Philosophy at Yale

In *A Treatise of Human Nature*, David Hume, who was then in his middle twenties, gave the following account of what led him to philosophy: "I cannot forbear having a curiosity to be acquainted with the principles of moral good and evil, the nature and foundations of government, and the cause of those several passions and inclinations, which actuate and govern me. I am uneasy to think I approve of one object, and disapprove of another; call one thing beautiful, and another deform'd; decide concerning truth and falsehood, reason and folly, without knowing upon what principles I proceed." In philosophy courses at Yale, we try to discover what those principles are—and, more importantly, what they should be. In doing so, we look beyond whatever principles happen to prevail at the moment. We consider alternatives that have been proposed and debated in the past, and work to formulate new principles that might serve us better in the future. The principles we consider aren't purely personal; in many of our courses, we examine the fundamental assumptions of other practices and disciplines, among them psychology, art, politics, law, mathematics, and natural science. Philosophy then becomes (as a prominent twentieth-century philosopher—and former Yale professor—once described it) an attempt to discover how things, in the broadest sense of the term, hang together, in the broadest sense of the term.

Philosophy courses at Yale are divided into three levels: introductory courses (numbered 100-199); intermediate courses (numbered 200-399); and advanced seminars (numbered 400 and above). (Course marked "a" are offered in the fall, courses marked "b" in the spring.) Below are descriptions of the introductory courses to be offered next year. All of them are ideal courses for freshmen. These are followed by a list of the intermediate courses scheduled for 2014-15. This list will give you a sense of the range of our curriculum. Introductory courses in philosophy are also offered through Directed Studies. PHIL 125a and 126b (or DRST 003a and 004b) and a course in logic (such as PHIL 115) are the most basic requirements of the major.

**Introductory Courses**

**PHIL 088a**, *The Philosophy of Transformative Experience*  
Laurie Paul
Going to college, fighting in a war, having a baby, being spiritually reborn, betraying your lover, emigrating to a new country—all of these are experiences that can transform you. By transforming you, they change you, and in the process, they can restructure the nature and meaning of your life. Exploring the epistemic structure of transformation can help us to understand the special and distinctive ways that new experiences can form and change us, and how this relates to how we make life choices, both big and small. This course explores the philosophical concept of transformative experience, focusing on the many ways this concept fits with contemporary philosophical issues in epistemology and metaphysics. We also explore connections to current research in psychology, cognitive science, and behavioral economics on empathy, morality, choice, and the self, in conjunction with discussions of the way that many real world experiences can be transformative. Enrollment limited to first-year students. Preregistration required; see under First-Year Seminar Program.

**PHIL 091a**, *Philosophy of Games*  
Mark Maxwell
In this class, we critically discuss a variety of puzzles that arise when thinking about games. Just what are games, anyway? And, how can thinking in terms of games help us understand the world? The notion of 'game' is a topic of interest in its own right, but games can also serve as a model and metaphor for other parts of the world, including life as a whole and the exploration of other philosophical debates. As such, the study of games serves as an entry point to a number of topics of potential interest, rather than just an in-depth study of one topic. Enrollment limited to first-year students. Preregistration required; see under First-Year Seminar Program.

**PHIL 112a**, *Problems of Philosophy*  
Daniel Greco
Exploration of perennial philosophical problems, including differences between knowledge and opinion, theories of truth, the nature of consciousness, the existence of God, the nature and possibility of free will, and how people remain the same over time as their bodily and psychological traits change. Readings from both classical and influential contemporary works.

**PHIL 115a**, *First-Order Logic*  
Elizabeth Miller
An introduction to formal logic. Study of the formal deductive systems and semantics for both propositional and predicate logic. Some discussion of metatheory.

**PHIL 192a / RLST 107a**, *Metaphysics and Modernity*  
Nancy Levene
This course surveys concepts and controversies in and among select works of philosophy, theology, and literature. The focus is twofold: on reading works in view of their own principles, thus on questions of truth and interpretation, and on histories of the ideas, thus on questions of origin, change, and story. What and when is metaphysics? What and when is modernity? HU
T 3:30pm-5:20pm

History of Philosophy

PHIL 125a / CLCV 125a, Introduction to Ancient Philosophy  Verity Harte
An introduction to ancient philosophy, beginning with the earliest pre-Socratics, concentrating on Plato and Aristotle, and including a brief foray into Hellenistic philosophy.

PHIL 126b, Introduction to Modern Philosophy from Descartes to Kant  Michael Della Rocca
An introduction to major figures in the history of modern philosophy, with critical reading of works by Descartes, Malabranche, Spinoza, Leibniz, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, and Kant. Intended to be taken in conjunction with PHIL 125, although PHIL 125 is not a prerequisite.

Ethics and Value Theory

PHIL 174a, Moral Skepticism  Shelly Kagan
The legitimacy of doubts about morality. Can there really be any objective moral facts? Isn't morality all a matter of personal opinion or subjective preference, or, alternatively, all socially or culturally relative? If there were moral facts, how could one possibly know anything about them? Can one's moral views be justified at all? What place can morality possibly have in a scientific world view?

PHIL 175b, Introduction to Ethics  Shelly Kagan
What makes one act right and another wrong? What am I morally required to do for others? What is the basis of morality? These are some of the questions raised in moral philosophy. Examination of two of the most important answers, the theories of Mill and Kant, with brief consideration of the views of Hume and Hobbes. Discussion of the question: Why be moral?

PHIL 177b / AFAM 198b / CGSC 277b / EDST 177b / EP&E 494b, Propaganda, Ideology, and Democracy  Jason Stanley
Historical, philosophical, psychological, and linguistic introduction to the issues and challenges that propaganda raises for liberal democracy. How propaganda can work to undermine democracy; ways in which schools and the press are implicated; the use of propaganda by social movements to address democracy's deficiencies; the legitimacy of propaganda in cases of political crisis.

PHIL 178b, Introduction to Political Philosophy  Thomas Pogge
A survey of social and political theory, beginning with Plato and continuing through modern philosophers such as Rawls, Nozick, and Cohen. Emphasis on tracing the development of political ideas; challenges to political theories.

PHIL 182a / CGSC 282a / PSYC 182a, Perspectives on Human Nature  Joshua Knobe
Comparison of philosophical and psychological perspectives on human nature. Nietzsche on morality, paired with contemporary work on the psychology of moral judgment; Marx on religion, paired with systematic research on the science of religious belief; Schopenhauer paired with social psychology on happiness.