Spring 2026 Department of Philosophy Grad Course Descriptions

Listed below are the Philosophy courses being offered at Purdue University in Spring 2026. The courses are listed by their five-digit course number and course title, followed by a brief description. The tables below each description also include information on the course type (e.g., lectures = 'LEC'), the enrolment limit of the course, the day(s)/time of the course or each section of it, the classroom in which the course will be taught, and the instructor(s) for the course. Courses that include a recitation section are marked in the tables below as type 'LEC/REC.' Details of the recitation sections are not listed. The type 'DIST' indicates a fully asynchronous, online course. 'Grad' indicates that a graduate student will be the instructor of record. PHIL courses that are cross-listed with other courses are marked as such (e.g., 'c/l DEPT 10000').

Have questions about philosophy graduate courses? You can contact our Grad Coordinator, Vickie Sanders, via email at sanders@purdue.edu, or by phone at 765-494-4275.

500 LEVEL COURSES

50200 The Problem of Universals in Late Antiquity & the Middle Ages

Course	Type	Enrollment	Time	Bldg/Rm	Instructor
PHIL 50200	LEC	10	M 2:30-5:20pm	BRNG 7119	KUMAR

To what are we referring when we invoke universal terms, such as 'human being,' 'red,' or 'rational'? Do universal terms pick out incorporeal, abstract objects or rather properties that exist immanently in concrete particulars? Or do they merely pick out mental concepts? The question of how and to what universal terms refer has come to be known as the "problem of universals." In his *Introduction* [to logic], Porphyry outlines these potential solutions to the problem but infamously declines to flesh them out. In this course, we will explore various approaches to the problem of universals in late antiquity and the Middle Ages, beginning with Porphyry himself. We will then turn to the influence of Porphyry's *Introduction*, by examining commentaries and glosses on the *Introduction* by Ammonius, Boethius, and Abelard. We will also discuss approaches to the problem in the Islamic tradition, including the groundbreaking contributions of Al-Fārābī and Ibn-Sīna. Finally, we will conclude by surveying Ockham's famous solution to the problem. Through carefully tracing various solutions to the problem of universals, students will come away with a better understanding of the one of the central problems in medieval semantics and metaphysics, a problem that still puzzles metaphysicians and philosophers of language to this day.

53500 Norms: What They Are, Where They Come From, and Whether We Can Change Them

Course	Type	Enrollment	Time	Bldg/Rm	Instructor
PHIL 53500	LEC	10	TR 10:30-11:25am	BRNG 7119	KELLY/WESTRA

This is a seminar about norms, norm psychology, and norm engineering. Norms are the ubiquitous rules that govern what's expected of us in everyday situations. Leaving a 20% tip for your server? That's a norm. Standing arm's length from someone when talking to them? That's a norm. Not wearing soiled clothes? That's a norm. Making small talk before getting down to business? That's a norm. Not putting your phone on speaker at full volume in a public place? That's a norm (that's still violated way too often).

Changing norms is a crucial part of the pursuit of moral progress. By doing away with many entrenched norms, we can eliminate longstanding sources of unfairness and barriers to greater equality. By creating new norms, we can improving the framework we use to work together towards shared social goals.

Still, a viable theory of norm engineering – one that provides reliable guidance about how to do away with bad norms and instill better ones – remains elusive. Indeed, well-intentioned efforts can backfire in spectacular fashion. Many of these difficulties are connected to the fact that norms themselves are frustratingly opaque entities. Despite how often the idea of norms is invoked in the social sciences, there is little consensus about what norms are and how they function. Moreover, norm engineering seems to require changes to a complex set of psychological processes and social incentives that often seem to defy rational explanation.

In this seminar we'll take up these challenges. In the first part, we'll take an opinionated look at theories of

norms and norm psychology, drawing on the latest advances in the study of norms from philosophy and cognitive science. In the second part, we'll use that perspective to explore the prospects for an empirically grounded approach to norm engineering, evaluating particular strategies for norm change as well as a few broad arguments about the entire endeavor.

55100 Philosophy of the Natural Sciences

Course	Type	Enrollment	Time	Bldg/Rm	Instructor
PHIL 55100	LEC	10	W 11:30-2:20pm	BRNG 7119	DUEDE

A survey of issues and theories in contemporary philosophy of science. Variable content.

55300 Mathematical Logic

Course	Type	Enrollment	Time	Bldg/Rm	Instructor
PHIL 55300	LEC	10	M 11:30-2:20pm	BRNG 7119	TULODZIECKI

An introduction to metatheoretic studies of formal axiomatic systems. Basic set theory is developed for use as a tool in studying propositional calculus. Further topics may include many-valued logics and basic (metatheory for) modal or predicate logic.

600 LEVEL COURSES

61000 Seminar in Recent Continental Philosophy

Course	Type	Enrollment	Time	Bldg/Rm	Instructor
PHIL 61000	LEC	10	W 2:30-5:20pm	BRNG 7119	SMITH/MOLLISON

This seminar will examine Nietzsche philosophy through an examination of key texts and selected secondary works.

68000 Dissertation Writing Seminar

Course	Type	Enrollment	Time	Bldg/Rm	Instructor
PHIL 68000	LEC	10	T 1:30am-4:20pm	BRNG 7119	T. DAVIS

This seminar has two primary goals: to improve and develop dissertations in philosophy, and to refine communication skills for an audience of professional philosophers, both in writing and in person. A secondary goal is to provide useful feedback to others, and to practice providing constructive feedback in general. In a workshop format, students give and receive critical feedback on chapters from their dissertations, as well as on presentations covering the dissertation as whole.

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