

PHILOSOPHY

Program Overview

The study of philosophy explores fundamental questions about persons and the universe. What is knowledge? What is the meaning of life? What is reality? How do psychology, religion, art, history, and science contribute to an understanding of the world and our place in it?

At Rider, philosophy students are encouraged to apply these questions toward pragmatic ends, with emphasis on both the academic discourse community and developing specific skills useful beyond the classroom. Specifically, the program teaches students how to formulate and defend positions, speak articulately and listen objectively, write clearly and persuasively, read complex material with comprehension, summarize and organize challenging materials and reason analytically and inferentially.

Curriculum Overview

Students begin with introductory courses in the teachings of Plato and Aristotle, the basics of logic and language and an historical and systematic analysis of ethics. Later coursework can focus on particular movements of philosophy including Modern Philosophy, Asian philosophy, Existentialism, Nietzsche's concept of nihilism, the philosophies of Wittgenstein and Hume, as well as a wide range of other courses related to the field. Most classes are taught as small weekly meetings in which students discuss the material in an intimate, supportive setting.

Introductory philosophy courses also hold small weekly discussion groups. In both upper and lower division courses students are also given the opportunity to develop their ability to verbally express their opinions and argue their basic points persuasively. During their senior year, students hone their writing and rhetorical skills by completing a thesis on a philosophic topic of their choice in consultation with a faculty advisor.

Student Learning Outcomes

Graduates of the Philosophy minor will be able to:

1. Recognize and interpret claims; recognize and reconstruct arguments; and evaluate arguments and justifications.
2. Articulate the main tenets of major philosophical schools and movements of thought in the history of philosophy and apply their knowledge to contemporary philosophical controversies and issues.
3. Take an active role in the discussion of philosophical issues; articulate and defend their views on controversial issues, and demonstrate open-mindedness in engaging other points of view.
4. Construct coherent and logical essays and other writings and use sources appropriately in accordance with the standards of the discipline.

Honors Program

Honors in philosophy may be achieved, upon the recommendation of the department, by earning a 3.5 cumulative average in the discipline and completing the senior thesis with distinction.

Degrees Offered

- Minor in Philosophy

Contact

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Associated Department: Department of History and Philosophy

Related programs

- Communication Studies (<http://catalog.rider.edu/undergraduate/colleges-schools/arts-sciences/majors-minors-certificates/communication-studies/>)
- Criminal Justice (<http://catalog.rider.edu/undergraduate/colleges-schools/arts-sciences/majors-minors-certificates/criminal-justice/>)
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- Gender and Sexuality Studies (<http://catalog.rider.edu/undergraduate/colleges-schools/arts-sciences/majors-minors-certificates/gender-sexuality-studies/>)
- History (<http://catalog.rider.edu/undergraduate/colleges-schools/arts-sciences/majors-minors-certificates/history/>)
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- Multicultural Studies (<http://catalog.rider.edu/undergraduate/colleges-schools/arts-sciences/majors-minors-certificates/multicultural-studies/>)
- Political Science (<http://catalog.rider.edu/undergraduate/colleges-schools/arts-sciences/majors-minors-certificates/political-science/>)

Philosophy Minor Requirements

(18 credits)

Code	Title	Credits
PHL 100	Plato and Aristotle	3
	One 400-level philosophy seminar	3
	Four philosophy electives, including one at the 300-level or above	12
Total Credits		18

Courses and Descriptions

PHL 100 Plato and Aristotle 3 Credits

The beginnings of Western scientific and humanistic thought among the early Greeks and their progress into the two great systems of Plato and Aristotle. Selections from Plato and Aristotle are read and discussed to determine the meaning and significance of philosophical ideas that have subsequently influenced the whole history of Western civilization. This course counts towards the fulfillment of the Disciplinary Perspectives element of the CLAS general education curriculum.

PHL 102 Philosophical Thinking 3 Credits

An introduction to philosophical thought with an emphasis on the enduring questions and problems of philosophy. We will explore such questions as: how do I know I am not dreaming? Is there an external world? What is truth? Is there a self? Is there a God? What is the relationship between the mind and the body? How can I tell right from wrong? What makes government legitimate? What is justice? What is the meaning of life? We will consider answers to these questions from diverse philosophical traditions, reading such philosophers as Plato, Descartes, Zhuangzi, Hume, Vasubandhu, Berkeley, Aquinas, Avicenna, Udayana, Kant, Mill, Russell, Camus, and Nishitani. This course counts towards the fulfillment of the Disciplinary Perspectives element of the CLAS general education curriculum.

PHL 110 Logic and Language 3 Credits

A study of the logical structure of argumentation in ordinary language, with an emphasis on the relation of logic to the uses of language in practical affairs. Traditional informal fallacies are studied as well. Discussions explore the nature of validity, truth, meaning, and evidence in relation to the evaluation of arguments. This course counts towards the fulfillment of the Disciplinary Perspectives element of the CLAS general education curriculum.

PHL 115 Ethics 3 Credits

A combined historical and systematic analysis of the problems of ethics. Such problems as the nature and meaning of moral values and judgments, moral responsibility and freedom, conscience and happiness, the good life, and the relativity of value, are explored through the writings of such philosophers as Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Kant, Mill, and Nietzsche. This course counts towards the fulfillment of the Disciplinary Perspectives element of the CLAS general education curriculum.

PHL 120 American Philosophy 3 Credits

The development of philosophical thought in the United States from the colonial era to the 20th century. Studies such thinkers as Edwards, Jefferson, Emerson, Thoreau, Peirce, James, Dewey, and King, and their ideas on human nature, free will, religion, morality, and politics. This course counts towards the fulfillment of the Disciplinary Perspectives element of the CLAS general education curriculum.

PHL 125 Philosophies of Education 3 Credits

Studies classical and contemporary theories of the nature, structure, and aims of education, including major works of such philosophers as Plato, Rousseau, and Dewey. The course will also introduce students to methods of critical philosophical analysis. This course counts towards the fulfillment of the Disciplinary Perspectives element of the CLAS general education curriculum.

PHL 130 Political Philosophy 3 Credits

An introduction to the problems of political philosophy with an emphasis on recent and contemporary issues, such as the conflict between liberal and conservative ideologies, fascism, revolution, civil disobedience, and the concept of legitimate political authority. This course counts towards the fulfillment of the Disciplinary Perspectives element of the CLAS general education curriculum.

PHL 202 Social Philosophy 3 Credits

Emphasizes social ethics through critical studies of such contemporary problems as abortion, euthanasia, the death penalty, pornography and censorship, animal rights, drug use, sexual morality, environmental ethics, and world hunger. This course counts towards the fulfillment of the Disciplinary Perspectives element of the CLAS general education curriculum.

PHL 203 Business Ethics 3 Credits

Surveys and examines ethical problems concerning the institutions and practices of contemporary business. Problems considered include: the conflicts of economic freedom and social responsibility; the relation of profits to work and alienation; the responsibilities of business to employees, minorities, consumers and the environment; the role of truthfulness in business practices; and the ethics of self-fulfillment and career ambitions. Readings selected from works of contemporary and historical philosophers, social theorists, and business people.

PHL 207 Asian Philosophy 3 Credits

A survey of the principal philosophical perspectives of Asia. Emphasis on the traditional Indian schools of Hinduism, Jainism, and Buddhism, Chinese Confucianism and Taoism, and the development of Zen Buddhism in China and Japan. Philosophical topics include: mystical experience, the ultimate nature of reality, the existence of a soul, the causes of human suffering, and the possibility of release, the nature of virtue and its development, and the nature of society and government. This course counts towards the fulfillment of the Disciplinary Perspectives element of the CLAS general education curriculum.

PHL 210 Symbolic Logic 3 Credits

An introduction to logic from the standpoint of modern symbolic methods, including techniques of formal deductive proof, quantification, the logic of relations, and properties of formal deductive systems. Discussions focus on philosophical issues in recent and contemporary logical theory. This course counts towards the fulfillment of the Disciplinary Perspectives element of the CLAS general education curriculum.

PHL 215 Environmental Ethics 3 Credits

A comprehensive introduction to environmental ethics that examines the major theoretical approaches, including anthropocentric (human-centered), zoocentric or sentientist (animal-centered), and biocentric or ecocentric (nature-centered) value systems, as well as the most important critiques of these ethical approaches. We will examine and analyze several classical ethical theories that are particularly relevant to a study of contemporary environmental controversies. We will also address specific issues such as biodiversity and wilderness preservation; human use of animals as food, entertainment, and research subjects; environmental racism and toxic dumping; sustainable development, population and consumption. Students will analyze and discuss the ethical dimensions of several contemporary environmental controversies. This course counts towards the fulfillment of the Disciplinary Perspectives element of the CLAS general education curriculum.

PHL 225 Modern Philosophy 3 Credits

Examines one of the most exciting periods in the history of philosophy during which philosophers from Descartes to Kant tried to come to terms with the following questions: What is knowledge? Can we know the physical world exists? Can we have scientific knowledge? Can we know God exists? Can we even know whether we exist? The works of Descartes, Leibniz, Spinoza, Locke, Berkeley, Hume and Kant are read and discussed. This course counts towards the fulfillment of the Disciplinary Perspectives element of the CLAS general education curriculum.

PHL 230 Philosophy of the Sexes 3 Credits

Studies philosophical views of the differences between the sexes, sexual equality, love, marriage, and the family from ancient Greece to the 20th century. Texts from the contemporary women's and men's movements will also be examined. This course counts towards the fulfillment of the Disciplinary Perspectives element of the CLAS general education curriculum.

PHL 303 Philosophy of Law 3 Credits

An examination and analysis of selected topics including classical and contemporary theories in the philosophy of law and moral philosophy. Such topics as the nature of the law and legal reasoning, the legal enforcement of morality, protection of personal liberty, and the moral justification of punishment are considered. Such philosophers as Aquinas, Austin, Holmes, Bentham, Hart, and Dworkin are read and discussed.

PHL 304 Medical Ethics 3 Credits

Introduces the student to ethical problems associated with the practice of medicine, the pursuit of biomedical research, and health care social policy. The course will explore such issues as: Is a physician morally obligated to tell a terminally ill patient that he or she is dying? Is society ever justified in enacting laws that would commit an individual, against his or her will, to a mental institution? Does society have a moral obligation to ensure that all its members have access to health care? To what extent, if at all, is it ethically acceptable to clone a human being? Under what conditions is human experimentation ethically acceptable?

Prerequisite(s): CMP 125 or CMP 203 or BHP 150.

PHL 310 Problems in 20th-Century Philosophy 3 Credits

Consideration of major philosophical movements in the 20th century such as phenomenology, existentialism, pragmatism, and analytic philosophy. Within these movements such topics as the function of analysis, language and meaning, the nature of values, the nature of persons, the synthetic-analytic distinction, the mind-body problem, and the possibility of metaphysics are considered. The work of such figures as Wittgenstein, Russell, Heidegger, Husserl, Sartre, Whitehead, and Dewey are read and discussed.

Prerequisite(s): CMP 125 or CMP 203 or BHP 150.

PHL 315 Existentialism 3 Credits

Historical development and contemporary problems of existentialism with emphasis on the nature of man, his ability to know his situation, the relation between existence and essence, and the meaning of human life and activity. The works of such figures as Kierkegaard, Sartre, Heidegger, Camus, Kafka, Beckett, Buber, Laing, and Frankl are read and discussed.

PHL 320 Philosophy of Science 3 Credits

The logic of fundamental concepts of science and scientific methods are studied. Patterns of explanation are examined to understand the functions of laws, theories, and predictions in science. Inquiry is made into the relation between mathematics and empirical science; similarities and distinctions between the natural and social sciences. The role of science in human affairs and the value of scientific knowledge.

Prerequisite(s): CMP 125 or CMP 203 or BHP 150.

PHL 334 Theories of Knowledge 3 Credits

An investigation of selected, representative theories of knowledge from classical and contemporary sources. Considers the analytic-synthetic distinctions, necessary truth, and the foundations of empirical knowledge. Such philosophers as Leibniz, Hume, Kant, Russell, and Quine are read and discussed.

Prerequisite(s): CMP 125 or CMP 203 or BHP 150.

PHL 336 Philosophy of Mind 3 Credits

An investigation of the nature, existence, and capacities of the mind and self in the light of recent philosophical and psychological theories, including psychoanalysis and behaviorism. Considers such topics as the interaction of mind and body, the unconscious, minds and machines, freedom of thought and action.

Prerequisite(s): CMP 125 or CMP 203 or BHP 150.

PHL 343 Theories of Reality 3 Credits

An examination of metaphysical problems with an emphasis on philosophical views of human nature from ancient Greece to contemporary evolutionary theories. The writings of such classical, modern, and contemporary figures as Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Kant, Hegel, and Darwin are read and discussed. Issues studied include the relation between mind and matter, freedom and determinism, and the existence of God.

Prerequisite(s): CMP 125 or CMP 203 or BHP 150.

PHL 348 Indian Philosophy 3 Credits

Consideration of major movements in the philosophical tradition of India. Emphasis on the disputes between the traditional Hindu and Buddhist schools of the classical period over logic, knowledge, and reality. Philosophical topics include: skepticism, the problem of universals, realism and idealism, the nature of perception, the problem of induction, the nature of causality, and the problem of identity over time. Philosophers such as Nagarjuna, Vasubandhu, Vatsyayana, Dharmakirti, and Udayana will be read and discussed.

Prerequisite(s): CMP 125 or CMP 203 or BHP 150.

PHL 358 Chinese Philosophy 3 Credits

Consideration of major movements in the philosophical tradition of China. Emphasis on the political philosophies of ancient China. Topics include: human nature and the development of virtue, the nature and purpose of government, and the cognitive value of mystical experience. Philosophers such as Confucius, Laozi, Xunzi, Mencius, Mozi, and Zhuangzi will be read and discussed.

Prerequisite(s): CMP 125 or CMP 203 or BHP 150.

PHL 360 Contemporary Ethics 3 Credits

An examination of recent and contemporary challenges to traditional ethical theory including such movements as logical positivism, cultural relativism, feminism, environmentalism, multiculturalism, and postmodernism. Such problems as the meaning and cognitive status of value judgments, the relation between fact and value, the relativity of values, and how value judgments can be justified are considered.

Prerequisite(s): CMP 125 or CMP 203 or BHP 150.

PHL 368 Japanese Philosophy 3 Credits

Consideration of major movements in the philosophical tradition of Japan, with an emphasis on Zen Buddhism in Medieval Japan and the Kyoto school in the 20th century. Topics include: the use of meditation and koans in Zen practice, the relationship between practice and enlightenment, the nature of time, meaning and nihilism, and the relationship between science and religion. Philosophers such as Kukai, Mumon, Dogen, and Nishitani will be read and discussed.

Prerequisite(s): CMP 125 or CMP 203 or BHP 150.

PHL 402 Nietzsche and Nihilism 3 Credits

A seminar dealing with Nietzsche's provocative ideas on Nihilism and the possibility of creating meaning, value, and truth for human existence. Many of his important works are read, analyzed, and critically discussed. Recent scholarly interpretations of Nietzsche's philosophy are considered.

Prerequisite(s): any previous philosophy course or permission of instructor.

PHL 408 The Philosophy of William James 3 Credits

Seminar involving a concentrated study of William James' contributions to philosophy with special attention to his pragmatism, pluralism, and radical empiricism. Many of James' philosophical works are read, analyzed, and critically discussed. Recent scholarly interpretations of James' philosophy are considered.

PHL 418 Great Buddhist Thinkers 3 Credits

Concentrated study of a single Buddhist philosopher, emphasizing the systematic views of that philosopher across a range of philosophical issues. Through an examination of primary sources in translation and recent scholarship, students will investigate the views and arguments of one important figure from the Buddhist philosophical tradition on a variety of philosophical problems regarding knowledge, existence, consciousness, religion, and ethics.

PHL 490 Independent Study: Research and Creative Expression 1-4 Credits

Independent Research and Study allows juniors and seniors in good academic standing to investigate topics of interest under faculty supervision. Projects must be approved by the faculty member, department chairperson, and academic dean no later than the third week of the semester in which the project is to be conducted. Only one project can be scheduled in a semester, and for no more than four semester hours; up to 12 semester hours of independent research and study may be counted toward graduation. Note that individual departments may have additional restrictions.

PHL 494 Preparation and Research for Senior Philosophy Thesis 1 Credits

Supervised by a faculty member, the Philosophy major chooses a topic, composes an outline and a bibliography. Must be completed prior to enrolling in PHL 495.

PHL 495 Senior Philosophy Thesis 3 Credits

In a tutorial setting, the Philosophy major will write a thesis which serves as the Capstone Experience in the Department.

Prerequisite(s): PHL 494.