

PHILOSOPHY, BACHELOR OF ARTS (B.A.) WITH A CONCENTRATION IN ETHICS AND PUBLIC POLICY

The Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy requires a minimum of 120 credits, with at least 30 of those credits in philosophy. Fifteen of these credits must be selected from upper-level philosophy courses.

Students whose main interests in philosophy are ethics, political philosophy, philosophy of law or public policy (and who may wish to pursue graduate work in law, political science, economics and related areas) will probably want to choose the ethics and public policy concentration.

Learning outcomes

Upon completing this program, students will know and know how to do the following:

1. Demonstrate a good knowledge of and facility with the methods and concepts of modern, analytic philosophy
2. Demonstrate a good knowledge of the current state of academic discussion of some of the central philosophical topics
3. Demonstrate some knowledge of the history of philosophy, including both major themes and movements and some specific figures and systems
4. Demonstrate the ability to think critically and systemically about philosophical problems, both abstract and practical, and to write clearly and cogently about them
5. Demonstrate the ability to construct and analyze arguments clearly and cogently, independently of their subject matter.

Degree requirements for Philosophy, Bachelor of Arts with an ethics and public policy concentration

General education requirements

University Core Education Curriculum (minimum 21 credits)

UNIV 111 Play course video for Focused Inquiry I	Focused Inquiry I	3
UNIV 112 Play course video for Focused Inquiry II	Focused Inquiry II	3
UNIV 200	Inquiry and the Craft of Argument	3
Approved humanities/fine arts		3
Approved natural/physical sciences		3-4
Approved quantitative literacy		3-4
Approved social/behavioral sciences		3-4
Total Hours		21-24

Additional College of Humanities and Sciences requirements (11-23 credits)

HUMS 202	Choices in a Consumer Society	1
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Approved H&S diverse and global communities	3
Approved H&S human, social and political behavior (fulfills University Core social/behavioral sciences)	
Approved H&S literature and civilization (fulfills University Core humanities/fine arts)	
Approved H&S science and technology (fulfills University Core natural/physical sciences)	
Approved H&S general education electives	6-8
Experiential fine arts ¹	1-3
Foreign language through the 102 level (by course or placement)	0-8
Total Hours	11-23

¹ Course offered by the School of the Arts

Major requirements

Select one of the following:	3	
PHIL 101	Introduction to Philosophy	
PHIL 103	Ancient Greek and Medieval Western Philosophy	
PHIL 104	Modern Western Philosophy	
Select one of the following:	3	
PHIL 201	Critical Thinking About Moral Problems	
PHIL 211	History of Ethics	
PHIL 212	Ethics and Applications	
PHIL 213	Ethics and Health Care	
PHIL 214	Ethics and Business	
PHIL 222	Logic	3
Select one of the following:	3	
PHIL 301	Mind and Reality	
PHIL 302	Reason and Knowledge	
PHIL 303	Philosophy of Language	
Select two of the following:	6	
PHIL 320	Philosophy of Law	
PHIL 327	Normative Ethics	
PHIL 328	Metaethics	
PHIL 335	Social and Political Philosophy	
PHIL 490	Seminar in Philosophy (capstone course)	3
PHIL elective		3
Non-PHIL course options (from the list below)		6
Total Hours		30

Open electives

Select 44-58 open elective credits	44-58
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Total minimum requirement 120 credits

Non-PHIL course options for major requirements (choose two)

CRJS 324	Courts and the Judicial Process	3
CRJS 355	Criminological Theory	3
ECON 301	Microeconomic Theory	3
ECON 302	Macroeconomic Theory	3
ECON 419/HIST 333	History of Economic Thought	3

POLI 310	Public Policy	3
POLI 314	U.S. Constitutional Law	3
POLI 315	Courts and Politics	3
SOCY 302	Contemporary Social Problems	3
SOCY 430	Politics, Power and Ideology	3

(or other appropriate courses approved by the department of philosophy)

What follows is a sample plan that meets the prescribed requirements within a four-year course of study at VCU. Please contact your adviser before beginning course work toward a degree.

Freshman year

Fall semester		Hours
UNIV 101	Introduction to the University	1
UNIV 111	Focused Inquiry I	3
Play course video for Focused Inquiry I		
Approved H&S diverse and global communities course		3
Approved quantitative literacy course		3-4
Open electives		5-6
Term Hours:		15-17

Spring semester

HUMS 202	Choices in a Consumer Society	1
UNIV 112	Focused Inquiry II	3
Play course video for Focused Inquiry II		
Approved H&S General Education elective		3-4
Approved H&S human, social and political behavior course		3-4
Open electives		5-6
Term Hours:		15-18

Sophomore year

Fall semester

PHIL 101	Introduction to Philosophy	3
or	or Ancient Greek and Medieval Western	
PHIL 103	Philosophy	
or	or Modern Western Philosophy	
PHIL 104		
PHIL 201	Critical Thinking About Moral Problems (to satisfy both a major requirement and H&S literature and civilization)	3
UNIV 200	Inquiry and the Craft of Argument	3
Experiential fine arts course		1-3
Foreign language (101-level)		4
Term Hours:		14-16

Spring semester

PHIL 222	Logic	3
Approved H&S General Education elective		3-4
Approved H&S science and technology		3-4
Foreign language (102-level)		4
Open elective		3
Term Hours:		16-18

Junior year

Fall semester

PHIL 320	Philosophy of Law	3
Non-PHIL course from list		3
Open electives		9
Term Hours:		15

Spring semester

PHIL 320	Philosophy of Law	3
or	or Normative Ethics	
PHIL 327	or Metaethics	
or	or Social and Political Philosophy	
PHIL 328		
or	PHIL 335	
Non-PHIL course from list		3
Open electives		9
Term Hours:		15

Senior year

Fall semester

PHIL 301	Mind and Reality	3
or	or Reason and Knowledge	
PHIL 302	or Philosophy of Language	
or	PHIL 303	
PHIL elective		3
Open electives		9
Term Hours:		15

Spring semester

PHIL 490	Seminar in Philosophy (capstone course)	3
Open electives		12
Term Hours:		15
Total Hours:		120-129

PHIL 101. Introduction to Philosophy. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. An introduction to some of the main branches of philosophy. Some of the issues that might be addressed are: What is knowledge? Is reason or experience the basis for all knowledge? Can we have knowledge of the past or of the future? What is truth? Does God exist? Is there a mental realm separate from the material realm? Are the laws of nature deterministic? Do we have free will? What makes an action morally permissible? What is the proper role of the state in regulating our lives? This course is directed primarily at first- and second-year students.

PHIL 103. Ancient Greek and Medieval Western Philosophy. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. A survey of Western philosophy from the ancient Greeks (e.g., Socrates, Plato and Aristotle) through the medieval period (e.g., Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas).

PHIL 104. Modern Western Philosophy. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. A survey of Western philosophy from the Renaissance to the 19th century (e.g., Hobbes, Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, Kant, Hegel and Marx).

PHIL 201. Critical Thinking About Moral Problems. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: UNIV 112 or both ENGL 295 and HONR 200. Focuses on the development of sound critical-thinking skills and their application to a range of topics in moral philosophy, including questions about the nature of morality and whether we have reason to be moral, and also to various topics in applied ethics such as the morality of abortion, animal rights, world hunger, pornography, capital punishment, sexual behavior, environmental ethics and reverse discrimination. Credit toward graduation may be received for only one of PHIL 201, 212, 213 or 214.

PHIL 211. History of Ethics. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: UNIV 112 or both ENGL 295 and HONR 200. A philosophical investigation of the main concepts and theories of ethics and their application to fundamental moral questions, as illustrated by the ethical systems of such historically important Western philosophers as Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Hume, Mill and Kant.

PHIL 212. Ethics and Applications. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: UNIV 112 or both ENGL 295 and HONR 200. A philosophical investigation of the main concepts and theories of ethics, with applications to fundamental moral questions as they arise in different areas. Such problems as abortion, the welfare of animals, world hunger, pornography, capital punishment, nuclear defense, sexual behavior, environmental ethics and reverse discrimination may be used as illustrations. Credit toward graduation may be received for only one of PHIL 201, 212, 213 or 214.

PHIL 213. Ethics and Health Care. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: UNIV 112 or both ENGL 295 and HONR 200. A philosophical investigation of the main concepts and theories of ethics, with applications to fundamental moral questions as they arise in health care. The following issues may be used as illustrations: abortion, euthanasia and the right to die, human experimentation, treating mental illness, genetic technologies, the concepts of health and disease, and the funding of health care. Credit toward graduation may be received for only one of PHIL 201, 212, 213 or 214.

PHIL 214. Ethics and Business. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: UNIV 112 or both ENGL 295 and HONR 200. A philosophical investigation of the main concepts and theories of ethics, with applications to fundamental moral questions as they arise in business. The following issues may be used as illustration: affirmative action, investment in unethical companies or countries, product safety, whistle blowing and advertising. Credit toward graduation may be received for only one of PHIL 201, 212, 213 or 214.

PHIL 221. Critical Thinking. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. An introduction to inductive and deductive reasoning, with emphasis on common errors and fallacies.

PHIL 222. Logic. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. An evaluation of deductive arguments utilizing the methods of symbolic logic.

PHIL 230. Reason, Science and the Self. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Open to Honors College students only. The reasonableness of a belief often depends on the arguments that support it. One primary goal of this course is to sharpen the abilities to identify, analyze and assess arguments. Another primary goal is to show how to apply critical reasoning skills to philosophical explorations of the nature of science, knowledge and personal identity.

PHIL 250. Thinking About Thinking. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: UNIV 112 or both ENGL 295 and HONR 200. An interdisciplinary course about thinking. Covers the development of the principles of reasoning, such questions as how thinking relates to behavior and brain activity and how to think about specific areas of our lives, such as science, morality, religion, the arts and the law.

PHIL 291. Topics in Philosophy. 1-4 Hours.

Semester course; variable hours. 1-4 credits. Prerequisite: as specified in the Schedule of Classes or written permission of instructor. An introductory study of an individual philosopher, a particular philosophical problem or a narrowly defined period or school. See the Schedule of Classes for specific topics to be offered each semester.

PHIL 301. Mind and Reality. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisites: 9 credits in philosophy including PHIL 221 or PHIL 222, and one of PHIL 101, PHIL 103 or PHIL 104, or permission of instructor. An examination of central metaphysical issues, for example, the mind-body problem, free will, causality, action, realism and the problems of universals.

PHIL 302. Reason and Knowledge. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisites: 9 credits in philosophy including PHIL 221 or PHIL 222, and one of PHIL 101, PHIL 103 or PHIL 104, or permission of instructor. An examination of central epistemological issues, for example, the problem of justification, empirical knowledge, perception, rationality and truth.

PHIL 303. Philosophy of Language. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisites: 9 credits in philosophy including PHIL 222 and 6 additional credits, at least 3 of which must be from PHIL 101, PHIL 103 or PHIL 104, or permission of the instructor. An examination of central issues in the philosophy of language; for example, the nature of meaning and reference, reductionism, properties of languages and the character of artificial symbols systems.

PHIL 320. Philosophy of Law. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisites: 9 credits in philosophy, which must include PHIL 221 or PHIL 222, and one of PHIL 201, PHIL 211, PHIL 212, PHIL 213, or PHIL 214, or permission of instructor. A critical examination of the nature of law and criminal justice in the light of important human values. The following topics will be considered: the nature of law and legal reasoning, the legal enforcement of morality, and such controversies as punishment versus rehabilitation and the right to due process versus the need for public safety.

PHIL 322. Tibetan Buddhism. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. A basic introduction to the history, development and mythology of the Buddhism of Tibet focusing on the Indian heritage and shared basis of all Buddhist practices, a clear identification of the three vehicles found in Buddhism, and a careful consideration of the path of the Bodhisattva, the hero of Great Vehicle Buddhism. Crosslisted as: RELS 322.

PHIL 326. Existentialism. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: three credits in philosophy (exclusive of PHIL 221 and PHIL 222) or permission of instructor. An examination of the nature of truth, freedom, responsibility, individuality and interpersonal relations as found in some principal writings of Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Jaspers, Sartre, Heidegger, Camus, Buber and Marcel. Crosslisted as: RELS 326.

PHIL 327. Normative Ethics. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisites: PHIL 221 or PHIL 222; PHIL 201, PHIL 211, PHIL 212, PHIL 213 or PHIL 214; and 3 additional credits of philosophy; or permission of instructor. A study of issues in systematic normative ethics, including such topics as egoism, consequentialism, utilitarianism, deontology and the theory of the virtues.

PHIL 328. Metaethics. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisites: PHIL 221 or PHIL 222; PHIL 201, PHIL 211, PHIL 212, PHIL 213 or PHIL 214; and 3 additional credits of philosophy; or permission of instructor. A study of issues in the semantics and metaphysics of ethics. Such topics as the following will be discussed: the objectivity of ethical judgements, the semantic value of ethical judgements and the possibility of ethical knowledge.

PHIL 331. Philosophy of Science. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisites: 3 credits of philosophy and 6 credits of natural sciences courses. An examination of the bases of scientific inquiry in both the natural and social sciences; including a study of such topics as hypothesis formation and testing, and the nature of scientific laws, theories and explanations.

PHIL 335. Social and Political Philosophy. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisites: 9 credits in philosophy, which must include PHIL 221 or PHIL 222, and one of PHIL 201, PHIL 211, PHIL 212, PHIL 213, or PHIL 214, or permission of instructor. A critical examination of political power and of the relationship between the individual and society. Possible topics include: anarchism and the justification of having a state at all; political views about what sort of state is justified (e.g., conservatism, liberalism, communitarianism, feminism, Marxism); private vs. collective property; market vs. planned economies; democracy vs. totalitarianism; and civil disobedience and revolution.

PHIL 340. Philosophy for Children. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisites: two philosophy courses, which must include at least one of PHIL 101, 103 or 104. A service-learning course requiring at least 15 hours of service in which students will be required to lead philosophical discussions with primary/secondary schoolchildren. An analysis of perennial philosophical questions and problems with the aim of introducing them to children. Some of the questions that might be addressed include: What is happiness? What is justice? What is a mind? Can a mind exist apart from a body? Can machines think? What is time? What is knowledge? What are the limits of human knowledge?.

PHIL 342. Buddhist Reasoning and Debate. 4 Hours.

Semester course; 4 lecture hours. 4 credits. Prerequisite: RELS/INTL 311. A basic introduction to perception, logic and epistemology in Buddhist thought. The course is designed to convey basic reasoning skills including formation of arguments, checking arguments for validity, and developing techniques and strategies for rational discourse. Crosslisted as: RELS 342.

PHIL 391. Topics in Philosophy. 1-4 Hours.

Semester course; variable hours. 1-4 credits. Prerequisite: as specified in the Schedule of Classes or permission of instructor. A study of an individual philosopher, a particular philosophical problem or a narrowly defined period or school. See the Schedule of Classes for specific topics to be offered each semester.

PHIL 408. Indian Tradition. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: at least six credits from philosophy or religious studies courses. A systematic analysis of the major theories of Indian religious and philosophical thought: Vedas, Upanishads, Gita, Charvaka, Jainism, Buddhism, the six systems of Hinduism and contemporary developments. Crosslisted as: RELS 408.

PHIL 410. The Chinese Tradition in Philosophy. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. A study of the development of Confucianism, of alternative ways of thought prior to the fall of the Han Dynasty and of neo-Confucianism. The systems of thought are examined in the light of their social, political and religious impact on China, Korea and Japan. Crosslisted as: RELS 410/INTL 410.

PHIL 412. Zen Buddhism. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: UNIV 200 or HONR 200. A study of Zen Buddhism, including backgrounds in Indian philosophy and practice, development in China and Korea, and present-day Zen theory and practice in Japan and in Western countries. Crosslisted as: RELS 412/INTL 412.

PHIL 421. Aesthetics. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisites: 3 credits in philosophy (exclusive of PHIL 221 and PHIL 222) or permission of instructor. A critical survey of philosophies of art from antiquity to the 20th century. Topics include: the nature of art, creativity, aesthetic experience and aesthetic judgments.

PHIL 430. Philosophy of Religion. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisites: three credits in philosophy (exclusive of PHIL 211 and PHIL 212) or permission of instructor. An introduction to the major problems and questions of religion and reason. Special reference will be made to the nature of God, the nature of man, the problem of evil, the source of good, immortality and the basis of authority. Crosslisted as: RELS 430.

PHIL 440. Mysticism. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: UNIV 200 or HONR 200. A critical analysis of the varieties of mysticism in world religions. Arguments for and against mysticism will be emphasized. Mysticism will be related to art, psychology, science, philosophy, theology and magic. Crosslisted as: RELS 440.

PHIL 490. Seminar in Philosophy. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. May be repeated with different topics for maximum of 6 credits. Prerequisite: one of PHIL 301, 302, 303, 320, 327, 335 or permission of instructor in exceptional cases. Research and analysis of selected philosophical topic in a seminar setting. Must be taken at least once as a senior (i.e., after the completion of at least 85 credit hours toward the degree) to satisfy the capstone requirement.

PHIL 492. Independent Study. 1-4 Hours.

Semester course; variable hours. Variable credit. Maximum of 6 credits per semester; maximum total of 12 credits for all independent study courses. Open generally to students of only junior or senior standing who have acquired at least 12 credits in the departmental discipline. Determination of the amount of credit and permission of instructor and department chair must be procured prior to registration of the course. An independent study course to allow interested majors in philosophy to do research, under the direction of a professor qualified in that field, in an area of major interest.

PHIL 496. Senior Research Project. 1-4 Hours.

Semester course; 1-4 credits. Prerequisites: Senior status; two courses from PHIL 301, 302, 303, 320, 327, 335, 391; and written approval by faculty supervisor. An individual research project to develop a polished journal-length research paper. This course is intended primarily for students who wish to develop a dossier paper for submission to a philosophy graduate program.