

PHILOSOPHY

Department Description

The program in philosophy introduces students to basic issues concerning knowledge, reality, and values in both classical Western thought and in contemporary critiques of the classical tradition. It attempts to help each student develop her philosophical thought in reflective, independent, and responsible ways.

Study Abroad

Saint Mary's has a long history of providing quality international programs as an essential part of our educational mission—forming women leaders who will make a difference in the world. As this world becomes increasingly interdependent, the College offers an expanding range of semester, year, semester break, and summer study and service programs in a wide variety of countries, and encourages students to take advantage of them. Learn more about the various Study Abroad opportunities (<https://catalog.saintmarys.edu/undergraduate/academic-life/international-programs/>).

Programs

- Law, Ethics and Politics Concentration, Philosophy, Bachelor of Arts - LEP (<https://catalog.saintmarys.edu/undergraduate/programs/philosophy/law-ethics-politics/>)
- Philosophy, Bachelor of Arts - PHIL (<https://catalog.saintmarys.edu/undergraduate/programs/philosophy/philosophy-bachelor-arts/>)
- Philosophy, Minor - PHIL (<https://catalog.saintmarys.edu/undergraduate/programs/philosophy/philosophy-minor/>)

Department Chair

Megan Zwart
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Faculty

D. Horan, A. Pierce, P. Sayre, G. Trey, M. Waddell, M. Zwart

Student Learning Outcomes

The curriculum and requirements are designed to achieve the following goals:

- To cultivate a community of inquiry that gives careful attention to the examination of our deepest assumptions about the world and our place in it.
- To provide those who join us in this community with an opportunity to explore the history of both our own and of other philosophical traditions, bringing the riches of those traditions to bear in addressing, both compassionately and critically, the pressing needs of the day.
- To support and aid those engaged in this exploration as they develop their capacities to think clearly about complex problems and to communicate those thoughts with precision and style.
- To foster an appreciation for all the unpredictable twists and turns that are part of any genuinely intellectual endeavor—an appreciation that will carry one on meaningfully through life with all its unexpected outcomes.

Law, Ethics and Politics Concentration

In addition to the above learning outcomes:

- To describe and evaluate philosophical issues related to:
 - legal structure and practice, including the role of law in a just society
 - the relationship between legal and moral norms
 - the relationship between law and its social context.

Philosophy Courses

Introductory Courses

The following survey courses are offered regularly for students who are fulfilling Sophia requirements or initiating the study of philosophy.

PHIL 110 Introductory Philosophy (3)

Readings and discussions designed to introduce the student to the major areas and problems of philosophy through a study of the writings of classical and contemporary thinkers. (4 semester hours when taught as writing proficiency). There are no prerequisites for this course.

PHIL 233 Philosophy of Gender (3)

An investigation of how gender construction has influenced how philosophy has been done and received historically, exploring how past and present thinkers view reality, knowledge and the good through the lens of gender identity (and the intersections of gender and other identities, including race, class and sexuality). There are no prerequisites for this course.

PHIL 235 Philosophy of Human Existence (3)

A study of important European philosophers from the 19th and 20th centuries who are associated with the existentialist movement. There are no prerequisites to this course.

PHIL 245 Philosophy of World Cultures (3)

A study of representative selected texts from Asian, African, Native American, and other philosophical traditions. There are no prerequisites for this course.

PHIL 247 Philosophy of Religion (3)

An investigation of the major philosophical issues in religious thought as posed by both critics and advocates. Special attention is paid to the relation between religious faith and knowledge. There are no prerequisites to this course.

PHIL 252 Philosophy of Art (3)

A study of both traditional and contemporary philosophical theories concerning beauty, the nature of aesthetic experience, principles of criticism, and the function and character of creativity in the arts. There are no prerequisites to this course.

PHIL 253 Philosophy of Politics (3)

A study of theories of society and the state which may include classical, contemporary, feminist, and other visions of real and ideal community. There are no pre-requisites to this course.

PHIL 291 Dialogue and Civil Discourse (1)

Participants in a democracy should have the skills to identify and evaluate arguments from various perspectives on contemporary social and political issues. They must also be able to articulate their own views clearly and engage with the views of others who disagree. In this course, we will develop skills to engage in constructive dialogue with others who have different views on social and political issues. We will engage a controversial contemporary issue each week (for example: abortion, free speech and safe spaces on campus, immigration, religion in the public space). Background readings will consist of contemporary media articles drawn from a range of sources and viewpoints. Students will investigate their own core assumptions and beliefs about key issues and will listen to the views and experiences of others in the class. Occasional guest speakers will model civil discourse by discussing issues from differing perspectives. Assignments will consist of keeping a journal of the course experience and developing a class-led event to share the skills of dialogue and civil discourse with the broader campus community.

PHIL 292 Philosophy of Walking (1)

This one-credit course in the philosophy of walking provides an opportunity not only to philosophize about walking, but to philosophize while walking. The course meets once a week to discuss and write briefly about the readings for the week, to go for a walk, and to discuss and record insights that come to one along the way. These recorded insights will provide the raw material for completing a project due at the end of the semester.

PHIL 302 Global Justice (3)

This course will explore issues of global justice, poverty, inequality, and human rights, synthesizing reflections on the philosophical foundations of such issues with more concrete reflections on specific challenges facing various regions throughout the world (also listed as JUST 302).

Note: Unless noted otherwise, completion of the Philosophical Worldviews Sophia Program requirement is prerequisite to the courses below.

PHIL 220 Introduction to Logic (3)

A study of the theories and techniques of formal logic in its traditional and contemporary forms. Prerequisite: completion of the Philosophical Worldviews Sophia Program.

PHIL 230 Socrates to Scholasticism (3)

A study of the Greek origins of Western philosophy, with special attention to Plato and Aristotle and their impact on medieval thought. Class discussions throughout the term are grounded in a close reading of primary source texts. Prerequisite: completion of the Philosophical Worldviews Sophia Program.

PHIL 236 American Philosophy (3)

A study of representative American philosophies, including those emerging from classical European traditions, American women philosophers, and African American and Native American thinkers. Prerequisite: completion of the Philosophical Worldviews Sophia Program.

PHIL 243 Introduction to Feminist Philosophy (3)

An inquiry into the meaning of gender and its philosophical implications. Questions of identity, knowledge, ethics, race, and global responsibility will be considered both from historical and contemporary perspectives. Prerequisite: completion of the Philosophical Worldviews Sophia Program.

PHIL 250 Philosophy and Disabilities (3)

This course explores questions raised by the existence of various kinds of disability. What is it like to experience disabilities? How do we understand disabilities? What ethical problems are raised by disabilities, and how do we respond to these problems? Prerequisite: completion of the Philosophical Worldviews Sophia Program.

PHIL 251 Business Ethics (3)

A study of the moral issues raised by contemporary business practices. Prerequisite: completion of the Philosophical Worldviews Sophia Program.

PHIL 254 Social Justice (3)

A philosophical study of problems of justice in the contemporary world. Prerequisite: completion of the Philosophical Worldviews Sophia Program.

PHIL 255 Medical Ethics (3)

A philosophical inquiry into moral issues that arise in modern medicine. Some of the issues to be considered include euthanasia, abortion, care for the dying, patients' rights, limits on medical rights, limits on medical experimentation with human beings, defining death, and the patient-therapist relationship. Prerequisite: completion of the Philosophical Worldviews Sophia Program.

PHIL 256 Environmental Ethics (3)

A focused introduction to ethical thinking organized around themes that pertain to contemporary environmental issues. Prerequisite: completion of the Philosophical Worldviews Sophia Program.

PHIL 290 Special Topics (1-3)

Topics in Philosophy not covered in regular departmental offerings. May be repeated with a different topic. Prerequisite: completion of the Philosophical Worldviews Sophia Program.

PHIL 331 Descartes to Skepticism (3)

A study of major themes in 17th and 18th century Western philosophy beginning with Descartes and tracing the development of modern thought through Hume. Class discussions throughout the term are grounded in a close reading of primary source texts. Prerequisite: completion of the Philosophical Worldviews Sophia Program.

PHIL 332 Kant and His Critics (3)

A careful reading of Kant accompanied by a study of critical responses to his philosophy. The aim is an understanding of Kant's philosophy as a whole and its relevance to contemporary thought. Prerequisite: completion of the Philosophical Worldviews Sophia requirement.

PHIL 333 19th Century Philosophy (3)

A study of philosophical questions emerging in the wake of the enlightenment, examining the implications for religion, politics, history, and reason. Prerequisite: completion of the Philosophical Worldviews Sophia Program.

PHIL 334 Philosophy of Thomas Aquinas (3)

This course develops the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas both as a dialectical method and with respect to a philosophical issue. The issues, which vary from time to time depending on timeliness and student interest, include Aquinas's theory of natural law, natural theology, and the theory of human nature and knowledge. Prerequisite: completion of the Philosophical Worldviews Sophia Program.

PHIL 341 Mind, Knowledge, and Reality (3)

A critical investigation of traditional and contemporary theories of mind along with questions concerning the origin, nature, and validity of human knowledge. Prerequisite: completion of the Philosophical Worldviews Sophia Program.

PHIL 343 20th Century Philosophy (3)

A study of significant contemporary intellectual movements on the continent of Europe, in Great Britain and America since World War II, e.g., phenomenology, post-structuralism, analytic philosophy, and neo-pragmatism. Prerequisite: completion of the Philosophical Worldviews Sophia Program.

PHIL 345 Philosophy of Language (3)

A critical investigation of both analytic and continental theories of language with an emphasis on questions of meaning, reference, and interpretation. Prerequisite: completion of the Philosophical Worldviews Sophia Program.

PHIL 348 Philosophy of Science (3)

An investigation of the meaning and use of scientific concepts and methods. Prerequisite: completion of the Philosophical Worldviews Sophia Program.

PHIL 354 Ethics (3)

A study and critique of selected ethical theories with some application to current moral issues. Prerequisite: completion of the Philosophical Worldviews Sophia Program.

PHIL 355 Philosophy of Law (3)

The philosophy of law considers the relation of law to justice. This course examines legal positivism, social contract, and natural law as accounts of the links between law and justice, including their role in contemporary understanding of the U.S. Constitution. Prerequisite: completion of the Philosophical Worldviews Sophia Program.

PHIL 390 Special Topics (1-3)

Topics in Philosophy not covered in regular departmental offerings. May be repeated for credit with a different topic. Prerequisite: completion of the Philosophical Worldviews Sophia Program.

PHIL 410 Philosophers of Consequence (3)

An in-depth study of the work of one or two important philosophers who will be selected on the basis of instructor preference and student interest. Secondary literature may be consulted but the bulk of the reading will be primary sources. Prerequisite: completion of the Philosophical Worldviews Sophia Program.

PHIL 495 Hannah Arendt: Thinking and Acting (3)

In this course, students engage in a careful study of the work of Hannah Arendt. Arendt makes this famous claim in her magnum opus *The Human Condition*: "What I propose, therefore, is very simple: it is nothing more than to think what we are doing." The course engages with works in which Arendt investigates the relationship between thinking and acting, culminating with the question: How can philosophy help us to "think what we are doing"? Prerequisite: Completion of Philosophical Worldviews Sophia requirement.

PHIL 496 Senior Thesis (3)

An independent study under the supervision of a faculty advisor who guides the writing of a major paper.

PHIL 497 Independent Study (1-3)

An opportunity for students to do independent study. Content dependent on student interests and background. May be repeated.

FOUR-YEAR PLAN for b.a. PHILOSOPHY

The philosophy program is extremely flexible. This is just a suggested pathway. Courses do not have to be taken sequentially, however it is recommended to take PHIL 230: Socrates to Scholasticism before PHIL 331: Descartes to Skepticism. Students may begin the major as late as

the fall semester of their junior year and graduate on time if they plan carefully.

Students who complete the Philosophy Major with a concentration in Law, Ethics and Politics will follow a similar plan, making sure to choose PHIL 355: Philosophy of Law as one of their 300 level electives, and ensuring that two of their additional PHIL electives include a course on politics and a course on ethics.

The philosophy department accepts credit towards the major (for 200 and 300 level elective requirements) from a number of study abroad locations. The study abroad program in Oxford, England, in particular, enables students to complete several courses towards the major.

Students who are planning to study abroad or who have specific questions about the major are encouraged to contact Megan Zwart (mzwart@saintmarys.edu), chair of the department.

Sample Four Year Plan in Philosophy

Course	Title	Credits
First Year		
First Semester		
Sophia Language I (4cr)		
CTS or W (3cr/4cr)		
SPLL 101 (1cr)		
Sophia (3cr)		
PHIL 110	Introductory Philosophy (or 200 level course that meets LO1 in Philosophical Worldviews) ¹	3
Elective (1-3cr)		
Credits		3
Second Semester		
Sophia Language II (4cr)		
CTS or W (3cr/4cr)		
Sophia (3cr)		
Sophia (3cr)		
PHIL 230	Socrates to Scholasticism (or PHIL elective (200 level)) ²	3
Credits		3
Second Year		
First Semester		
Sophia (3cr)		
Sophia (3cr)		
Sophia (3cr)		
PHIL 331	Descartes to Skepticism (or PHIL elective (200 level)) ³	3
Credits		3
Second Semester		
Sophia (3cr)		
Sophia (3cr)		
Sophia (3cr)		
PHIL 220	Introduction to Logic (or PHIL 230: Socrates to Scholasticism or PHIL elective (200 level)) ⁴	3
Credits		3

Third Year**First Semester**

Sophia (4cr)		
PHIL 331	Descartes to Skepticism (or PHIL elective (300 level))	3
Credits		3

Second Semester

Advanced Historical Seminar or PHIL elective (300 level)		3
PHIL 220	Introduction to Logic (or PHIL elective (200 or 300 level))	3
Credits		6

Fourth Year**First Semester**

PHIL elective (200 or 300 level) or Advanced Historical Seminar		3
Credits		3

Second Semester

PHIL 496	Senior Thesis	3
Credits		3
Total Credits		27

¹ Fulfills the Sophia LO1 in Philosophical Worldviews; particular sections of PHIL 110 fulfill LO2s in CTS and W.

² Fulfills the Sophia LO1 in Historical Perspectives

³ Fulfills the Sophia LO1 in Historical Perspectives

⁴ A number of 200 and 300 level PHIL electives fulfill Sophia LO3 requirements. PHIL 255: Medical Ethics fulfills the Sophia AEL requirement

⁵ Students who choose to write a thesis for their philosophy comp will take PHIL 496 during the spring of senior year. This independent study counts as a 300+ elective for the major.