

What next (or, a Quick Guide to Philosophy Sub-Fields)

We have covered a lot of ground in this class. Hopefully, you are interested in thinking more about some of the questions we discussed. One excellent way to do so is by taking more philosophy classes. But which ones? This quick guide is meant to help you decide based on what you found most interesting, and to give you a sense of the breadth of questions covered in philosophy.

What to take next

If you are interested in the question of personal identity



Then take Introduction to Metaphysics (Phil 215)

Metaphysics is the field of philosophy that studies the nature of reality. Central questions (in addition to the question of personal identity) include free will, the nature of time, causality, necessity, and possibility.

If you are interested in social identities, standpoint epistemology, or anger



Then take Philosophical Issues in Feminism (Phil 347) or Philosophy and the Black Experience (Phil 258)

Feminist philosophy and *philosophy of race* are concerned with questions on the nature of sex and gender and race, respectively. In addition, they are concerned with oppression, and with the role of gender and race in politics, knowledge, and our way of life.

If you are interested in tools for reasoning and argumentation



Then take Logic, Reasoning, and Persuasion (Phil 101)

Logic is the field of philosophy (and math) that deals with the rules for correct inference. In a critical thinking course like Phil 101, the focus is on applying basic tools of logic (and probability, and psychology) to real-world circumstances. In logic classes specifically, you would study formal systems meant to capture what good reasoning looks like, including proving results within such systems.

If you are interested in material on knowledge (Module 2)



Then take Theory of Knowledge (Phil 220)

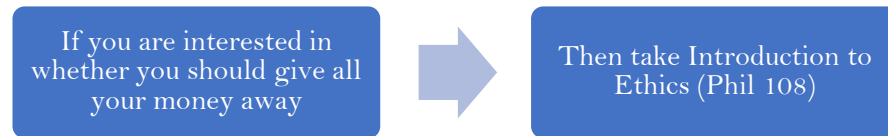
Epistemology studies the nature of knowledge and how we can come to know things about the world. *Social epistemology* is a growing field that approaches these questions in a way that is sensitive to the fact that we come to know things in a society with distinctive features, not as isolated individuals.

If you are interested in the meaning of life (Module 3)

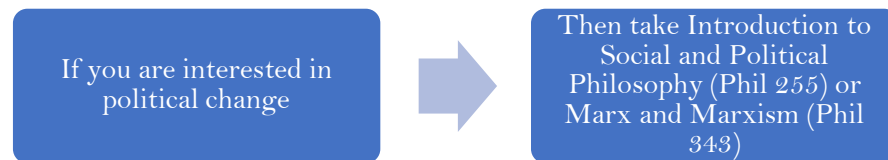


Then take Introduction to Existentialism (Phil 268)

Existentialism is a philosophical tradition that has been especially concerned with the meaning of life, freedom, choice, and action. You will also find work in mainstream ethics on these questions.



Ethics is the study of how one ought to live (or, to put it differently, of the good life), typically with a focus on individuals. *Applied Ethics* focuses on how to act in specific real-world situations, such as in war (*Ethics of War*) or the context of medical decision making (in *Bioethics* and *Medical Ethics*).



Political philosophy focuses on what the ideal states and political institutions and arrangements are like. Marxism is one tradition in political philosophy; if you are interested in thinking about revolutionary politics, it is a good tradition to go to. *Social Philosophy* focuses on social relations and patterns primarily (instead of states and political institutions). Relatedly, *Philosophy of Law* is about what our legal institutions should be like.

Other fields of philosophy to explore

And there are many more philosophy classes you might want to take—we only scratched the surface! For example:

- *Philosophy of Mind* studies the nature of the mind (and of specific mental states, such as beliefs, desires, and emotions), its relation to the body (and to the brain in particular), and the potential for different kinds of minds (including animal minds and AI). *Philosophy of Cognitive Science* covers similar ground, with a closer look at results from psychology.
 - o **Courses to take:** Introduction to the Philosophy of Mind (Phil 218); Minds, Machines, and Persons (Phil 329); Philosophical Aspects of Cognitive Science (Phil 360)
- *Philosophy of Language* studies linguistic meaning, reference, and communication.
 - o **Courses to take:** Philosophy of Language (Phil 201)
- *Philosophy of Science* and of specific sciences (Physics, Math, Biology, Cognitive Science...): General philosophy of science is about scientific methodology, focusing on topics such as the nature of scientific theories, explanation, and confirmation; and on objectivity and scientific knowledge. Philosophy of specific sciences looks at philosophical questions about those disciplines, such as how to interpret their core theories (e.g. quantum mechanics; the nature of the infinite; biological evolution...)
 - o **Courses to take:** Introduction to the Philosophy of Science (Phil 225); the courses on philosophy of specific sciences
- *History of Philosophy* focuses on studying the writings of historically important philosophers, which helps us understand how we got to the conception of the world we now have. The typical history of philosophy courses focus on the western tradition, specifically, on Ancient Greek philosophy and modern European (i.e. British, French, and German) philosophy.

- **Courses to take:** Introduction to Classical Greek Philosophy (Phil 204); Introduction to Modern Philosophy (Phil 205); other more advanced (and more specific) history of philosophy courses.
- *Non-Western Traditions:* philosophy has been done all over the world. Courses on non-Western traditions look at what non-Western philosophers have had to say about a wide range of philosophical questions.
 - **Courses to take:** Chinese Philosophy (Phil 140); African, Latin American, and Native American Philosophy (Phil 366); Hindu Philosophy (Phil 368); Buddhist Philosophy (Phil 369).
- *Philosophy of Religion* focuses on the existence and nature of God, faith, mysticism and religious experience, and the significance of religious belief and practice.
 - **Courses to take:** Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion (Phil 265)
- *Aesthetics* considers questions about the nature and value of beauty and art, interpretation, standards of taste, and specific art forms (literature; music; film...) and artistic movements.
 - **Courses to take:** Philosophy and the Arts (Phil 263); more advanced courses on specific art forms.

Good luck on your future philosophical explorations!