

Philosophy

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The mission of the program is to help students develop interpretive, analytical and reflective skills in philosophy. The curriculum provides students with a wide range of topics in ethics, metaphysics, logic, and epistemology.

Degree Plans Offered

Major in Philosophy

Combined Major in Religious Studies and Philosophy

Minor in Philosophy

Minor in Ethics

For a multidisciplinary program incorporating philosophy, please refer to the [Philosophy, Politics, and Economics \(PPE\)](#) program.

A **major in philosophy** consists of:

Required Core Courses (5 courses)

- _____ PHIL 110 Modern Logic
- _____ PHIL 220 Ancient and Medieval Philosophy
- _____ PHIL 225 Early Modern Philosophy
- _____ PHIL 230 Contemporary Philosophy
- _____ PHIL 495 Senior Seminar

Electives* (4 courses; at least 2 at the 300 level or higher)

- _____ PHIL 105 Introduction to Philosophy*
- _____ PHIL 203 Philosophy and Art
- _____ PHIL 205 Ethics
- _____ PHIL 207 Ethics and the Environment
- _____ PHIL 209 Ethics and Medicine
- _____ PHIL 211 Feminist Thought and Its Critics
- _____ PHIL 213 Law and Morality
- _____ PHIL 250 Topics in Philosophy
- _____ PHIL 302 Ethical Theory
- _____ PHIL 306 Knowledge and Reality
- _____ PHIL 307 Environmental Philosophy
- _____ PHIL 308 Metaphysics
- _____ PHIL 310 Mind and Language
- _____ PHIL 312 Philosophy of Religion
- _____ PHIL 314 Social and Political Philosophy
- _____ PHIL 350 Topics in Philosophy

*Philosophy 105 (Introduction to Philosophy) may count as one of these additional 4 courses, provided that it is the first philosophy course taken at Austin College.

Other Considerations When Planning for the Major:

- Students wishing to pursue graduate work in philosophy should consider completing 11 credits in philosophy in consultation with philosophy faculty.
- Approved topics courses also may count, but students should consult the instructor to determine whether a course is appropriate before enrolling in it.

Total Credits Requirement = 9 course credits

A **combined major in religious studies and philosophy** is available for students whose personal or professional interests include both disciplines.

Religious Studies Content (5 courses)

- _____ REL course
- _____ REL course
- _____ REL course
- _____ REL course at the 300 level or higher
- _____ REL course at the 300 level or higher

Philosophical Studies Content (5 courses)

- _____ PHIL course
- _____ PHIL course
- _____ PHIL course
- _____ PHIL course at the 300 level or higher
- _____ PHIL course at the 300 level or higher

Total Credits Requirement = 10 course credits

The **minor in philosophy** consists of:

Course Options (5 courses; at least 3 at the 200 level or higher)

- _____ PHIL 105 Introduction to Philosophy*
- _____ PHIL 110 Modern Logic
- _____ PHIL 203 Philosophy and Art
- _____ PHIL 205 Ethics
- _____ PHIL 207 Ethics and the Environment
- _____ PHIL 209 Ethics and Medicine
- _____ PHIL 211 Feminist Thought and Its Critics
- _____ PHIL 213 Law and Morality
- _____ PHIL 220 Ancient and Medieval Philosophy
- _____ PHIL 225 Early Modern Philosophy
- _____ PHIL 230 Contemporary Philosophy
- _____ PHIL 250 Topics in Philosophy
- _____ PHIL 302 Ethical Theory
- _____ PHIL 306 Knowledge and Reality
- _____ PHIL 307 Environmental Philosophy
- _____ PHIL 308 Metaphysics
- _____ PHIL 310 Mind and Language
- _____ PHIL 312 Philosophy of Religion
- _____ PHIL 314 Social and Political Philosophy
- _____ PHIL 350 Topics in Philosophy

*Philosophy 105 (Introduction to Philosophy) may count toward the minor, provided that it is the first philosophy course taken at Austin College.

Other Considerations When Planning for the Minor:

- While the history of philosophy sequence (PHIL 220, 225, and 230) is not required for the minor, it is strongly recommended.

Total Credits Requirement = 5 course credits

The **minor in ethics** consists of:

Course Options (5 courses)

- _____ PHIL 205 Ethics
- _____ PHIL 207 Ethics and the Environment
- _____ PHIL 209 Ethics and Medicine
- _____ PHIL 211 Feminist Thought and Its Critics
- _____ PHIL 213 Law and Morality
- _____ PHIL 302 Ethical Theory
- _____ PHIL 314 Social and Political Philosophy

Total Credits Requirement = 5 course credits

COURSES

PHIL 105 Introduction to Philosophy

An introduction to such basic problems in philosophy as the relationship between mind and body, freedom of the will, skepticism and the nature of knowledge, personal identity, God and the problem of evil, and the demands of morality. Includes an introduction to techniques of critical thinking and arguing. Requirements met: Humanities Breadth/Discover. (Each fall and spring)

PHIL 110 Modern Logic

A study of the formal structure of argumentation from Aristotle to the present with primary emphasis on modern symbolic logic. Requirements met: Quantitative Competency (pre-Fall 2019). (Each year)

PHIL 203 Philosophy and Art

An examination of various accounts of art from Plato and Aristotle to the present. Topics covered include: art and truth; the peculiar kind of being of works of art; objectivity in meaning and interpretation of art; feminist, postmodern and multicultural criticisms of traditional aesthetic theory. Requirements met: Humanities Breadth/Discover and Half Writing Competency. (Every other year)

PHIL 205 Ethics

A critical analysis of ethical theory, including (but not limited to) consequentialism, egoism, relativism, religious ethics, feminist ethics, virtue ethics, and deontological ethics. Requirements met: Humanities Breadth/Discover and Half Writing Competency. (Usually every fall)

PHIL 207 Ethics and the Environment

An examination of ethical issues involving the environment that emphasizes using traditional moral theories, animal welfare and/or rights approaches, and biocentric proposals to address them. Requirements met: Humanities Breadth/Discover. (Every other year)

PHIL 209 Ethics and Medicine

An exploration of ethical issues that arise in the practice of medicine and the health sciences, including such issues as confidentiality, truth-telling, euthanasia, abortion, and reproductive technologies. Requirements met: Humanities Breadth/Discover. (Every other year)

PHIL 211 Feminist Thought and Its Critics

A survey of different types of feminist theory (conservative and liberal feminists, Marxist feminists, radical feminists, psychoanalytic feminists, postmodern feminists, multicultural feminists, ecofeminists, etc.) and an exploration of both internal and external critiques of these theories. Requirements met: Humanities Breadth/Discover and Systems of Power, Privilege, and Inequality. (Every other year)

PHIL 213 Law and Morality

An examination of the complex relationship between law and morality. Questions addressed may include what makes something a law? Is the threat of punishment the only reason to follow a law? Is an immoral law still a law? Can a lawyer lie? Can a lawyer make it appear the witness is lying, even if he knows this is not the case? How can a lawyer defend a client she knows is guilty? Requirements met: Humanities Breadth/Discover. (Every other year)

PHIL 220 Ancient and Medieval Philosophy

An examination of Ancient Greek, Hellenistic, and Medieval philosophy, with special emphasis on Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, and Aquinas. Requirements met: Humanities Breadth/Discover and Half Writing Competency. (Each fall)

PHIL 225 Early Modern Philosophy

An examination of philosophical issues in the early modern period, with an emphasis on the works of Descartes, Leibniz, Locke, Spinoza, Berkeley, Hume, and/or Kant. Requirements met: Humanities Breadth/Discover and Half Writing Competency. (Each spring)

PHIL 230 Contemporary Philosophy

An examination of 19th- and 20th-century philosophy to the present, with special attention to analytic, existentialist, pragmatist, and post-modernist positions. Requirements met: Humanities Breadth/Discover and Half Writing Competency. (Each fall)

PHIL 250 Topics in Philosophy

A study of a topic in philosophy that is of broad interest to undergraduates. May be repeated when topic varies.

PHIL 260 Intermediate Directed Study

Student investigation of topic of interest working in collaboration with a faculty member resulting in significant oral and written work. See On-Campus Learning Opportunities for more information. PREQ: Freshman January term or Sophomore standing. Special permission required. Offered in variable course credit from 0.25-1.00.

PHIL 294 Intermediate Student Research

Intended for less experienced students to develop and execute a research project in philosophy, beyond the constraints of the normal classroom, suitable for public dissemination on or off campus under mentorship of a faculty member. Typically this work results in a formal presentation, written work, or creative works. Course credit varies from 0-1.00. PREQ: Instructor permission required.

PHIL 302 Ethical Theory

An extended, in-depth look at one or more specific topics/texts in ethical theory, e.g. the relationship between what is good and what is right; the role of reason and emotion in ethical judgment; the possibility of moral knowledge; the nature of moral judgment, etc. PREQ: Junior standing with at least two philosophy courses or

instructor permission. Requirements met: Half Writing Competency and Advanced Writing Competency. (Every other year)

PHIL 306 Knowledge and Reality

A study of issues involving knowledge, including scientific knowledge, of reality. Topics may include skepticism and the justification of belief; observation and explanation; the basis, development, and validation of theories; the demarcation problem; the nature of scientific laws; and scientific realism. PREQ: Junior standing with at least two philosophy courses or instructor permission. Requirements met: Humanities Breadth/Discover, Half Writing Competency, Advanced Writing Competency, and Non-Lab Science Breadth/Discover. (Every other year)

PHIL 307 Environmental Philosophy

An investigation of the assumptions and demands of Aldo Leopold's maxim that we should "think like a mountain." Topics include competing interpretations of Leopold's principle and of the embedded concepts of nature, wilderness, species, and ecosystems. PREQ: Junior standing with at least one previous philosophy course and Environmental Studies 235. Requirements met: Humanities Breadth/Discover and Advanced Writing Competency. (Every other year)

PHIL 308 Metaphysics

An examination of traditional issues concerning reality's ultimate nature. Topics may include persons and personal identity, freedom and determinism, causation, time, existence, sensible qualities and space-occupying properties, and realism. PREQ: Junior standing with at least two philosophy courses or instructor permission. Requirements met: Humanities Breadth/Discover, Half Writing Competency, and Advanced Writing Competency. (Every other year)

PHIL 310 Mind and Language

An examination of the relation between linguistic notions such as meaning, reference and communication and such psychological notions as intentionality, consciousness, personhood and the explanation of behavior. Topics may include: mind-body dualism, functionalism and artificial intelligence; semantic indeterminacy and knowing Other minds; speech acts and conversational implicature; biological evolution of thought and language; dysfunctional minds and language-users; religious language. PREQ: Junior standing with at least one philosophy courses or instructor permission. Requirements met: Humanities Breadth/Discover and Half Writing Competency. (Every other year)

PHIL 312 Philosophy of Religion

An examination of classical problems in philosophy of religion. Topics may include the problem of evil, the existence and nature of God, the status of religious language, the relationship between faith and reason, etc. PREQ: Junior standing with at least two philosophy courses instructor permission. Requirements met: Humanities Breadth/Discover. (Every other year)

PHIL 314 Social and Political Philosophy

An examination of various theories of justice, equality, liberty, and rights from Plato and Aristotle to modern liberalism and their feminist, postmodern and multicultural critics. Special topics may include debates over church-state separation, affirmative action, reparations, disability rights, homosexual rights, language and other rights of ethnic minorities. PREQ: Junior standing with at least two philosophy courses or instructor permission. Requirements met: Humanities Breadth/Discover and Half Writing Competency. (Every other year)

PHIL 350/450 Advanced Topics in Philosophy

A critical examination of a major philosopher, philosophical movement, or philosophical issue. May be repeated when topic varies. PREQ: Junior standing with at least two philosophy courses or instructor permission.

PHIL 360 Advanced Directed Study

A study of a topic in philosophy that is of interest to students with a background in philosophy. May be repeated when topic varies. PREQ: Junior standing with at least two philosophy courses or instructor permission.

PHIL 394/494 Advanced Student Research

Intended for advanced students to develop and execute a research project in philosophy suitable for public dissemination under mentorship of a faculty member. Students are expected to present the results of their research in a public forum. Typically this work results in a formal presentation, written work, or creative works. Offered for variable course credit from 0-1.00. PREQ: Instructor permission required.

PHIL 460 Advanced Directed Study

Student investigation of topic of interest related to the major or minor working in collaboration with a faculty member resulting in significant oral and written work. See On-Campus Learning Opportunities for more information. PREQ: Junior or Senior standing. Special permission required. Offered for variable course credit from 0.25-1.00.

PHIL 464 Teaching/Learning Participation

An individualized study that includes sharing in the instructional process for a particular philosophy course under the supervision of the faculty member teaching the course. Open only to certain highly qualified juniors and seniors by invitation. See On-Campus Learning Opportunities for more information.

PHIL 490 Independent Study

Student-driven independent work to produce a high quality body of work such as paper, report, art project, etc. See On-Campus Learning Opportunities for more information. PREQ: Junior or Senior standing. Special permission required. Offered in variable course credit from 0.25-1.00.

PHIL 491 Honors Thesis in Philosophy

Extensive independent study in the major in a topic of special interest culminating in a bachelor's thesis with oral examination by thesis committee resulting in a bachelor's degree with Honors upon completion. See Departmental Honors Program for more information. Completed in last three semesters before graduation. Offered for variable course credit from 1.00-2.00.

PHIL 492 Independent Study Off-Campus/NSOC

Student-driven independent study in a topic related to the major completed at an off-campus site. See Off-Campus Learning Opportunities for more information. PREQ: Junior or Senior standing. Special permission required. Offered in variable course credit from 0.25-1.00.

PHIL 495 Senior Seminar

A capstone course for all majors. This seminar provides an opportunity to employ the skills and knowledge gained from previous philosophy courses to engage a particular problem, philosopher, or text in a sustained way. Topics vary. PREQ: Senior major or instructor permission. Requirements met: Humanities Breadth/Discover and Half Writing Competency. (Usually each spring)