PHILOSOPHY 2013–2014

Why study philosophy at the University of Denver?

The department of philosophy at the University of Denver offers an MA in philosophy, but only when done through the university’s flexible dual-degree program in conjunction with an MA in another approved discipline. The philosophy faculty places a strong emphasis on research and personal interaction with students. Our program is designed to meet the needs of two kinds of students — those wishing to prepare for doctoral work in philosophy and those seeking an individualized course of study with a more interdisciplinary focus. Areas of concentration include the history of Western thought, interpretive and critical theory, practical philosophy, meta-philosophy, and studies in creative and critical reasoning about human nature and values.
Proposal Process for Flexible Dual-Degree Program in Philosophy

The dean, chair, or director of each degree program and both program advisers, must carefully compare the requirements for each program and approve the proposal. The student must then submit a copy of the original requirements for each degree (printout from the unit Web site or copy from the student handbook is acceptable), and the flexible dual-degree proposal to the Office of Graduate Studies. The philosophy department will provide a coursework template for the student to include with his or her proposal.

The student then submits the documents listed above to the Office of Graduate Studies, which reviews and decides on the proposals. Proposals with errors or course/program inconsistencies will be returned for revision.

Any changes to the approved program require the student to resubmit a revised proposal packet to the deans/chairs/directors and advisers of both programs and the Office of Graduate Studies.

Once the proposal is approved, the student will be entered into the university computer system as a flexible dual-degree student for the following quarter.

Requirements

• 45 quarter hours in philosophy (students may propose to have this amount reduced by a maximum of 10 quarter hours under appropriate circumstances as specified by the flexible dual-degree guidelines). Because philosophy is part of a flexible dual-degree program, these hours are required in addition to the required hours in another approved discipline. Courses graded below a C– cannot be counted for a flexible dual-degree.

• A comprehensive exam over the history of Western philosophy

• A portfolio paper approved by a committee of three department faculty

• An oral defense covering both the comprehensive exam on the history of Western philosophy and the portfolio paper
FACULTY

Thomas Nail
Assistant Professor
University of Oregon

Marco Nathan
Assistant Professor
Columbia University

Sarah Pessin
Associate Professor
PhD, The Ohio State University

Naomi Reshotko
Professor
PhD, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Frank Seeburger
Professor
PhD, University of Colorado at Boulder

Jere Surber
Professor
PhD, Pennsylvania State University/Rheinische Universität-Bonn

Candace Upton
Associate Professor
PhD, University of Nebraska-Lincoln
PHIL 3000 Great Thinkers: Plato (4 qtr. hrs.)
A study of Plato’s central theories and doctrines. Prerequisite: junior standing or instructor’s permission.

PHIL 3023 Great Thinkers: Maimonides: Politics, Prophecy and Providence (4 qtr. hrs.)
Using the Guide for the Perplexed as our central text, we explore the complex philosophical ideas of Moses Maimonides (1135-1204), one of the central figures in medieval philosophy and Jewish thought. Our study includes analyses of his ideas on principles of faith, human perfection, intellectual vs. “imaginational” approaches to truth, pedagogy and politics, reasons for the commandments, the nature of God and Divine Will, the limits of human knowledge, the mechanics of prophecy, and the parameters and implications of Providence. Prerequisite: junior standing or instructor’s permission.

PHIL 3040 Great Thinkers: Maimonides: Greek, Muslim and Christian Encounters (4 qtr. hrs.)
Using the “Guide of the Perplexed” as our central text, we explore the complex philosophical ideas of Moses Maimonides (1135-1204), a central figure in the history of ideas and in the history of Jewish thought. In this course, we examine in-depth the relationship between Maimonides’ core ideas and various Greek, Muslim and Christian thinkers. Topics include Aquinas and Maimonides on Negative Theology; Aristotle and Maimonides on Creation, Eternity and Providence; Maimonidean Emanation meets Plotinus, the “Theology of Aristotle”, and the “Liber de Causis”; relating Maimonides’ cosmological and political theories to Avicenna, al-Farabi, and Averroes. Prerequisite: junior standing or instructor’s permission.

PHIL 3050 Great Thinkers: Hume (4 qtr. hrs.)
A detailed study of Hume’s “radical” empiricism and its impact on contemporary analytic philosophy. Prerequisite: junior standing or instructor’s permission.

PHIL 3061 Kant’s Ethics/Aesthetics/Politics (4 qtr. hrs.)
A study of Kant’s “value theory” and its historical significance. Prerequisite: junior standing or instructor’s permission.

PHIL 3062 Kant’s Epistemology and Logic (4 qtr. hrs.)
A study of Kant’s theory of knowledge, logic and related issues. Prerequisite: junior standing or instructor’s permission.

PHIL 3063 Kant on Religion (4 qtr. hrs.)
A study of Immanuel Kant’s major writings on religion and their subsequent influence on theology and the philosophy of religion. Prerequisite: junior standing or instructor’s permission.

PHIL 3070 Great Thinkers: Hegel (4 qtr. hrs.)
Hegel’s “Phenomenology,” later system and place in the history of modern philosophy. Prerequisite: junior standing or instructor’s permission.

PHIL 3090 Great Thinkers: Heidegger (4 qtr. hrs.)
Study of “Being and Time” and related essays by a major 20th-century philosopher. Prerequisite: junior standing or instructor’s permission.

PHIL 3092 Great Thinkers: The Later Heidegger (4 qtr. hrs.)
Study of the works of Heidegger after 1930. Prerequisite: junior standing or instructor’s permission.

PHIL 3101 Great Thinkers: Kierkegaard (4 qtr. hrs.)
Each year, the philosophy department offers at least two courses in great thinkers. Specific figures may vary from year to year. Cross-listed with RLGS 3102. Prerequisite: 10 hours of Philosophy at the 2000 level or permission of instructor.

PHIL 3111 Contemporary Continental Philosophy: The Figure of the Migrant (4 qtr. hrs.)
The 21st century has been described as the century of "people on the move" by UNHCR High Commissioner Antonio Guterres. Some 11 million people are refugees worldwide, fleeing political violence and/or persecution at home; whole more than 20 million are internally displaced within the borders of their own countries. Accordingly, the figure of the migrant/refugee has emerged as one of the most important, if not the most important, political figures of contemporary continental philosophy. Despite differences in philosophical orientation, thinkers such as Gilles Deleuze, Judith Butler, Jacques Ranciere, Julia Kristeva, Alain Badiou, and Jacques Derrida have all written at length on the centrality of the figure of the migrant for contemporary...
political thought. Not only does the figure of the migrant define the people of our time, according to many of these authors, it also defines a positive political way forward. This course thus provides not only a survey of the different traditions in contemporary European philosophy over the last twenty years (post-structuralism, deconstruction, neo-classicism, post-Marxism, third-wave feminism) but also offers a thematic look at the politico-philosophical figure of the migrant and other issues related to migration (human rights, borders, camps, sovereignty, territory, nomadism, and resistance).

PHIL 3120 Metaphysics (4 qtr. hrs.)

In the course of this study, we will cover a broad range of philosophical topics falling within metaphysics, philosophy of language, philosophy of science, and epistemology. Prerequisite: junior standing or instructor’s permission.

PHIL 3130 Knowledge Problems (4 qtr. hrs.)

Problems in the foundations and justifications of claims to knowledge. Prerequisite: junior standing or instructor’s permission.

PHIL 3152 Philosophy Meets Mysticism: A Greek, Jewish and Muslim Neoplatonic Journey (4 qtr. hrs.)

Neoplatonism is a unique genre—somewhere between philosophy and mysticism. In this course, we investigate some of the leading themes of Neoplatonism, tracing the Greek ideas of Plotinus (the third century “father of Neoplatonism”) into later Jewish and Islamic textual traditions. As part of our journey, we will investigate a host of philosophical writings, including the Theology of Aristotle and the Liber de Causis, as well as works by Plato, Plotinus, Proclus, Ibn Tufayl, Acecenna, IsaacIsraeli, Solomon Ibn Gabirol, and Abraham Ibn Ezra. Themes to be covered include emanation and creation, apophatic discourse, divine desire, the theological significance of imagination, inward reflection and the call to virtue. Prerequisite: junior standing or instructor’s permission.

PHIL 3175 Morality and the Law (4 qtr. hrs.)

A systematic study of various elements of the relation between law and morality. Are we obligated to obey every law the government enacts? Why? If we do have an obligation to obey the law, are civil disobedients like Martin Luther King, Jr. justified in disobeying the law? Are immoral laws, laws at all, or must a law connect with some higher moral truth to have any authority? To what extent is it morally permissible for the law to restrict our personal freedoms? To what extent is it morally permissible for the law to enforce morality in general? If it is not permissible for the law to enforce morality, do we incur any obligation to obey the law? Prerequisite: junior standing or instructor’s permission.

PHIL 3176 Advanced Topics in Philosophy of Law: Rights, Legal Institutions, and Justice (4 qtr. hrs.)

A critical examination of rights claims and an exploration of those rights claims ought to affect legal institutions. What are rights? How are they justified? How do various different rights claims conflict with each other? Does a theory or rights help provide a justified theory of criminalization? Are there any rights we have just in virtue of being human? How does the concept of human rights apply to issues such as international law, the right to life and whether human rights require a right to democracy?

PHIL 3178 Metaethics (4 qtr. hrs.)

This course systematically and critically examines the metaphysical, semantic, and epistemic issues central to the study of metaethics. Do moral properties exist? If so, how are they related to natural properties? Do moral properties exist independent of human agency, or do we construct morality? If moral properties exist, how can we come to have justified belief about them? Is it possible to know that a moral belief is true? Doesn’t the phenomenon of widespread, intractable disagreement about moral matters establish that there are no objective moral truths? Is the process of gaining scientific knowledge really that different from the process of gaining moral knowledge? Prerequisite: junior standing or instructor’s permission.

PHIL 3180 Socratic Ethics (4 qtr. hrs.)

A study of Plato’s early dialogues in order to discern the ethical views of the historical Socrates. Prerequisite: junior standing or instructor’s permission.

PHIL 3201 Wittgenstein, Quine, & Kripke on Necessity and a Priori Knowledge (4 qtr. hrs.)

A study of Wittgenstein, Quine, and Kripke on the nature of necessity, a priori knowledge and their relation to understanding philosophy. Prerequisite: junior standing or instructor’s permission.
PHIL 3215 Modern Jewish Philosophy (4 qtr. hrs.)

PHIL 3702 Topics in Philosophy (1 to 4 qtr. hrs.)
Prerequisite: 10 hours of Philosophy at 2000 level or permission of instructor.

PHIL 3703 Topics in Philosophy (1 to 4 qtr. hrs.)
Prerequisite: 10 hours of Philosophy at 2000 level or permission of instructor.

PHIL 3704 Topics in Philosophy (1 to 4 qtr. hrs.)
Prerequisite: 10 hours of Philosophy at 2000 level or permission of instructor.

PHIL 3991 Independent Study (1 to 8 qtr. hrs.)

PHIL 3992 Directed Study (1 to 10 qtr. hrs.)

PHIL 4991 Independent Study (1 to 10 qtr. hrs.)

PHIL 4992 Directed Study (1 to 10 qtr. hrs.)

PHIL 4995 Independent Research (1 to 10 qtr. hrs.)

PHIL 5300 Philosophy Colloquium (4 qtr. hrs.)

PHIL 5400 Cultural Theory Colloquium (1 to 5 qtr. hrs.)

For More Information
A complete description of the program’s official offerings and requirements is available from the department at http://www.du.edu/philosophy.

The University of Denver is an Equal Opportunity institution. We admit students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the University. The University of Denver does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin in administration of our educational policies, admission policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other university-administered programs. University policy likewise prohibits discrimination on the basis of age, religion, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, marital status or veteran status. Inquiries concerning allegations of discrimination based on any of the above factors may be referred to the University of Denver, Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity.