotle's view of the soul, its functions, and its relation to matter (hylomorphism), as well as the development of his thought by later ancient and medieval Aristotelians, including Alexander of Aphrodisias, Averroes, and Aquinas. Will conclude with examination of some renewed interest in Aristotle relative to contemporary philosophy of mind.

Area: Humanities

**AS.150.428. Spinoza's Theological Political Treatise. 3 Credits.**

The course is an in-depth study of Spinoza's Theological-Political Treatise. Among the topics to be discussed are: Spinoza's Bible criticism, the nature of religion, philosophy and faith, the nature of the ancient Hebrew State, Spinoza's theory of the State, the role of religion in Spinoza's political theory, the freedom to philosophize, the metaphysics of Spinoza's Theological-Political Treatise, and finally, the reception of the TTP.

**AS.150.429. Topics in Logic: Ontology and Knowledge Representation. 3 Credits.**

Knowledge representation deals with the possible structures by which the content of what is known can be formally represented in such a way that queries can be posed and inferences drawn. Ontology concerns the hierarchical classification of entities from given domains of knowledge together with the relations between various classes, subclasses, or individuals. The main framework in which we will work is that of description logics, which are decidable fragments of varying degrees of first order predicate logic. In ontology development we will examine RDF (Resource Description Framework), its extension to RDFS, and OWL (Web Ontology Language), and use the software Protegé for specific applications. Finally, we will take a look at query languages such as SPARQL (SPARQL Protocol and RDF Query Language).

Area: Humanities, Quantitative and Mathematical Sciences

**AS.150.430. Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit. 3 Credits.**

An in-depth study of Hegel's masterpiece, the Phenomenology of Spirit. We will be concentrating on the first half of the text.

**AS.150.433. Philosophy of Space & Time. 3 Credits.**

Is space an entity that exists independently of matter (substantivalism), or is it only an abstraction from spatial relations between bodies (relationism)? Is there a lapse of time even when nothing changes, or is time only a measure of motion? Are motion and rest contrary properties or states of a body, or are there only changes in the positions of bodies relative to one another? Philosophers and physicists have disputed these questions from antiquity to the present day. We survey the arguments and attempt to find a resolution. But there are further questions. What is the significance of incongruent counterparts (left hands vs. right hands)? Is there a fact of the matter as to the geometry of space (flat, hyperbolic or elliptical), or as to whether space-like separated events occur at the same time? What is the principle of relativity? Does Einstein's theory have consequences for the substantivalist/relationist debate? What is the status of spacetime in current physics and cosmology? Why does time but not space have a "direction"? Are past, present and future objective features of reality, or are they merely "stubborn illusions"? Does time flow? If not, how do we account for our sense of the passage of time?

Area: Humanities, Natural Sciences

**AS.150.434. Formal Methods of Philosophy. 3 Credits.**

For better or for worse (and we think better), during the last century or so, philosophy has become infused with logic. Logic informs nearly every area of philosophy; it is part of our shared language and knowledge base. Vast segments of literature, especially in contemporary analytic philosophy, presuppose basic competence in logic and a familiarity with associated formal methods, particularly set theoretical. The standard philosophy curriculum should therefore guarantee a minimum level of logic literacy, thus enabling students to read the literature without it seeming like an impenetrable foreign tongue. This course is an introductory survey of the formal methods that a contemporary philosopher should be familiar with. It is not mathematically demanding in the way that more advanced courses in metalogic and specialized topics may be. The emphasis is on basic comprehension, not on mathematical virtuosity. Co-taught with AS.150.223 Formal Methods of Philosophy.

Area: Humanities

**AS.150.435. Maimonides' Guide of the Perplexed & Political Theology. 3 Credits.**

The seminar is an in-depth study of Maimonides' magisterial work, the Guide of the Perplexed. Special attention will be given to Maimonides' views about the political functions of religion. We will also read modern commentaries and responses to the Guide, by Leibniz, Spinoza, and Salomon Maimon.

Area: Humanities

**AS.150.436. Philosophy of Gender. 3 Credits.**

In this class we will examine philosophical questions about gender, and about the intersections between gender and other social categories including race, class and sexuality. We will focus specifically on questions about the metaphysics of gender and other social categories.

Area: Humanities

**AS.150.437. KANT'S Opus Postumum. 3 Credits.**

Why did Kant, after he had completed the three Critiques, work on a book with the title, Transition from the Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science to Physics – better known as his Opus postumum? Why did this project eventually come to include ethics and result in a revision of Kant's transcendental philosophy? Questions like these will be answered by means of a close study of Kant's text, and by relating the text to (a) his Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science and (b) to his ethical writings from the critical period.

Area: Humanities

**AS.150.440. The Making of Black Lives Matter. 3 Credits.**

This course explores the history of black thought that informs the ethics of the contemporary movement for black lives.

Area: Humanities

Writing Intensive

**AS.150.442. The Philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein. 3 Credits.**

We will read Wittgenstein's two great works: Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus (1921) and Philosophical Investigations (1953). We may also devote some time to his late, unpublished work, Uncertainty.

Area: Humanities

**AS.150.447. The Logic of Spinoza's Ethics. 3 Credits.**

One of the unique aspects of Spinoza's major work, the Ethics, is its formal or 'geometric' structure. The book is written following the model of Euclid's Elements, with Definitions, Axioms, Propositions, and Demonstrations. In this seminar, we scrutinize the deductive structure of the Ethics and some of its earlier drafts. We consider the role and epistemic status of the definitions and axioms, attempt to provide rigorous reconstructions of some of its key propositions, and also investigate the possibility of alternative routes between these propositions.

Area: Humanities

**AS.150.448. The Religion of Morality. 3 Credits.**

In the wake of the Enlightenment criticism of traditional forms of religion, philosophers attempted to give religion a rational basis by equating it with moral practice. We will examine this religion of morality with the goal of determining whether it can vindicate its claim to be a genuine religion. We will read texts by Rousseau, Kant, Fichte, Hegel and Emerson.

Area: Humanities

**AS.150.452. Freedom of Will & Moral Responsibility. 3 Credits.**

What are freedom of the will and moral responsibility? Are they compatible with determinism or naturalism? This course will examine various philosophers' answers to these questions.

Area: Humanities

Writing Intensive

**AS.150.455. Ethics And Animals. 3 Credits.**

Area: Humanities

Writing Intensive

**AS.150.457. Color and Color Perception. 3 Credits.**

An examination of philosophically relevant discussions of the nature of color and color perception, from both historical and contemporary perspectives.

Area: Humanities

**AS.150.458. The Biggest Hits in Philosophy of Science (20th and 21st Centuries). 3 Credits.**

Readings from Duhem, Carnap, Hempel, Popper, Quine, Kuhn, Feyerabend, van Fraassen, and others who got us where we are in the field today.

Quine said: Philosophy of science is philosophy enough. Is it?

Area: Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences

**AS.150.459. Counterfactual Reasoning, Normative & Descriptive Aspects. 3 Credits.**

Counterfactual reasoning is reasoning about what would be the case if things had been other than they are: If it had been sunny and so I didn't run into that store for cover from the rain, maybe I would never have met my future partner! How ought one to reason counterfactually? How do people in fact do it? Counterfactual reasoning might seem like a narrow topic, but it is of fundamental importance to both scientific and everyday inquiry, where it is intimately connected to the use of imagination, planning for the future, assessment of and learning from the past, providing explanations, understanding fictions, and constructing experiments. This course will explore both normative and empirical aspects of counterfactual reasoning, drawing upon readings in philosophy, psychology, and linguistics. An overarching goal of this course is to arrive at a better understanding of counterfactuality that is informed by research across these different disciplines.

Area: Humanities

**AS.150.460. Rawls and His Critics. 3 Credits.**

John Rawls was the most important moral and political thinker of the 20th century. In this course we will look at his two main works, A Theory of Justice and Political Liberalism, along with some of the more influential criticisms of his ideas. Main topics will include the derivation of principles of justice, the role of the good in liberal political theory, and the nature of reasonable pluralism.

Area: Humanities

**AS.150.462. Islamic Political Philosophy. 3 Credits.**

An introduction to the history of Islamic political philosophy, primarily focused on two flashpoints of encounter between the religion of Islam and other philosophical/political systems—an early one with ancient Greek philosophy (especially in the works of Plato and Aristotle), and a period of interface with modern Western secular political thought, from the late 19th century to present. Our goal will be to try to understand some of the varying responses in each period as Muslim thinkers seek authentic engagement with external and internal trends, both religious and philosophical. The focus will be on primary texts from philosophically engaged thinkers (who may or may not consider themselves philosophers).

Area: Humanities



**AS.150.463. The Value of Humanity and Nature. 3 Credits.**

We start by posing a question: who, or what, has standing in the moral community? First we consider an appealing answer—humanity—then we consider whether moral status extends to nonhuman animals and the environment. We will focus on the notion of being valuable, and how it relates to moral considerability. No background in philosophy is required.

Area: Humanities  
Writing Intensive

**AS.150.464. Hegel's Philosophy of Right. 3 Credits.**

This course will be a close reading of G.W.F. Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*. Some of the main topics for discussion will be the relation of law and morality, the dependence of the political philosophy on Hegel's Logic, and the relation of individual and social conceptions of freedom.

Area: Humanities

**AS.150.466. Recent Work in Skepticism. 3 Credits.**

We all take it for granted that perceptual experience yields knowledge of the world around us. But in the first of his *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Descartes invents a new and puzzling thought experiment. He imagines an Evil Demon with the power to manipulate the total course of his (Descartes's) experience, so that what he naturally takes to be experience of the world around him is really a kind of perpetual dream: a simulation or virtual reality, as we might say today. Descartes's problem, which has made its way into popular culture through films like those in the "Matrix" series, remains a source of philosophical puzzlement. While no one believes that skeptical hypotheses like Demon or computer deception are true, it is not easy to say how we can exclude them. Given that the deception is systematic, it seems that any "evidence" I cite could itself be part of the simulation. So how do I (or could I) know (for sure) that I'm not the victim of the Deceiver or the Matrix? We shall examine some of the latest attempts to respond to Descartes's challenge. Does the "How could I know?" question admit of a theoretical answer, or is the question itself somehow ill-posed? Can we answer it without making significant concessions to skepticism? Exploring such questions should teach us some interesting lessons about knowledge (or the concept of knowledge).

Area: Humanities

**AS.150.467. Philosophic Logic. 3 Credits.**

This course is a survey of various topics in philosophical logic. We begin with a review of the model theory of classical first-order logic (FOL). In our first unit, we will then move beyond the standard existential and universal quantifiers of FOL and consider generalized quantifiers, substitutional quantifiers, and plural quantification. In our second unit, we investigate the theory of propositional modal logic, considering its syntax, semantics, proof theory, and some of its applications. In our fourth unit, we inquire into the nature and normativity of logical validity.

Area: Humanities

**AS.150.473. Classics of Analytic Philosophy. 3 Credits.**

A reading of some of the classic philosophical works in 20th Century Analytic Philosophy, beginning with G. Frege and ending with V.O. Quine.

Area: Humanities

**AS.150.474. Justice and Health. 3 Credits.**

Course will consider the bearing of theories of justice on health care. Topics will include national health insurance, rationing and cost containment, and what justice requires of researchers in developing countries.

Area: Humanities

**AS.150.476. Philosophy and Cognitive Science. 3 Credits.**

This year's topic is perception. Questions will include: In what ways might perceptual states be like and unlike pictures? Does what we believe affect what we perceive? Is linguistic comprehension a kind of perception?

Area: Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences

**AS.150.479. The Ethics of Making Babies. 3 Credits.**

In this class, we will investigate many aspects of the ethics of making babies, asking not only which children we should create and how we should create them, but whether we should make any more people at all. Investigating these questions will take us through large chunks of moral theory, bioethics, and public health ethics. For more information, or to request permission of the instructor (for those who do not meet the prerequisite requirements), email Travis Rieder at [trieder@jhu.edu](mailto:trieder@jhu.edu). Recommended Course Background: One course in ethics or bioethics, or permission of the instructor.

Area: Humanities

**AS.150.480. Death and Dying. 3 Credits.**

What is death? How should we think about death? How should we think about it? How should we treat those who are dying including ourselves? This course will examine these and other philosophical questions.

Area: Humanities

Writing Intensive

**AS.150.481. Hobbes' Leviathan. 3 Credits.**

Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan* is a masterpiece of modern political philosophy. This class is an in-depth study of that work.

Area: Humanities

**AS.150.482. Food Ethics. 3 Credits.**

Eating is an essential human activity: we need to eat to survive. But how should we eat? In this course, we consider such ethical questions as: Is it morally wrong to make animals suffer and to kill them in order to eat them? What is the extent of hunger and food insecurity, in this country and globally, and what should we as individuals do about it? Should the government try to influence our food choices, to make them healthier?

Area: Humanities

**AS.150.483. Evidence, Foundations of Probability, and Speculation. 3 Credits.**

The course examines major theories about the meaning of evidence and probability, and in terms of these provides answers to the questions "What is a scientific speculation?" and "When, if at all, is speculating important or even legitimate in science?" No previous study of evidence or probability is required.

Area: Humanities

**AS.150.485. Descartes and Spinoza. 3 Credits.**

Descartes and Spinoza are two of the leading philosophers of the modern period. In the class we will study the works of both figures. Special attention will be assigned to Spinoza's early works.

Area: Humanities

**AS.150.486. Moral Imagination. 3 Credits.**

This course explores the relationship between moral principles and how we use imagination to put or fail to put principles to work. We will read widely and eclectically in exploring this relationship.

Area: Humanities

**AS.150.487. Fundamental Principles of Philosophical Rationalism. 3 Credits.**

At the center of Leibniz rationalist metaphysics are four interrelated philosophical principles: (1) The Law of Non-Contradiction, (2) The Principle of Sufficient Reason (roughly, the claim that everything must have a reason), (3) The Identity of Indiscernibles (roughly, the claim that there are no two perfectly similar things), and (4) The Predicate in Subject Principle (the claim that in every true proposition the concept of the predicate is somehow contained in the concept of the subject). In this class we will study these four principles, i.e., their modal strength, range, justification, and interrelations both in early modern philosophy (Leibniz, Spinoza, and Clarke), and in contemporary philosophy (Della Rocca, Sam Levey, Dasgupta, Max Black).

Area: Humanities

**AS.150.491. American Philosophy: Pragmatism. 3 Credits.**

Studies of major figures in the history of American philosophy beginning with the 19th century. The course focuses on the development of pragmatism in the work Peirce, James and Dewey. Other philosophers, such as Royce and Mead, may also be studied.

Area: Humanities, Quantitative and Mathematical Sciences

**AS.150.492. Plato's Republic. 3 Credits.**

This course will be a close reading of Plato's Republic, with special attention to the parallel of city and soul, the relevance of metaphysics to politics, and the relation of aristocracy, democracy and tyranny.

Area: Humanities

**AS.150.498. Modal Logic and Its Applications. 3 Credits.**

In the first part of the course, we'll investigate the theory of modal logic, considering its syntax, semantics, and proof theory. We'll then turn to some its philosophical applications: epistemic logic, counterfactuals, deontic logic, intuitionistic logic, and the metaphysics of time.

Area: Humanities, Quantitative and Mathematical Sciences

**AS.150.511. Directed Study. 3 Credits.**

Individual study of special topics, under regular supervision of a faculty member. Special permission is required.

**Prerequisite(s):** You must request Independent Academic Work using the Independent Academic Work form found in Student Self-Service: Registration &gt; Online Forms.  
Writing Intensive

**AS.150.512. Directed Study. 0 - 3 Credits.**

**Prerequisite(s):** You must request Independent Academic Work using the Independent Academic Work form found in Student Self-Service: Registration &gt; Online Forms.

**AS.150.551. Honors Project. 3 Credits.**

See departmental major adviser.

**Prerequisite(s):** You must request Independent Academic Work using the Independent Academic Work form found in Student Self-Service: Registration &gt; Online Forms.

**AS.150.552. Honors Project. 0 - 3 Credits.**

**Prerequisite(s):** You must request Independent Academic Work using the Independent Academic Work form found in Student Self-Service: Registration &gt; Online Forms.

**AS.150.600. Reason Virtue and the Good.**

This is a course in theoretical ethics structured around the topics of reason, virtue, and the good. Questions include: Are there types of value? What is it to value something? Is there a property good? What would it mean for goodness to be relational rather than non-relational? What is the ground of excellence? How is excellence related to the good? Should we understand virtue on the model of perception? Is there an important difference between facts and values? Is there something distinctive about practical reason? What is the role of the good in intentional action?

Area: Humanities

**AS.150.602. Seminar: Foundations of Probability & Evidence.**

An introduction to the major theories of probability and to theories of evidence. There are no mathematical or philosophical pre-requisites.

Area: Humanities, Quantitative and Mathematical Sciences

**AS.150.604. Graduate Seminar in the Philosophy of Science: The Big Issues.**

Readings from Duhem, Carnap, Hempel, Popper, Quine, Kuhn, Feyerabend, van Fraassen, and others who, in the 20th and 21st centuries, got us where we are in the field today. And Quine added: philosophy of science is philosophy enough. Is it?

Area: Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences

**AS.150.606. Seminar on Skepticism - Ancient & Modern.**

Course will focus on ancient skepticism as a way of life, and on the role of epistemological argument in skepticism so conceived. The seminar will end with a brief look at early modern reactions to ancient skepticism.

**AS.150.607. Graduate Seminar: Knowledge and Perception.**

How does perception reveal the world, if it does? Why have philosophical reflections on perception often led to skepticism? For background, we will start with readings from Ayer and Austin (on the sense-datum theory), and Sellars (on the Myth of the Given). We will then spend time on contemporary 'disjunctive' accounts of perceptual consciousness, with readings from McDowell, Travis and (possibly) others.

Area: Humanities

**AS.150.608. Graduate Seminar-Speculation: Scientific and Philosophical.**

Some say that speculation whether in science or philosophy, should be avoided at all costs (e.g., Descartes, Newton). Others say that speculation is okay as long as it is followed by argument or evidence (e.g., Popper). Still others encourage one to freely speculate in the absence of argument or evidence (e.g., Feyerabend). Are any of these views right? What is speculation, and is it subject to any universal standards? What is evidence, and is it subject to universal standards? Readings will be from authors mentioned above and from quite a few others. We will look at some very general influential philosophical=scientific speculations, such as the claim that nature is simple and that everything is explainable, as well as some more specific ones.

Area: Humanities

**AS.150.609. Fichte, Schelling and Spinoza.**

Spinoza constituted a major philosophical interlocutor for both Fichte and Schelling. In this class will study the critical reception of Spinoza by the two philosophers. Among the topics we intend to discuss are: freedom, God, the concept of substance, the nature of thought, and reason. Recommended Course Background: Previous acquaintance with Spinoza's ethics.

Area: Humanities

**AS.150.610. Virtue Ethics.**

A study of recent work in virtue ethics.

**AS.150.612. The Birth of German Idealism.**

This course will mainly consist of close readings of the work F.H. Jacobi, J.G. Fichte, and F.W.J. Schelling. We will focus on the issues of freedom and systematicity in the transformation of Kant's critical philosophy through the influence of Spinoza.

Area: Humanities

**AS.150.618. Martin Heidegger, Being and Time: Integral Reading and Current Perspectives II.**

Starting with a brief overview and recapitulation of themes discussed in its Introduction and Division One, this jointly will focus on Division Two of Being and Time and bring phenomenological, hermeneutic, and deconstructive as well as analytic, epistemological, and pragmatist methods and viewpoints to bear upon this modern classic.

Area: Humanities

**AS.150.619. Topics in Hegel's Philosophy: The Philosophy of Right.**

This course will be a close reading of G.W.F. Hegel's Philosophy of Right. Some of the main topics for discussion will be the relation of law and morality, the dependence of the political philosophy on Hegel's Logic, and the relation of individual and social conceptions of freedom.

Area: Humanities

**AS.150.620. Political Philosophy.**

A high level review of key thinkers in contemporary political thought.

Area: Humanities

Writing Intensive

**AS.150.625. Fatalism and the Logic of Unconditionals.**

Since the early eighties, there has been a growing movement away from traditional truth-centric theories of meaning and consequence towards more information-oriented accounts. Given these relatively new developments, I think the time is ripe for reconsidering one of the oldest arguments in philosophy: the 'Idle Argument' for fatalism. This notorious argument survives in Cicero's De Fato from 44BC but the version that we will focus on in the seminar is based on Dummett's classic 'Bringing About the Past' [1964].

Area: Humanities

**AS.150.632. Formal Logic.**

'An introduction to symbolic logic and probability. In the first two parts of the course we study formal ways of determining whether a conclusion of an argument follows from its premises. Included are truth-functional logic and predicate logic. In the third part we study the basic rules of probability, and learn how to make probability calculations and decisions in life.' Co-listed with AS.150.118 (for undergraduate students) (01-F 11:00-11:50am).

Area: Humanities, Quantitative and Mathematical Sciences

**AS.150.633. Kant's Opus Postumum.**

This research seminar examines the reasons that led Kant to revise his transcendental philosophy late in life. Special attention to problems in the Metaphysics of Nature and the Metaphysics of Morals. Students should be familiar with Kant's theoretical and practical philosophy.

**AS.150.636. Spinoza and Hegel.**

Spinoza and Hegel are two of the greatest philosophers of the modern period. Both philosophers are bold and difficult, and both exerted a decisive influence on later developments of Western philosophy. In this class, we will attempt to reconstruct a philosophical dialogue between the two philosophers. Topics to be discussed include: the nature of philosophy, basic ontology, kinds of knowledge, negation and contradiction, freedom, the reality of time, teleology and human history, the role and value of the state.

Area: Humanities

**AS.150.645. Truthmakers.**

An investigation into the metaphysics and semantics of truthmakers and their application in various areas of philosophy.

Area: Humanities

**AS.150.653. Seminar: Philosophy of Physics.**

The Hole Argument. There's a rather simple argument that if the structure of spacetime is not absolute, but is dynamically influenced by physical fields, then determinism is impossible, i.e., unless one thinks that isomorphic models of the theory represent the same physical situation. Various rationales have been given for such identification, some metaphysical, some mathematical, some referential, some operational. For example, among the metaphysical, some have appealed to essentialism, counterpart theory, or haecceity. Others see the hole argument as a specialization of the general permutation arguments given by Quine, Davidson, and Putnam respectively for the relativity of reference, the inscrutability of reference, and internal realism. Still others appeal either to the practices of applied mathematics or to dependent type theory. Yet others invoke the operational foundations (in terms of observables). Detailed knowledge of spacetime theories or physics is not presupposed. To be sure, some formal tools are needed (e.g., the notions of isomorphism and permutation) but these will be introduced on an as needed basis.

Area: Humanities

**AS.150.656. Practical Reason in German Idealism.**

In this course we will examine the development of idealist theories of practical reason. We will read Kant's Critique of Practical Reason, Fichte's System of Ethics, and selections from Hegel's writings.

Area: Humanities

**AS.150.657. Philosophy of Language.**

We will investigate one or more specialized topics in formal semantic and pragmatics.

**AS.150.667. Explanation in Science and Metaphysics.**

Questions about the nature of metaphysical explanation are central to contemporary metaphysics. These questions are relevant to similar debates in philosophy of science about the nature of scientific explanation. In this seminar we will examine questions about the nature and role of metaphysical explanation, specifically focusing on the comparison between metaphysical explanation and scientific explanation.

Area: Humanities, Social and Behavioral Sciences

**AS.150.668. Graduate Seminar on Essence.**

An exploration of historical and contemporary work on the metaphysics of essence, and related questions about modality, explanation, identity and the Principle of Sufficient Reason. Readings will include work from Aristotle, Spinoza, Kripke and Fine. This course is open to upper level undergraduate students with the permission of the instructor.

Area: Humanities

**AS.150.676. Graduate Seminar: Current Topics in Philosophy.**

Rather than having a set topic, the point of this seminar is to stay up-to-date with the current philosophy literature by working through 1-2 recently published papers each week. The papers covered will depend on the research interests of the seminar participants (and my own).

Area: Humanities

**AS.150.677. Moral Imagination.**

This course explores the relationship between moral principles and how we use imagination to put or fail to put principles to work. We will read widely and eclectically in exploring this relationship.

Area: Humanities

**AS.150.678. Social Construction.**

An exploration of the metaphysics of social construction, examining different theories of social construction and related questions about social ontology, scientific realism and the boundaries of metaphysics.

Area: Humanities

**AS.150.688. Philosophy of Psychology.**

An examination of recent philosophical and empirical work on perception and consciousness.

Area: Humanities

**AS.150.810. Independent Study.**

**AS.150.811. Directed Study.**

Please see AS.150.810 for section numbers to use when registering.

**AS.150.812. Directed Study.**

Please see AS.150.810 for section number to use when registering.

**AS.150.821. Research Seminar in Language and Mind.**

A workshop for current departmental research in language and mind.

Permission required.

Area: Humanities

**AS.150.822. READINGS AND SKILLS IN CONTEMPORARY PHILOSOPHY PART I.**

This course provides skills training for a successful career in philosophy, through engagement with cutting-edge contemporary work across a wide-range of areas of philosophy. As a class, we will choose accessible articles of general interest recently published in top journals. Each student will be responsible for presenting one of these articles to the class and leading discussion, with guidance from the instructors. All students will be required to carefully and closely read each paper for each class, and come prepared to discuss it in depth. The aim of this part of the course is to learn how to read and analyze articles, present work, and engage in constructive philosophical discussion. After presenting the paper, each presenter will be required to write a short reply to it, in the style of the relevant journal. As a class, we will then engage in a mock review process, crafting anonymous referee reports, revising replies in the light of these, and discussing these as editors. The aim of this part of the course is to gain knowledge and skills relevant to writing philosophy and successful publication. The course is open to 1st and 2nd year students.

It will meet every other week in both the fall and the spring semesters; each semester is worth 2 credits and students are required to enroll in both. Grading will be based predominantly on participation and effort.

Upper-year graduate students may audit the course by permission of the instructors, conditional on their commitment to attend and engage as full members of the class; if student numbers are high, priority with respect to presentations will be given to 1st and 2nd year students.

Area: Humanities