

# PHILOSOPHY

haverford.edu/philosophy

Philosophy at Haverford aims as far as possible to reflect the richness, diversity, and reflexivity of philosophical inquiry. Grounded throughout in the history of philosophy, many courses focus on particular subfields, on value theory, for instance, or the philosophy of mind, ancient philosophy, or the philosophy of logic and language. A student of philosophy at Haverford might study views regarding the ultimate nature of reality or pursue questions about the nature of a good human life, might grapple with theoretical problems of social meaning or with puzzles that arise on reflection about language.

The Department of Philosophy helps students in all disciplines to develop the reflective, analytical, and critical skills required for thoughtful engagement with problems and issues in all aspects of life. Courses introduce students to seminal ideas that have changed, or have the potential to change, the most fundamental understanding of who we are and how we should live. Because the study of philosophy is essentially reflexive, we also encourage students to contemplate upon and challenge the methods of philosophy as well as its history, goals, and achievements.

## Global Philosophy

The department also provides courses in global philosophy that seek to cultivate global philosophical literacy for students across all majors. These courses, which are not included within the major or minor, appear at the conclusion of this departmental description.

## LEARNING GOALS

In studying the discipline of philosophy, students:

- learn to recognize and articulate philosophical problems, whether those that arise within philosophy or those to be found in other academic disciplines and outside the academy.
- become skilled at thinking, reading, writing, and speaking thoughtfully and critically about philosophical problems, through learning to recognize, assess, and formulate cogent and compelling pieces of philosophical reasoning both written and verbal.
- achieve literacy in a wide range of

philosophical works and develop thoughtful views about their interrelations.

- develop attitudes and habits of reflection, as well as appreciation for the complexities of significant questions in all aspects of their lives and the courage to address those complexities.

## CURRICULUM

Unless otherwise indicated, one philosophy course at the 100 level is a prerequisite for all other courses in philosophy. Courses at the 300 level require, in addition, a 200-level course plus junior standing, or consent of the instructor. Some advanced philosophy courses may require a reading knowledge of a foreign language as a prerequisite for admission.

## MAJOR REQUIREMENTS

- One philosophy course at the 100 level, or Bryn Mawr Philosophy 101, 102, or 201, or the equivalent elsewhere.
- Five philosophy courses at the 200 level, at least four of which must be completed by the end of the junior year, and three philosophy courses at the 300 level.
- The Senior Seminar (399A and 399B).

The eight courses at the 200 and 300 level must furthermore satisfy the following requirements:

- **Historical:** One course must be from among those that deal with the history of European philosophy prior to Kant.
- **Topical breadth:**
  - One course must be from among those that deal with value theory, including ethics, aesthetics, social and political philosophy, and legal philosophy.
  - One course must be from among those that deal with metaphysics and epistemology, including ontology, philosophy of mind, philosophy of psychology, and philosophy of action.
  - One course must be from among those that deal with logic, the philosophy of literature, and/or the philosophy of language.
- **Systematic coherence:** Four of these courses, two at the 200 level and two at the 300 level, must exhibit some systematic

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coherence in theme or subject satisfactory to the major advisor and department.

Students who elect to major in philosophy but are unable to comply with normal requirements because of special circumstances should consult the chairperson regarding waivers or substitutions.

Majors are also encouraged to be discussion leaders in their senior year.

### MINOR REQUIREMENTS

- One philosophy course at the 100 level, or Bryn Mawr Philosophy 101, 102, or 201, or the equivalent elsewhere.
- Three philosophy courses at the 200 level.
- Two philosophy courses at the 300 level.

Among the 200- and 300-level courses: one must be in value theory (broadly conceived to include ethics, social and political philosophy, aesthetics, and legal philosophy), one must be in metaphysics and epistemology (including ontology, philosophy of mind, and philosophy of action), and one must be concerned with philosophical texts written before the twentieth century. This third requirement can be satisfied concurrently with either of the other two (e.g., by taking a course in ancient ethics, or in Descartes' metaphysics), or can be satisfied separately from the other two.

### SENIOR PROJECT

The capstone of the philosophy major is the Senior Seminar. This two course seminar (PHIL 399A and PHIL 399B) comprises (1) a year-long research project culminating in a senior thesis, (2) student presentations and discussion of the students' works-in-progress in preparation for the final, formal presentation of the thesis at the end of the spring term, and (3) seminars with visiting speakers throughout the senior year.

The senior thesis (thirty pages) is on a topic of the student's choice. It is written under the supervision of a first reader who meets with the student on a regular basis throughout the year, usually weekly. A second reader also reads and comments on the student's written work and may also meet regularly with the student. In the fall, students write a twenty-page research paper introducing the literature on the topic and the issues it involves. In the spring, students build on

this base, developing an analysis of the issues and an argument in defense of the conclusions drawn. A draft of the thesis is submitted in March; the final version is due the end of April.

After a very short initial presentation in the fall to introduce their research topics, students give three substantial presentations of their work: at the end of the fall semester, in March, and in May. Each presentation is followed by a question period.

In preparation for the fall Altherr Symposium, featuring a speaker of the students' choice, students and faculty read works by the Altherr speaker, and students prepare discussion questions both for the Symposium lecture and for the seminar with the speaker. Seniors also attend all other invited speaker events, of which there are four or five over the course of the year, and they have a short seminar with each speaker to further discuss the presented work.

### Senior Project Learning Goals

In the process of researching and writing the senior thesis, students should acquire and demonstrate:

- the ability to articulate a philosophically rich but also manageable research question.
- the ability to locate and to learn from relevant work on the topic by other philosophers.
- the ability to assess critically and fairly other positions and views, and to develop arguments in support of those assessments.
- the ability to explain in a compelling way the philosophical interest of the research topic and to develop a sustained and cogent philosophical argument for the conclusions reached.

In the course of repeated presentations and discussions, students should acquire and demonstrate:

- the capacity to develop and enact thoughtful and effective presentations.
- the ability to respond constructively to presentations on a very wide range of philosophical topics, even those with which one is unfamiliar.
- the ability to respond productively to questions about and criticisms of one's work.

### Senior Project Assessment

A student's faculty advisors collectively assess the thesis project (written and oral components) on

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the following criteria:

- **Conceptualization of Research Question and Historical Argument:** Students acknowledge and explore the full implications of an innovative thesis question.
- **Familiarity with and Understanding of Primary Texts:** Students engage primary sources to answer their research question and display a creative approach to existing sources or bring new and illuminating sources to bear on their research question.
- **Engagement with Secondary Literature:** Students demonstrate mastery of scholarly literature that pertains to their thesis topic by synthesis of and contribution to the scholarly conversation.
- **Methodological and Theoretical Approach:** Students ground their theses in current knowledge about their historical period, demonstrating a thorough understanding of relevant methodological and theoretical issues.
- **Quality of Argument:** Students construct a well reasoned, well structured, and clearly expressed argument.
- **Clarity of Writing:** Writing is consistently engaging, clear, well organized, and enjoyable to read.
- **Oral Presentation:** At the end of the semester, students demonstrate comprehensive understanding of their topic in an articulate and engaging presentation and are able to provide innovative and thoughtful answers to questions. Student demonstrates capacity to connect thesis project to prior coursework in history and related disciplines.

### REQUIREMENTS FOR HONORS

The award of honors in philosophy will be based upon distinguished work in philosophy courses, active and constructive participation in the senior seminar, and the writing and presentation of the senior essay. High honors requires in addition exceptional and original work in the senior essay.

### TRAVEL GRANTS

Travel grants of up to \$100 each will be available to be awarded to philosophy majors (juniors and seniors) for travel to scholarly conferences. Students presenting papers at undergraduate conferences will be given priority, and no student will be eligible for more than one grant in a given academic year.

### CAREERS AND GRADUATE WORK

Because the study of philosophy strengthens both the skill of analytical thinking characteristic of scientific investigation and the interpretive reasoning skills of the humanist, in addition to producing strong verbal and writing skills, advanced undergraduate training in philosophy is excellent preparation for a wide range of career paths. It is also at the core of a liberal education—regardless of one’s primary intellectual interests. Some Haverford philosophy majors go on to graduate school in philosophy. Most pursue careers in other areas such as medicine, law, education, writing, public service, architecture, and business.

### FACULTY

#### **Benjamin Berger**

Visiting Assistant Professor of Philosophy

#### **Ashok Gangadean** (*on leave Fall 2017*)

The Emily Judson and John Marshall Gest Professor of Global Philosophy

#### **Danielle Macbeth**

T. Wistar Brown Professor of Philosophy

#### **Jerry Miller**

Associate Professor of Philosophy

#### **Brooks Sommerville**

Visiting Assistant Professor of Philosophy

#### **Joel Yurdin**

Department Chair and Associate Professor of Philosophy

#### ***Affiliated Faculty:***

#### **Jill Stauffer**

Assistant Professor and Director of the Interdisciplinary Concentration in Peace, Justice and Human Rights

### COURSES

#### **PHIL H102 MODERN THEORIES OF CONSCIOUSNESS: RATIONAL ANIMALS**

*Brooks Sommerville*

Humanities (HU)

This course examines the role played by the self in the systems of four philosophers: Plato, Aristotle, René Descartes, and David Hume. This list by no means is meant to suggest that all four

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philosophers are working with the same conception of the self: part of our challenge will be to chart how this conception changes from author to author. For Plato and Aristotle, our focus will be on their accounts of the soul. For Descartes and Hume, our focus will be on their conceptions of the self as a thinking subject. (Offered Fall 2017 and Spring 2018)

### **PHIL H106 THE PHILOSOPHY OF CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE PROBLEM OF EMBODIMENT**

*Benjamin Berger*

Humanities (HU)

The human body is the best picture of the soul (Wittgenstein). This course provides an introduction to six Western conceptions of the body, of the soul/mind, and of the relation between the body and the soul/mind. Readings: Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Nietzsche, Arendt, and de Beauvoir. (Offered Fall 2017 and Spring 2018)

### **PHIL H107 HAPPINESS, VIRTUE, AND THE GOOD LIFE**

*Joel Yurdin*

Humanities (HU)

Happiness is something that we all want, but what exactly is it? This course considers the nature of the virtues and their roles in a happy life, the relations between happiness and morality, and the meaning (or meaninglessness) of life. Readings from classic and contemporary sources, including Plato, Aristotle, Kant, Nagel, and Wolf. (Offered Spring 2018)

### **PHIL H110 MIND AND WORLD**

*Danielle Macbeth*

Humanities (HU)

An introduction to the history of our conception of ourselves as rational beings in the world through a close reading of central texts in the European tradition that address both the sorts of beings we are and the nature of the world as it is the object of our natural scientific knowledge. (Offered Fall 2017)

### **PHIL H111 THE WICKED AND THE WORTHY**

*Jerry Miller*

Humanities (HU)

The possibility of “doing good” in the world presumes that one can distinguish between good and bad actions, people, and consequences. But on what basis are we to make such distinctions? What grounds, if anything, our definitions of

good and bad? This course examines such concerns through a survey of the history of ethical philosophy. In assessing ethical “first principles” we will consider as well questions of intentionality, power, and historical value. Readings include selections from Mill’s *Utilitarianism*, Kant’s *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, and Nietzsche’s *Beyond Good and Evil*. (Offered Fall 2017)

### **PHIL H210 PLATO**

*Joel Yurdin*

Humanities (HU)

A close reading of the Protagoras. With its wide range of topics and vivid drama, this is arguably the richest of Plato’s so-called ‘Socratic’ dialogues. We will first read through the dialogue at a brisk pace, and then on the second pass we will read more closely, consulting the occasional secondary source on certain technical points. Some of the themes covered in this course will be: the value of moral education; justice and its origins; Socratic method and its limitations; the nature of methodological disputes in philosophy; the unity of the virtues; weakness of will; the relationship between philosophy and literature. (Not offered 2017-18)

### **PHIL H212 ARISTOTLE**

*Brooks Sommerville*

Humanities (HU)

An analytic study of the main works of Aristotle. Particular attention is paid to the theory of being and substance developed in Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*, to the theory of animal life developed in his treatise *On the Soul*, and to the understanding of good human action and choice developed in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Primary emphasis is on the interpretation and understanding of the philosophical arguments that are elaborated in these works. (Offered Spring 2018)

### **PHIL H222 EARLY MODERN BRITISH PHILOSOPHY**

*Joel Yurdin*

Humanities (HU)

How can we think all that we actually do think? What is mind-independent reality like? This course examines these and related questions in the philosophical writings of Locke, Berkeley, Hume, and Reid. Emphasis is on a philosophical understanding of the theories of cognition and reality developed in these texts. (Not offered 2017-18)

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### **PHIL H243 TWENTIETH-CENTURY CONTINENTAL PHILOSOPHY**

*Benjamin Berger*

Humanities (HU)

An introduction to key readings in 20th century continental philosophy covering areas of phenomenology, existentialism, poststructuralism, and critical identity theory. Of primary importance will be issues of language, embodiment, and knowledge. (Offered Spring 2018)

### **PHIL H250 HEGEL AND AFTERWARD**

*Benjamin Berger*

Humanities (HU)

Hegel was the most important thinker of the 19th century: his system of knowledge seemed to promise not only a solution to the great philosophical problems of his day, but the completion of the whole philosophical project. We'll consider how this was supposed to happen and what was left for subsequent philosophers to accomplish. Prerequisite(s): 100-level Introductory Philosophy course at HC or BMC, or instructor consent. (Offered Fall 2017)

### **PHIL H251 PHILOSOPHY OF MIND**

*Danielle Macbeth*

Humanities (HU)

The focus of this course is the question of the place of mind in nature, in the world. What sort of thing is a mind? What is it to be conscious? Can there be freedom of the will in a physical world? Could a computer ever be correctly described as thinking? Do animals have minds? Our aim is to clarify what we are asking when we ask such questions, and to begin at least to formulate answers. (Offered Spring 2018)

### **PHIL H253 ANALYTIC PHIL OF LANGUAGE**

*Danielle Macbeth*

Humanities (HU)

A close study of seminal essays by Frege, Russell, Kripke, Quine, Davidson, and others focusing on questions of meaning, reference, and truth. An overarching aim of the course is to understand how one can approach fundamental issues in philosophy through a critical reflection on how language works. Prerequisite(s): One 100 level class or its equivalent, or instructor consent. (Not offered 2017-18)

### **PHIL H255 VIRTUE EPISTEMOLOGY**

*Danielle Macbeth*

Humanities (HU)

An introduction to various issues in the theory of knowledge through a critical examination of recent work aiming to understand what it is good to believe by appeal to the virtues of an intellectually good person. (Not offered 2017-18)

### **PHIL H257 CRITICAL APPROACHES TO ETHICAL THEORY**

*Jerry Miller*

Humanities (HU)

This course examines efforts over the last century to engage the ethical without recourse to formal systems or foundational principles. How, these approaches ask, can we talk about good and evil, morality and immorality, while believing "truth" to be historically, linguistically, and culturally contingent? In the process of drafting possible answers, we shall think deeply about social subjectivity and formations of sexual desire. (Typically offered every fall)

### **PHIL H259 STRUCTURALISM AND POST- STRUCTURALISM**

*Jerry Miller*

Humanities (HU)

An introduction to key readings in 20th century continental philosophy in the areas of semiotics, critical theory, and deconstruction. Of primary importance will be issues of language, meaning, and representation. Readings include Barthes, Althusser, Foucault, Derrida, Kristeva, and Jameson. (Offered Fall 2017)

### **PHIL H260 HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION TO LOGIC**

*Danielle Macbeth*

Humanities (HU)

Our aim is two-fold: first, to understand - in the sense of having a working knowledge of - both traditional Aristotelean and modern quantificational logic (translating sentences into logical notation, assessing the validity of arguments, constructing proofs, and so on); and second, to understand logic, why it matters, what it can teach us (both as philosophers and as thinkers more generally), and how it "works" in the broadest sense. (Offered Fall 2017)

### **PHIL H261 EXPERIENCE, KNOW-HOW, AND SKILLED COPING**

*Joel Yurdin*

Humanities (HU)

An investigation of three debates concerning the character of experiential knowledge. (1) Is

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experience the same as expertise? Is it required for the acquisition of expertise? (2) What is the difference between knowing-how and knowing that, and how are they related? (3) What is the phenomenology of skillful behavior? (Offered Fall 2017)

### **PHIL H265 VALUE THEORY**

*Jerry Miller*

Humanities (HU)

A study of various modern and contemporary strains of metaethics and value theory. How can things and persons be objects of value? By what capacities do we apprehend worth? The objective is to better understand whether and how ethical knowledge is possible. (Offered Spring 2018)

### **PHIL H301 TOPICS IN PHILOSOPHY OF LITERATURE: JAUQUES DERRIDA**

*Jerry Miller*

Humanities (HU)

(Offered Spring 2018)

### **PHIL H311 TOPICS IN GREEK PHILOSOPHY**

*Joel Yurdin*

Humanities (HU)

This course explores the connection between two questions in the history of moral philosophy: i) What is pleasure?; and ii) What is its contribution to a happy life? We begin with the ancients, specifically Plato, Aristotle, and Epicurus. We then turn to some modern authors: John Stuart Mill, G.E. Moore, Robert Nozick, Derek Parfit, and Fred Feldman. In each case, our focus will be on the connection between their conceptions of pleasure, on the one hand, and their assessments of its value, on the other. While the subject of pleasure seems to fall squarely to the moral philosopher, we will see that conceptual questions about the nature of pleasure lead directly into key issues in metaphysics and epistemology as well. (Not offered 2017-18)

### **PHIL H335 TOPICS IN MODERN EUROPEAN PHILOSOPHY: PHILOSOPHY AND ENVIRONMENT**

*Benjamin Berger*

Humanities (HU)

(Offered Fall 2017)

### **PHIL H350 TOPICS IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF MATHEMATICS**

*Danielle Macbeth*

Humanities (HU)

(Offered Spring 2018)

### **PHIL H354 TOPICS IN METAPHYSICS: THE PHILOSOPHY OF JOHN MCDOWELL**

*Danielle Macbeth*

Humanities (HU)

John McDowell is widely regarded as one of the greatest living philosophers writing in English today. In this course we will begin by reading his Locke Lectures, delivered at Oxford University in AY 90/91 and published as *Mind and World*. We will then turn to a selection of his essays chosen by students in the class. McDowell has written on an enormous range of topics—ethics, ancient philosophy, philosophy of mind, philosophy of language, aesthetics, and more—so there is bound to be something for everyone. If there is interest, we may already read a few essays in an exchange McDowell and Charles Travis have had (and are still having) on perceptual content. (Not offered 2017-18)

### **PHIL H360 TOPICS IN PHILOSOPHICAL PSYCHOLOGY**

*Joel Yurdin*

Humanities (HU)

An examination of some central problems concerning the varieties of cognition. Topics may include hallucination, illusion, the phenomenal character of perceptual awareness, and the nature of sense-experience. Readings from contemporary authors. Prerequisite(s): 200-level course in philosophy or psychology or instructor consent. (Offered Fall 2017)

### **PHIL H370 TOPICS IN ETHICAL THEORY: RACE**

*Jerry Miller*

Humanities (HU)

This course examines the relation of racial and evaluative difference in modernity. Readings will focus on the role of embodiment in determinations of comparative worth and as a site of ethical knowledge. (Not offered 2017-18)

### **PHIL H399 SENIOR SEMINAR**

*Joel Yurdin*

Humanities (HU)

This course has several components: (a) participation in the Altherr Symposium, including three to four meetings devoted to preparation for the symposium, (b) participation in the Distinguished Visitors series, (c) the writing of a senior thesis, and (d) presentation of one's work for critical discussion with others in the seminar,

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as well as a final formal presentation. (Offered Fall 2017)

### PHIL H402 DISCUSSION LEADERS

*Brooks Sommerville*  
Humanities (HU)  
(Not offered 2017-18)

### PHIL H407 DISCUSSION LEADERS

*Joel Yurdin*  
Humanities (HU)  
(Offered Spring 2018)

### PHIL H410 DISCUSSION LEADERS: MIND AND WORLD

*Danielle Macbeth*  
Humanities (HU)  
(Offered Fall 2017)

### PHIL H411 DISCUSSION LEADERS: THE WICKED AND THE WORTHY

*Jerry Miller*  
Humanities (HU)  
(Offered Fall 2017)

### Courses in Global Philosophy

The philosophy curriculum additionally provides courses in global philosophy that seek to cultivate global literacy for all students in the liberal arts across diverse majors. Courses in global philosophy explore fundamental issues in philosophy in global context across and between diverse worldviews and philosophical traditions. These courses augment philosophical literacy, rationality, and critical thinking between diverse worlds, seeking to appreciate diversity while at the same time cultivating integral intelligence and capacities to make significant connections between diverse worldviews and disciplinary orientations. Such skills in global literacy and interdisciplinary dialogue are vital for all liberal arts students and for the literacy of global citizenship. These courses are not included in and do not count toward the major or minor.

### PHIL H103 GLOBAL ETHICS

*Ashok Gangadean*  
Humanities (HU)  
An exploration of selected texts on ethics in a global context. This course seeks to develop a global perspective on human values through a critical exploration of vital texts on ethics across diverse philosophical traditions. A central focus is on the challenge of articulating global ethics and global values across cultures, worldviews, and

traditions. Readings include Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, *Bhagavad-Gita*, the *Analects* of Confucius, and Kant's *Fundamental Principles*. (Offered Spring 2018)

### PHIL H104 GLOBAL WISDOM

*Ashok Gangadean*  
Humanities (HU)  
A critical exploration of classic texts from diverse philosophical traditions in a global context. This course seeks to cultivate a global perspective in philosophy and brings classical texts from diverse philosophical worlds into global dialogue. One aim is to help students to appreciate global patterns in rationality across traditions and to gain a critical understanding of common ground and significant differences in diverse wisdom traditions. Readings include *Bhagavad-Gita*, *Dhamapada*, Plato's *Phaedo*, and Descartes's *Meditations*. (Not offered 2017-18)

### PHIL H241 HINDU PHILOSOPHY

*Ashok Gangadean*  
Humanities (HU)  
A critical exploration of classical Hindu thought (Vedanta) in a global and comparative context. Special focus on selected Principal Upanisads, a close meditative reading of the *Bhagavad-Gita* and an in depth exploration of Shankara's *Brahmasutra Commentary*. (Offered Spring 2018)

### PHIL H242 BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY IN A GLOBAL CONTEXT

*Ashok Gangadean*  
Humanities (HU)  
An introduction to classical Indian Buddhist thought in a global and comparative context. The course begins with a meditative reading of the classical text—*The Dhamapada*—and proceeds to an in depth critical exploration of the teachings of Nagarjuna, the great dialectician who founded the Madhyamika School. (Not offered 2017-18)

### PHIL H254 METAPHYSICS: GLOBAL ONTOLOGY

*Ashok Gangadean*  
Humanities (HU)  
A critical examination of philosophical accounts of reality and being. Special attention is given to how world views are formed and transformed: an ontological exploration of diverse alternative categorical frameworks for experience. Metaphysical narratives of diverse thinkers in the evolution of the European tradition are explored

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in global context. Heraclitus, Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Spinoza, Kant, Heidegger, Whitehead...and other ontologists are explored. (Not offered 2017-18)

### **PHIL H342 ZEN THOUGHT IN A GLOBAL CONTEXT**

*Ashok Gangadean*

Humanities (HU)

This advanced seminar focuses on the development of Zen (Japanese) Buddhism culminating in the work of Nishida and his influential Kyoto School of Zen Philosophy. The background in the Indian origins of Madhyamika dialectic introduced by Nagarjuna is traced through the Zen Master Dogen and into flourishing of the modern Kyoto School founded by Nishida. The seminar focuses in the texts by Dogen and on selected writings in the Kyoto School: Nishida, Nishitani and Abe. The seminar involves intensive discussion of the issues on global context of philosophy. Nishida's thought is developed in dialogue with thinkers such as Aristotle, Descartes, Kant, Hegel, Husserl, Sartre and Heidegger, Nagarjuna and others.

Prerequisite(s): An introductory philosophy course (100 series) and either 241 (Hindu Thought) or 242 (Buddhist Thought) or a course in religion or East Asian Thought or instructor consent (Not offered 2017-18)