

DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS AND PHILOSOPHY

As its name suggests, the Department of Linguistics and Philosophy houses a linguistics section and a philosophy section. Though they share a number of intellectual interests and a joint undergraduate major, these two sections are administratively autonomous with separate chairpersons, faculties, admissions procedures, curricular and degree requirements, and financial aid programs.

Undergraduate Study

Bachelor of Science in Philosophy (Course 24-1)

This major (<https://catalog.mit.edu/degree-charts/philosophy-course-24-1>) is designed to provide familiarity with the history and current status of the main problems in epistemology, metaphysics, and ethics; mastery of some of the technical skills requisite for advanced work in philosophy; facility at independent philosophical study; and work at an advanced level in an allied field. A relatively large amount of unrestricted elective time is available so that students can devise programs suited to individual needs and interests.

Bachelor of Science in Linguistics and Philosophy (Course 24-2)

This major, also known as the Program in Language and Mind, aims to provide students with a working knowledge of a variety of issues that currently occupy the intersection of philosophy, linguistics, and cognitive science. Central among these topics are the nature of language, of those mental representations that we call "knowledge" and "belief," and of the innate basis for the acquisition of certain types of knowledge (especially linguistic knowledge). Students have the option of pursuing either a philosophy track (<https://catalog.mit.edu/degree-charts/linguistics-philosophy-course-24-2/#philosophytext>) or a linguistics track (<https://catalog.mit.edu/degree-charts/linguistics-philosophy-course-24-2/#linguisticstext>). Both require a core set of subjects drawn from both fields and are designed to teach students the central facts and issues in the study of language and the representation of knowledge. Each track requires, in addition, a set of subjects drawn primarily from its discipline and is designed to prepare students for graduate study either in philosophy/cognitive science or in linguistics. A coherent program of three restricted electives (drawn from one or two of the following three areas: linguistics, philosophy, or a related area) rounds out the major.

Note that students are prohibited from majoring in both 24-1 and 24-2.

Minor in Philosophy

The goal of the Minor in Philosophy is to introduce students to the methods of analytic philosophy and then to have them study a

broad range of philosophers and philosophical issues at a more sophisticated level, culminating in an advanced seminar.

The minor consists of six subjects arranged into three levels of study as follows:

Tier I		
Select 1-2 introductory philosophy subject numbered		12
24.00 - 24.09 ¹		
Select one of the following logic subjects: ²		12
24.118	Paradox and Infinity	
24.141	Logic I	
24.242	Logic II	
24.243	Classical Set Theory	
24.244	Modal Logic	
24.245	Theory of Models	
Tier II		
Select 2-3 philosophy subjects numbered at the 100 or 200 level, approved by the minor advisor		36
Tier III		
24.260	Topics in Philosophy	12
Total Units		72

¹ Students may substitute one appropriate philosophy concourse subject with the permission of the minor advisor.

² Students may take a logic subject offered by another department (e.g., Mathematics) with the permission of the minor advisor.

Minor in Linguistics

The Minor in Linguistics consists of six subjects arranged in three levels of study, intended to provide students with breadth in the field of theoretical linguistics as a whole. The three levels are as follows:

Tier I		
24.900	Introduction to Linguistics ¹	12
Tier II		
24.901	Language and Its Structure I: Phonology	12
24.902	Language and Its Structure II: Syntax	12
24.903	Language and Its Structure III: Semantics and Pragmatics	12
Tier III		
Select two of the following:		24
24.904	Language Acquisition	
24.905[[	Laboratory in Psycholinguistics	
24.906[[	The Linguistic Study of Bilingualism	
24.909	Field Methods in Linguistics	
24.910	Advanced Topics in Linguistic Analysis	
24.914	Language Variation and Change	

24.915	Linguistic Phonetics
Total Units	72

¹ 24.9000 How Language Works is also an acceptable option.

Graduate Study

Master of Science in Linguistics

The Department of Linguistics (<http://linguistics.mit.edu>) and Philosophy (<http://web.mit.edu/philosophy>)’s Indigenous Language Initiative (MITILI) (<https://linguistics.mit.edu/mitili>) offers a two-year graduate program of study leading to a Master of Science (SM) in Linguistics. The MITILI SM in Linguistics is for members of indigenous communities whose languages are threatened; the goal of the program is to provide its graduates with the linguistic knowledge that will help them in efforts to keep their communities’ languages alive. Additionally, MITILI offers expanded opportunities for MIT students and faculty to become involved in indigenous and endangered languages through work with native speaker linguists in the master’s program and also with outside groups.

Admission

Applicants must have a native speaker’s knowledge of an indigenous or endangered language or commitment to learning it as a second language (as evidenced, for example, by demonstrable commitment to the community in the area of language revitalization), as well as a demonstrated ability and interest in scholarly and practical work in or out of the community relating to the language. Applications are encouraged not only from individuals who have demonstrated their capabilities in a traditional academic setting but also from individuals who have demonstrated their ability in concrete ways recognized as valuable within their home communities.

Requirements

Students in the MITILI in the SM in Linguistics (<https://catalog.mit.edu/degree-charts/sm-linguistics>) must fulfill the Institute’s General Degree Requirements (<https://catalog.mit.edu/mit/graduate-education/general-degree-requirements/#mastersdegreetxt>): 66 units of graduate subject credit, plus a thesis approved by the department.

During the first year of the program, students complete coursework in linguistics, along with independent study in their language. The second year is normally devoted to the writing of the master’s thesis, under the supervision of the student’s advisor, along with any additional coursework judged to be relevant to that project. Upon the successful completion of the program and defense of the thesis during the second year, the student is awarded the Master of Science in Linguistics.

Doctor of Philosophy in Linguistics

The Linguistics Section offers a demanding program leading to the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Linguistics. The normal course

of study is five years, including the writing of the dissertation. The orientation of the program is highly theoretical, its central aim being the development of a general theory that reveals the rules and laws that govern the structure of a given language and the general laws and principles that govern all natural languages. The topics that form the core of this program are the traditional ones of phonology, syntax, and semantics, but the program’s interests also extend into questions of the interrelations between linguistics and other disciplines such as philosophy and logic, speech science and technology, computer science and artificial intelligence, and study of the brain and cognition.

Approximately eight students enter the program each year in a highly selective admissions process. The department does not require that applicants have taken any particular set of subjects or that they be trained in any particular discipline. Instead, applicants must present evidence that they are able to engage in serious scholarly inquiry of complex subject matter.

All students in the linguistics program must complete a set of required subjects unless they have acquired adequate preparation elsewhere. Before degree candidates begin their doctoral research, they are required to pass a comprehensive general examination, in conformity with Institute requirements.

The following subjects are normally required of all doctoral candidates in linguistics:

24.951	Introduction to Syntax	12
24.961	Introduction to Phonology	12
24.970	Introduction to Semantics	12
24.952	Advanced Syntax	12
24.962	Advanced Phonology	12
24.973	Advanced Semantics	12
24.993	Tutorial in Linguistics and Related Fields	
24.942	Topics in the Grammar of a Less Familiar Language	12
24.949	Language Acquisition I	9
24.991	Workshop in Linguistics (two terms)	12
24.995	Linguistics Professional Perspective	1

Two additional subjects, including:	
An advanced subject with research paper requirement in syntax/semantics	
An advanced subject with research paper requirement in phonology/morphology	

Before students begin their doctoral research, they are required to pass a comprehensive general examination that is composed of two parts. The first part is a written examination consisting of two substantial papers on topics chosen in consultation with members of the faculty. The two papers must present research on two distinct topics in two distinct subdisciplines of linguistics. The

subdisciplines include phonetics, phonology, syntax, semantics, pragmatics, language acquisition, language processing, or any other area of linguistics, so long as there is a substantial theoretical-linguistic component to the papers. In conformity with Institute regulations, the second part of the examination is oral. It deals with topics treated in the candidate's written examination, but is not limited to these and probes into the candidate's competence in linguistics in general.

For more information about the PhD program requirements (<http://web.mit.edu/philosophy/PhDprogram.html>), visit the website.

Doctor of Philosophy in Philosophy

The program of studies leading to the doctorate in philosophy provides subjects and seminars in such traditional areas as logic, ethics, metaphysics, epistemology, philosophy of science, philosophy of language, philosophy of mind, aesthetics, social and political philosophy, and history of philosophy. Interest in philosophical problems arising from other disciplines, such as linguistics, psychology, mathematics, and physics, is also encouraged.

To enter the doctoral program, students must have done well in their previous academic work and must be formally accepted as candidates for the degree by the Department of Linguistics and Philosophy. Although there are no formal course requirements for admission, applicants must satisfy the committee on admissions that their preparation in philosophy and allied disciplines is sufficient for undertaking the study of philosophy at the graduate level.

Before beginning dissertation research, students are required to take two years of coursework, including a proseminar in contemporary philosophy that all students must complete in their first year of graduate study. Students are also required to demonstrate competence in the following areas: value theory, logic, and the history of philosophy.

Interdisciplinary study is encouraged, and candidates for the doctorate may take a minor in a field other than philosophy. Options for minors include linguistics, psychology, and logic. Students who elect one of these options are expected to complete three approved graduate subjects in their minor field. There is no general language requirement for the doctorate, except in those cases in which competence in one or more foreign languages is needed to carry on research for the dissertation.

For more information about the PhD program requirements (<http://web.mit.edu/philosophy/PhDprogram.html>), visit the website.

Inquiries

Information regarding undergraduate or graduate academic programs, research activities, admissions, financial aid, and assistantships may be obtained from the Department of Linguistics and Philosophy, Room 32-D808, 617-253-4653.

Faculty and Teaching Staff

Kieran Setiya, PhD
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Professor of Philosophy
Head, Department of Linguistics and Philosophy

Daniel Fox, PhD
Anshen-Chomsky Professor in Language and Thought
Professor of Linguistics
Head, Linguistics Section

Professors

Adam Albright, PhD
Professor of Linguistics

Alex Byrne, PhD
Laurance S. Rockefeller Professor in Philosophy
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Kai von Fintel, PhD
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Caspar Hare, PhD
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(On leave, fall)

Sally Haslanger, PhD
Ford International Professor
Professor of Philosophy

Brian Hedden, PhD
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Professor of Linguistics

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Dean, School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences

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Associate Professors

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Rachel Fraser, PhD
Associate Professor of Philosophy

Martin Hackl, PhD
Associate Professor of Linguistics

Justin Khoo, PhD
Associate Professor of Philosophy

Viola Schmitt, PhD
Associate Professor of Linguistics

John Haven Spencer II, PhD
Associate Professor of Philosophy
(On leave, spring)

Assistant Professors

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Assistant Professor of Linguistics

Sam Berstler, PhD
Laurance S. Rockefeller Career Development Professor in Philosophy
Assistant Professor of Philosophy

Bar Luzon, PhD
Assistant Professor of Philosophy

Matthias Michel, PhD
Old Dominion Career Development Professor
Assistant Professor of Philosophy

Elise Newman, PhD
Assistant Professor of Linguistics

Senior Lecturers

Tushar Menon, PhD
Senior Lecturer in Philosophy

Professors Emeriti

Noam Chomsky, PhD
Institute Professor Emeritus
Professor Emeritus of Linguistics

Irene R. Heim, PhD
Professor Emerita of Linguistics

Samuel Jay Keyser, PhD
Professor Emeritus of Linguistics

Vann McGee, PhD
Professor Emeritus of Philosophy

Shigeru Miyagawa, PhD
Kochi Prefecture-John Manjiro Professor Emeritus in Japanese
Language and Culture
Professor Emeritus of Linguistics

Roger Schwarzschild, PhD
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Kenneth Wexler, PhD
Professor Emeritus of Psychology
Professor Emeritus of Linguistics

Stephen Yablo, PhD
David W. Skinner Professor Emeritus
Professor Emeritus of Philosophy

Discovery-focused

24.93 The Search for Meaning

Subject meets with 24.A03

Prereq: None

Acad Year 2025-2026: Not offered

Acad Year 2026-2027: U (Fall)

1-0-1 units

"We create islands of meaning in the sea of information" (Freeman Dyson). Primarily explores meanings conveyed through language, with an emphasis on concepts and tools from linguistics. Also brings in ideas from information theory, cryptography, logic, psychology, anthropology, computer science, philosophy, and literature. Topics include human language and its core properties, writing systems, auxiliary systems (talking drums, whistled languages), animal communication systems, the interplay of language and thought, the social dimensions of meaning, the unreasonable effectiveness of cursing, and much more. Includes some reading and thinking outside class, but no problem sets or papers. Subject can count toward the 6-unit discovery-focused credit limit for first-year students.

K. von Fintel

Philosophy

Undergraduate Subjects

24.00 Problems of Philosophy

Prereq: None

U (Fall)

3-0-9 units. HASS-H; CI-H

Introduction to the problems of philosophy- in particular, to problems in ethics, metaphysics, theory of knowledge, and philosophy of logic, language, and science. A systematic rather than historical approach. Readings from classical and contemporary sources, but emphasis is on examination and evaluation of proposed solutions to the problems.

A. Byrne

24.01 Classics of Western Philosophy

Prereq: None

U (Fall)

3-0-9 units. HASS-H; CI-H

Introduction to Western philosophical tradition through the study of selected major thinkers such as Plato, Aristotle, Lucretius, Descartes, Hobbes, Leibniz, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, Kant, Nietzsche and Marx. Emphasis on changes of intellectual outlook over time, and the complex interplay of scientific, religious and political concerns that influence the development of philosophical ideas.

S. Haslanger

24.013 Philosophy and the Arts

Prereq: None

Acad Year 2025-2026: Not offered

Acad Year 2026-2027: U (Spring)

3-0-9 units. HASS-H; CI-H

Explores philosophical questions about art in general, and about the particular arts, such as literature and music. Measures the answers philosophers have proposed to these questions against our own experiences with the arts. Readings include short works of literature. Includes a museum visit with no charge to students.

Staff

24.02 Moral Problems and the Good Life

Prereq: None

U (Spring)

3-0-9 units. HASS-H; CI-H

Introduction to important philosophical debates about moral issues and what constitutes a good life: What is right, what is wrong, and why? How important are personal happiness, longevity, and success if one is to live a good life? When is it good for you to get what you want? To what extent are we morally obliged to respect the rights and needs of others? What do we owe the poor, the discriminated, our loved ones, animals and fetuses?

K. Setiya

24.03 Good Food: The Ethics and Politics of Food

Prereq: None

U (Spring)

Not offered regularly; consult department

3-0-9 units. HASS-H; CI-H

Explores the values (aesthetic, moral, cultural, religious, prudential, political) expressed in the choices of food people eat. Analyzes the decisions individuals make about what to eat, how society should manage food production and consumption collectively, and how reflection on food choices might help resolve conflicts between different values.

S. Haslanger

24.04[J] Justice

Same subject as 17.01[J]

Prereq: None

U (Fall)

3-0-9 units. HASS-H; CI-H

Provides an introduction to contemporary political thought centered around the ideal of justice and the realities of injustice. Examines what a just society might look like and how we should understand various forms of oppression and domination. Studies three theories of justice (utilitarianism, libertarianism, and egalitarian liberalism) and brings them into conversation with other traditions of political thought (critical theory, communitarianism, republicanism, and post-structuralism). Readings cover foundational debates about equality, freedom, recognition, and power.

B. Zacka

24.05 Philosophy of Religion

Prereq: None

Acad Year 2025-2026: Not offered

Acad Year 2026-2027: U (Spring)

3-0-9 units. HASS-H; CI-H

Uses key questions in the philosophy of religion to introduce tools of contemporary philosophy. Explores what defines a god, the possibility of the existence of gods, the potential conflict between religion and science, whether morality requires a divine author, and religious tolerance.

J. Spencer

24.06[J] Bioethics

Same subject as STS.006[J]

Prereq: None

Acad Year 2025-2026: Not offered

Acad Year 2026-2027: U (Fall)

3-0-9 units. HASS-H; CI-H

Considers ethical questions that have arisen from the growth of biomedical research and the health-care industry since World War II. Should doctors be allowed to help patients end their lives? If so, when and how? Should embryos be cloned for research and/or reproduction? Should parents be given control over the genetic make-up of their children? What types of living things are appropriate to use as research subjects? How should we distribute scarce and expensive medical resources? Draws on philosophy, history, and anthropology to show how problems in bioethics can be approached from a variety of perspectives.

R. Scheffler

24.08[J] Philosophical Issues in Brain Science

Same subject as 9.48[J]

Prereq: None

Acad Year 2025-2026: Not offered

Acad Year 2026-2027: U (Fall)

3-0-9 units. HASS-H; CI-H

An introduction to some central philosophical questions about the mind, specifically those intimately connected with contemporary psychology and neuroscience. Discussions focus on arguments over innate concepts; "mental images" as pictures in the head; whether color is in the mind or in the world; and whether there can be a science of consciousness. Explains the relevant parts of psychology and neuroscience as the subject proceeds.

Staff

24.09 Minds and Machines

Prereq: None

U (Spring)

3-0-9 units. HASS-H; CI-H

Introduction to philosophy of mind. Can computers think? Is the mind an immaterial thing? Alternatively, is the mind the brain? How can creatures like ourselves think thoughts that are about things? Can I know whether your experiences are the same as mine when we both look at raspberries, fire trucks, and stoplights? Can consciousness be given a scientific explanation?

M. Michel

24.111 Philosophy of Quantum Mechanics

Prereq: None

U (Spring)

3-0-9 units. HASS-H

Quantum mechanics is said to describe a world in which physical objects often lack "definite" properties, indeterminism creeps in at the point of "observation," ordinary logic does not apply, and distant events are perfectly yet inexplicably correlated. Examination of these and other issues central to the philosophical foundations of quantum mechanics, with special attention to the measurement problem, no-hidden-variables proofs, and Bell's Inequalities. Rigorous approach to the subject matter nevertheless neither presupposes nor requires the development of detailed technical knowledge of the quantum theory.

T. Menon

24.116 Philosophy of Statistics

Prereq: None

U (Spring)

Not offered regularly; consult department

3-0-9 units. HASS-H

Studies how to evaluate statistical hypotheses. Critically considers several prominent approaches, including frequentism (with its null hypotheses, test statistics, p-values), likelihoodism (with its likelihood ratios and relative support) and Bayesianism (with its priors, conditionalization, utilities). Focuses on foundations, not technicalities. Previous exposure to statistics will be helpful but isn't required.

*T. Menon***24.118 Paradox and Infinity**

Prereq: None

U (Spring)

3-0-9 units. HASS-H

Presents highlights of the more technical side of philosophy. Studies a cluster of puzzles, paradoxes, and intellectual wonders - from the higher infinite to Godel's Theorem - and discusses their philosophical implications. Recommended prerequisites: 6.100A, 18.01. Enrollment limited.

*T. Menon***24.121 Metaphysics**

Prereq: None

U (Fall)

3-0-9 units. HASS-H

Study of basic metaphysical issues concerning existence, the mind-body problem, personal identity, and causation plus its implications for freedom. Classical as well as contemporary readings. Provides practice in written and oral communication.

*Staff***24.122[J] Knowledge, Opinion, and Truth**

Same subject as CC.118[J]

Prereq: None

U (Spring)

Not offered regularly; consult department

3-0-9 units. HASS-H

See description under subject CC.118[J]. Preference to students in Concourse.

*L. Rabieh***24.130 Ethics**

Prereq: None

U (Fall)

3-0-9 units. HASS-H

Survey of moral philosophy in the Western tradition, focusing primarily on utilitarian, Kantian, and Aristotelian moral theories, along with selected criticisms of those theories. Explores the questions of what makes right actions right and wrong actions wrong, what a good life consists of, what it takes to be a virtuous person, and what it means to be free and responsible for one's actions. Debates why these ideas are important. Aim is to understand how some of the most influential philosophers have addressed these questions, and by so doing, to better understand and formulate one's own views. Readings from classic and contemporary authors, including Aristotle, Bentham, Kant, Rawls, Nagel, and Korsgaard. Enrollment limited.

*T. Schapiro***24.131 Ethics of Technology**

Prereq: None

U (Spring)

3-0-9 units. HASS-H

Introduces the tools of philosophical ethics through application to contemporary issues concerning technology. Takes up current debates on topics such as privacy and surveillance, algorithmic bias, the promise and peril of artificial intelligence, automation and the future of work, and threats to democracy in the digital age from the perspective of users, practitioners, and regulatory/governing bodies.

*M. Masny***24.132 Workshop in Ethical Engineering**

Prereq: None

U (IAP)

Not offered regularly; consult department

2-0-1 units

Students study and apply a protocol for identifying and addressing ethical issues in a computer science, software development, or other engineering project. Builds a vocabulary to advocate for and justify ethical decisions in engineering contexts. For the final project, students either apply the protocol to a project they are working on, or develop their own protocol.

Staff

24.133 Experiential Ethics

Subject meets with 24.134

Prereq: None

U (Fall, Spring; partial term)

1-0-2 units

Examines the ethical context around students' summer internships, research, and other experiential learning activities. During the summer and through the first four weeks of the fall term, students engage in small group discussions of applied ethical practices and case studies. Throughout the subject, they explore their own moral values through a reflective final project that examines their engagement with ethics during their summer experience. Includes local field trips, practitioner interviews, and/or similar opportunities for interaction with professional ethics. Concludes with a showcase of final presentations. Meets with 24.134, a 6-unit version which includes additional class time, assignments, theoretical content, and in-depth engagement. Students planning to take this subject must apply in the spring; consult program website for details.

*Staff***24.134 Experiential Ethics**

Subject meets with 24.133

Prereq: None

U (Fall, Spring; partial term)

2-0-4 units

Examines the ethical context around students' summer internships, research, and other experiential learning activities. During the summer and beginning of fall term, students engage in small group discussions of applied ethical problems. Includes an independent project and opportunities for interaction with professional ethics. Meets with 24.133 but includes additional class time, assignments, theoretical content, and in-depth engagement. Students planning to take this subject must apply in the spring; consult program website for details.

*Staff***24.137[J] Feminist Thought**

Same subject as 17.007[J], WGS.301[J]

Subject meets with 17.006[J], 24.637[J]

Prereq: None

U (Fall, Spring)

3-0-9 units. HASS-H

See description under subject WGS.301[J].

*E. Wood, S. Haslanger***24.141 Logic I**

Prereq: None

U (Fall)

3-0-9 units. HASS-H

Introduction to the aims and techniques of formal logic. The logic of truth functions and quantifiers. The concepts of validity and truth and their relation to formal deduction. Applications of logic and the place of logic in philosophy.

*B. Brast-McKie***24.150[J] Liberalism, Toleration, and Freedom of Speech**

Same subject as 17.043[J], CMS.125[J]

Prereq: None

U (Spring)

3-0-9 units. HASS-H

Examines theories and principles that underlie the concept of free speech in the United States, the historical context in which the values of free speech and toleration emerged, and the philosophical arguments that were and are made for and against them. Students analyze a variety of contexts and communicative practices, including new media technologies, to debate how "speech" can be described and when it should be appropriately regulated. Considers current disputes over free speech on college campuses.

*A. Byrne, B. Skow***24.C40[J] Ethics of Computing**

Same subject as 6.C40[J]

Prereq: None

U (Fall)

3-0-9 units. HASS-H

Explores ethical questions raised by the potentially transformative power of computing technologies. Topics include: lessons from the history of transformative technologies; the status of property and privacy rights in the digital realm; effective accelerationism, AI alignment, and existential risk; algorithmic bias and algorithmic fairness; and free speech, disinformation, and polarization on online platforms.

B. Skow, A. Solar-Lezama

24.200 Ancient Philosophy

Prereq: One Philosophy subject or permission of instructor

U (Spring)

Not offered regularly; consult department

3-0-9 units. HASS-H

Investigates the origins of Western philosophy in ancient Greece. Aims both to understand the philosophical questions the Greeks were asking on their own terms, and to assess their answers to them. Examines how a human being can lead a good life, the relationship between morality and happiness, our knowledge of the world around us, and the entities we need to appeal to in order to explain that world. Students taking graduate version complete additional assignments. Enrollment may be limited; preference to Course 24 majors and minors.

Staff

24.201 Topics in the History of Philosophy

Prereq: One philosophy subject or permission of instructor

Acad Year 2025-2026: Not offered

Acad Year 2026-2027: U (Spring)

3-0-9 units. HASS-H

Can be repeated for credit.

Close examination of a text, an author, or a theme in the history of philosophy. Can be repeated for credit with permission of the instructor and advisor. Enrollment may be limited; preference to Course 24 majors and minors.

T. Schapiro

24.211 Theory of Knowledge

Prereq: One philosophy subject

Acad Year 2025-2026: Not offered

Acad Year 2026-2027: U (Spring)

3-0-9 units. HASS-H

Study of problems concerning our concept of knowledge, our knowledge of the past, our knowledge of the thoughts and feelings of ourselves and others, and our knowledge of the existence and properties of physical objects in our immediate environment. Enrollment may be limited; preference to Course 24 majors and minors.

R. White

24.212 Philosophy of Perception

Prereq: One philosophy subject or permission of instructor

Acad Year 2025-2026: Not offered

Acad Year 2026-2027: U (Fall)

3-0-9 units. HASS-H

In-depth examination of philosophical issues concerning perception, such as whether we see mind-independent physical objects or, alternatively, mind-dependent representations; whether perception is a source of theory-neutral observations or is affected by the perceiver's beliefs in a way that compromises the objectivity of science. Readings primarily drawn from contemporary literature in both philosophy and psychology. Enrollment may be limited; preference to Course 24 majors and minors.

Staff

24.213 Philosophy of Film

Prereq: One philosophy subject or permission of instructor

Acad Year 2025-2026: Not offered

Acad Year 2026-2027: U (Spring)

3-0-9 units. HASS-H

Explores the philosophical analysis of cinematic art. Topics may include the nature of film, authorship, interpretation, ethical, narration, metaphor, meta-criticism, political and emotional engagement with the cinematic experience. Enrollment may be limited; preference to Course 24 majors and minors.

J. Khoo

24.215 Topics in the Philosophy of Science

Prereq: One philosophy subject

U (Fall)

3-0-9 units. HASS-H

Can be repeated for credit.

Close examination of a small number of issues central to recent philosophy of science, such as the demarcation problem, causal relations, laws of nature, underdetermination of theory by data, paradoxes of confirmation, scientific realism, the role of mathematics in science, elimination of bias, and the objectivity of scientific discourse. Enrollment may be limited; preference to Course 24 majors and minors.

T. Menon

24.220 Moral Psychology

Prereq: One philosophy subject or permission of instructor
U (Spring)
3-0-9 units. HASS-H

An examination of philosophical theories of action and motivation in the light of empirical findings from social psychology, sociology and neuroscience. Topics include belief, desire, and moral motivation; sympathy and empathy; intentions and other committing states; strength of will and weakness of will; free will; addiction and compulsion; guilt, shame and regret; evil; self-knowledge and self-deception; virtues and character traits. Enrollment may be limited; preference to Course 24 majors and minors.

T. Schapiro

24.222 Decisions, Games and Rational Choice

Prereq: One philosophy subject or permission of instructor
Acad Year 2025-2026: Not offered
Acad Year 2026-2027: U (Spring)
3-0-9 units. HASS-H

Foundations and philosophical applications of Bayesian decision theory, game theory and theory of collective choice. Why should degrees of belief be probabilities? Is it always rational to maximize expected utility? If so, why and what is its utility? What is a solution to a game? What does a game-theoretic solution concept such as Nash equilibrium say about how rational players will, or should, act in a game? How are the values and the actions of groups, institutions and societies related to the values and actions of the individuals that constitute them? Enrollment may be limited; preference to Course 24 majors and minors.

Staff

24.223 Rationality

Prereq: One philosophy subject or permission of instructor
Acad Year 2025-2026: Not offered
Acad Year 2026-2027: U (Fall)
3-0-9 units. HASS-H

Provides the tools for thinking through the tension of empirical work that suggests humans are surprisingly irrational and other work that suggests humans are exquisitely rational. Doing so requires combining both normative and descriptive methods: the need to know how ideally rational agents *would* reason, as well as how real people *do* reason. The first half of the term is spent learning the details of how to work with the canonical (Bayesian) theory of rationality; it is blackboard- and problem-set based. The second half of the term is spent applying this theory to work out the proper interpretation of a variety of empirical results that have been taken to demonstrate human irrationality, such as hindsight bias, motivated reasoning, the gambler's fallacy, the sunk-cost fallacy, conformity, and polarization. Subject is paper- and discussion-based. Enrollment may be limited; preference to Course 24 majors and minors.

K. Dorst

24.230 Meta-ethics

Prereq: One philosophy subject or permission of instructor
Acad Year 2025-2026: Not offered
Acad Year 2026-2027: U (Fall)
3-0-9 units. HASS-H

Considers a range of philosophical questions about the foundations of morality, such as whether and in what sense morality is objective, the nature of moral discourse, and how we can come to know right from wrong. Enrollment may be limited; preference to Course 24 majors and minors.

J. Khoo

24.233 The Ethics of Climate Change

Prereq: One philosophy subject or permission of instructor
Acad Year 2025-2026: Not offered
Acad Year 2026-2027: U (Spring)
3-0-9 units. HASS-H

Deals with ethical questions raised by the way in which our climate is changing as a result of fossil fuel consumption. Explores the moral problems raised by these effects, the obligations of individuals and governments, the difficulties involved in dealing with uncertainty, catastrophe, and the ethics of future generations. Enrollment may be limited; preference to Course 24 majors and minors.

C. Hare, K. Setiya

24.234 Global Justice, Gender, and Development

Subject meets with 24.634

Prereq: None

U (Fall)

3-0-9 units. HASS-H

Addresses challenges in working towards global justice including poverty, food and water insecurity, healthcare disparities, human rights violations, violence and dislocation, and environmental risk. Focuses on gender and identity, locating the root causes of inequality within cultural, political and economic contexts. Designed to give a framework to understand gender dynamics. Teaches how to integrate gender sensitive strategies into development work. Classes, readings, and final projects illustrate how design and implementation of international development strategies can provide capacity building and income generation opportunities. Meets with EC.718[J] when offered concurrently. Students taking graduate version complete additional assignments. Limited to 20 total for versions meeting together.

S. Haslanger, L. McDonald

24.235[J] Philosophy of Law

Same subject as 17.021[J]

Prereq: One philosophy subject or permission of instructor

U (Spring)

Not offered regularly; consult department

3-0-9 units. HASS-H

Examines fundamental issues in philosophy of law, such as the nature and limits of law and a legal system, and the relation of law to morality, with particular emphasis on the philosophical issues and problems associated with privacy, liberty, justice, punishment, and responsibility. Historical and contemporary readings, including court cases. Instruction and practice in oral and written communication provided. Enrollment may be limited; preference to Course 24 majors and minors.

Staff

24.236 Topics in Social Theory and Practice

Subject meets with 24.636

Prereq: One philosophy subject or permission of instructor

U (Spring)

3-0-9 units. HASS-H

An in-depth consideration of a topic in social theory with reflection on its implications for social change. Examples of topics include race and racism; punishment and prison reform; global justice and human rights; gender and global care chains; environmentalism and industrial agriculture; bioethics, disability, and human enhancement; capitalism and commodification; and sexuality and the family. Readings draw from both social science and philosophy with special attention to the normative literature relevant to the issue. Students taking graduate version complete additional assignments. Enrollment may be limited; preference to Course 24 majors and minors.

R. Fraser

24.240[J] Literature and Philosophy

Same subject as 21L.452[J]

Prereq: One philosophy subject

U (Spring)

Not offered regularly; consult department

3-0-9 units. HASS-H

Highlights interactions between literary and philosophical texts, asking how philosophical themes can be explored in fiction, poetry, and drama. Exposes students to diverse modes of humanistic thought, interpretation, and argument, putting the tools and ideas of philosophy into conversation with those of the literary humanities. Students engage closely with selected literary and philosophical texts, explore selected topics in philosophy - such as ethics, epistemology, and aesthetics - through a literary lens, and participate in class discussion with peers and professors. Enrollment limited.

M. Gubar, K. Setiya

24.242 Logic II

Prereq: 24.141 or permission of instructor

Acad Year 2025-2026: Not offered

Acad Year 2026-2027: U (Spring)

3-0-9 units. HASS-H

The central results of modern logic: the completeness of predicate logic, recursive functions, the incompleteness of arithmetic, the unprovability of consistency, the indefinability of truth, Skolem-Löwenheim theorems, and nonstandard models. Enrollment may be limited.

Staff

24.243 Classical Set Theory

Prereq: 24.141 or permission of instructor

Acad Year 2025-2026: Not offered

Acad Year 2026-2027: U (Spring)

3-0-9 units. HASS-H

Introduction to the basic concepts and results of standard, i.e., Zermelo-Fraenkel, set theory, the axioms of ZF, ordinal and cardinal arithmetic, the structure of the set-theoretic universe, the axiom of choice, the (generalized) continuum hypothesis, inaccessible cardinals, and beyond. Enrollment may be limited.

Staff

24.244 Modal Logic

Prereq: 24.141

U (Spring)

3-0-9 units. HASS-H

Sentential and quantified modal logic, with emphasis on the model theory ("possible worlds semantics"). Soundness, completeness, and characterization results for alternative systems. Tense and dynamic logics, epistemic logics, as well as logics of necessity and possibility. Applications in philosophy, theoretical computer science, and linguistics. Enrollment may be limited.

Staff

24.245 Theory of Models

Prereq: 24.141 or permission of instructor

Acad Year 2025-2026: Not offered

Acad Year 2026-2027: U (Spring)

3-0-9 units. HASS-H

Studies fundamental results in the model theory of the first-order predicate calculus. Includes completeness, compactness, Löwenheim-Skolem, omitting types, ultraproducts, and categoricity in a cardinal, starting with Tarski's definition of logical consequence, in terms of truth in a model. Enrollment may be limited.

Staff

24.251 Introduction to Philosophy of Language

Prereq: One philosophy subject

U (Fall)

3-0-9 units. HASS-H

Examines views on the nature of meaning, reference, and truth, and their bearing on the use of language in communication. No knowledge of logic or linguistics presupposed. Instruction and practice in oral and written communication provided. Enrollment may be limited; preference to Course 24 majors and minors.

S. Berstler

24.252 Language and Power

Prereq: One philosophy subject or permission of instructor

Acad Year 2025-2026: U (Spring)

Acad Year 2026-2027: Not offered

3-0-9 units. HASS-H

Explores topics at the intersection of philosophy of language and social/political philosophy. Topics may include linguistic harm, free speech, speech in non-cooperative contexts (lying, insincerity, antagonistic interlocutors), propaganda, pejoratives, and the relationship of language to features of the social world (race, gender, ideology). Instruction and practice in oral and written communication provided. Enrollment may be limited; preference to Course 24 majors and minors.

S. Berstler, J. Khoo

24.253 Philosophy of Mathematics

Prereq: One philosophy subject or permission of instructor

Acad Year 2025-2026: Not offered

Acad Year 2026-2027: U (Spring)

3-0-9 units. HASS-H

Philosophical issues about or related to mathematics, including the existence and nature of basic mathematical objects such as numbers and sets, how we can come to have knowledge of such objects, the status of mathematical truth, the relation of mathematics to logic, and whether classical logic can be called into question. Enrollment may be limited; preference to Course 24 majors and minors.

Staff

24.260 Topics in Philosophy

Prereq: Two subjects in philosophy

U (Fall)

3-0-9 units. HASS-H

Close examination of a single book, or group of related essays, with major significance in recent philosophy. Subject matter varies from year to year. Intended primarily for majors and minors in philosophy. Opportunities are provided for oral presentation. Students will be required to revise at least one paper in response to instructor's comments. Enrollment may be limited; preference to Course 24 majors and minors.

C. Hare

24.280 Foundations of Probability

Prereq: One philosophy subject or one subject on probability

U (Fall)

3-0-9 units. HASS-H

Topics include probability puzzles, common fallacies in probabilistic reasoning, defenses and criticisms of Kolmogorov's axiomatization, interpretations of probability (including the frequency, logical, propensity, and various subjectivist interpretations), the relation of objective chance to rational subjective credence, conditional probability, rules for updating probability, and proposals for supplementing the probability calculus with further principles. Enrollment may be limited; preference to Course 24 majors and minors.

R. White

24.292 Independent Study: Philosophy

Prereq: Any two subjects in philosophy

U (Fall)

Units arranged

Open to qualified students who wish to pursue special studies or projects. Students electing this subject must consult the undergraduate officer.

Staff

24.293 Independent Study: Philosophy

Prereq: Any two subjects in philosophy

U (Spring)

Units arranged

Open to qualified students who wish to pursue special studies or projects. Students electing this subject must consult the undergraduate officer.

Staff

24.500 Special Subject: Philosophy

Prereq: None

U (Fall)

3-0-9 units

Can be repeated for credit.

Undergraduate subject that covers topics not offered in the regular curriculum. Consult department to learn of offerings for a particular term.

Staff

24.520 Special Subject: Philosophy

Prereq: One philosophy subject or permission of instructor

Acad Year 2025-2026: Not offered

Acad Year 2026-2027: U (Fall, Spring)

3-0-9 units

Can be repeated for credit.

Undergraduate subject that covers topics not offered in the regular curriculum. Consult department to learn of offerings for a particular term.

Staff

24.UR Undergraduate Research

Prereq: None

U (Fall, IAP, Spring, Summer)

Units arranged [P/D/F]

Can be repeated for credit.

Research opportunities in linguistics and philosophy. For further information, consult the departmental coordinators.

Staff

24.URG Undergraduate Research

Prereq: None

U (Fall, IAP, Spring, Summer)

Units arranged

Can be repeated for credit.

Research opportunities in linguistics and philosophy. For further information consult the departmental coordinators.

Staff

Undergraduate Seminars**24.191 Being, Thinking, Doing (or Not): Ethics in Your Life**

Prereq: None

U (Spring)

2-0-4 units

Provides an opportunity to explore a wide range of ethical issues through guided discussions that are geared to equip students for ongoing reflection and action. Lectures and discussions with guest faculty, as well as attendance at on-and off-campus events, expose students to ethical problems and resources for addressing them. Encourages students to work collaboratively as they clarify their personal and vocational principles. Topics vary each term and will reflect the interests of those enrolled.

Staff

24.192 Language, Information, and Power

Prereq: One philosophy subject or permission of instructor
U (Fall)
Not offered regularly; consult department
2-0-4 units

Explores foundational issues about language and communication by investigating different ways language and its use affects various aspects of lived experience. Topics include speech act theory, lying, propaganda, censorship, expressions of knowledge, communication in non-cooperative contexts.

J. Khoo

Graduate Subjects

24.400 Proseminar in Philosophy I

Prereq: Permission of instructor
G (Fall)
6-0-18 units

Advanced study of the basic problems of philosophy. Intended for first-year graduate students in philosophy.

J. Spencer, R. White

24.401 Proseminar in Philosophy II

Prereq: Permission of instructor
G (Spring)
6-0-18 units

Advanced study of the basic problems of philosophy. Intended for first-year graduate students in philosophy.

C. Hare, B. Luzon

24.410 Topics in the History of Philosophy

Prereq: Permission of instructor
Acad Year 2025-2026: Not offered
Acad Year 2026-2027: G (Fall)
3-0-9 units
Can be repeated for credit.

Intensive study of a philosopher or philosophical movement. Content varies from year to year and subject may be taken repeatedly with permission of instructor and advisor.

T. Schapiro

24.420 Ancient Philosophy

Prereq: Permission of instructor
Acad Year 2025-2026: Not offered
Acad Year 2026-2027: G (Fall)
3-0-9 units

Investigates the origins of Western philosophy in ancient Greece. Aims both to understand the philosophical questions the Greeks were asking on their own terms, and to assess their answers to them. Examines how a human being can lead a good life, the relationship between morality and happiness, our knowledge of the world around us, and the entities we need to appeal to in order to explain that world. Students taking graduate version complete additional assignments.

Staff

24.500 Topics in Philosophy of Mind

Prereq: Permission of instructor
G (Fall)
3-0-9 units
Can be repeated for credit.

Selected topics in philosophy of mind. Content varies from year to year. Topics may include consciousness, mental representation, perception, and mental causation.

B. Luzon, M. Michel

24.501 Problems in Metaphysics

Prereq: Permission of instructor
Acad Year 2025-2026: Not offered
Acad Year 2026-2027: G (Spring)
3-0-9 units
Can be repeated for credit.

Systematic examination of selected problems in metaphysics. Content varies from year to year and subject may be taken repeatedly with permission of instructor and advisor.

J. Spencer

24.502 Topics in Metaphysics and Ethics

Prereq: Permission of instructor
 Acad Year 2025-2026: Not offered
 Acad Year 2026-2027: G (Spring)
 3-0-9 units
 Can be repeated for credit.

Systematic examination of selected problems concerning the relation between metaphysics and ethics, for example questions about personal identity and its relation to issues about fairness and distribution, or questions about the relation between causation and responsibility. Content may vary from year to year, and the subject may be taken repeatedly with the permission of the instructor and the student's advisor.

J. Khoo, T. Schapiro

24.503 Topics in Philosophy of Religion

Prereq: Permission of instructor
 Acad Year 2025-2026: Not offered
 Acad Year 2026-2027: G (Fall)
 3-0-9 units
 Can be repeated for credit.

Selected topics in philosophy of religion. Content varies from year to year. Topics may include the traditional arguments for the existence of God, religious experience, the problem of evil, survival after death, God and ethics.

A. Byrne

24.504 Topics in Aesthetics

Prereq: Permission of instructor
 Acad Year 2025-2026: Not offered
 Acad Year 2026-2027: G (Spring)
 3-0-9 units
 Can be repeated for credit.

Selected topics in aesthetics. Content varies from year to year. Topics may include the definition of art, the expression of emotion in music, the nature of depiction, the role of artists intentions in interpretation, and the relationship between moral and aesthetic value.

B. Skow, J. Khoo

24.601 Topics in Moral Philosophy

Prereq: Permission of instructor
 G (Spring)
 3-0-9 units

Systematic examination of selected problems in moral philosophy. Content varies from year to year. Subject may be repeated only with permission of instructor and advisor.

C. Hare, B. Hedden

24.602 Topics in the Philosophy of Agency

Prereq: Permission of instructor
 Acad Year 2025-2026: Not offered
 Acad Year 2026-2027: G (Fall)
 3-0-9 units
 Can be repeated for credit.

Systematic examination of selected problems in the theory of agency. Content varies from year to year and subject may be taken repeatedly with permission of instructor and advisor.

T. Schapiro

24.611[] Political Philosophy

Same subject as 17.000[]
 Prereq: Permission of instructor
 G (Fall, Spring)
 3-0-9 units
 Can be repeated for credit.

See description under subject 17.000[].

Fall: B. Zacka. Spring: B. Skow

24.634 Global Justice, Gender, and Development

Subject meets with 24.234
 Prereq: None
 G (Fall)
 3-0-9 units

Addresses challenges in working towards global justice including poverty, food and water insecurity, healthcare disparities, human rights violations, violence and dislocation, and environmental risk. Focuses on gender and identity, locating the root causes of inequality within cultural, political and economic contexts. Designed to give a framework to understand gender dynamics. Teaches how to integrate gender sensitive strategies into development work. Classes, readings, and final projects illustrate how design and implementation of international development strategies can provide capacity building and income generation opportunities. Meets with EC.798 when offered concurrently. Students taking graduate version complete additional assignments. Limited to 20 total for versions meeting together.

S. Haslanger, L. McDonald

24.635 Topics in Critical Social Theory

Prereq: Permission of instructor

G (Fall)

3-0-9 units

Can be repeated for credit.

Explores topics arising within critical race theory, feminist theory, queer theory, disability studies, working class studies, and related interdisciplinary efforts - both historical and contemporary - to understand and promote social justice.

R. Fraser

24.636 Topics in Social Theory and Practice

Subject meets with 24.236

Prereq: One philosophy subject or permission of instructor

G (Spring)

3-0-9 units

An in-depth consideration of a topic in social theory with reflection on its implications for social change. Examples of topics include race and racism; punishment and prison reform; global justice and human rights; gender and global care chains; environmentalism and industrial agriculture; bioethics, disability, and human enhancement; capitalism and commodification; and sexuality and the family. Readings draw from both social science and philosophy with special attention to the normative literature relevant to the issue. Students taking graduate version complete additional assignments. Enrollment may be limited.

R. Fraser

24.637[J] Feminist Thought

Same subject as 17.006[J]

Subject meets with 17.007[J], 24.137[J], WGS.301[J]

Prereq: Permission of instructor, based on previous coursework

G (Fall, Spring)

3-0-9 units

See description under subject 17.006[J].

H. Arain

24.711 Topics in Philosophical Logic

Prereq: Permission of instructor

Acad Year 2025-2026: Not offered

Acad Year 2026-2027: G (Spring)

3-0-9 units

Can be repeated for credit.

Problems of ontology, epistemology, and philosophy of language that bear directly on questions about the nature of logic and the conceptual analysis of logical theory, such as logical truth, logical consequence, and proof. Content varies from year to year and subject may be taken repeatedly upon permission of instructor and advisor.

Staff

24.729 Topics in Philosophy of Language

Prereq: Permission of instructor

G (Spring)

3-0-9 units

Can be repeated for credit.

Major issues in the philosophy of language. Topics change each year and subject may be taken repeatedly with permission of instructor.

Spring: S. Berstler

24.805 Topics in Theory of Knowledge

Prereq: Permission of instructor

G (Fall, Spring)

3-0-9 units

Can be repeated for credit.

Major issues in theory of knowledge. Topics change each year and subject may be taken repeatedly with permission of instructor.

Fall, K. Dorst. Spring, R. White

24.810 Topics in Philosophy of Science

Prereq: Permission of instructor

Acad Year 2025-2026: Not offered

Acad Year 2026-2027: G (Spring)

3-0-9 units

Can be repeated for credit.

Topics in the foundations of science: the nature of concepts and theories, the distinction between empirical and theoretical knowledge claims, realist and instrumentalist interpretation of such claims, and the analysis of scientific explanation. The central topic varies from year to year. Subject may be taken repeatedly with the permission of instructor and advisor.

B. Skow

24.891 Independent Study: Philosophy

Prereq: Permission of instructor

G (Fall, Spring, Summer)

Units arranged

Can be repeated for credit.

Open to qualified graduate students in philosophy who wish to pursue special studies or projects. Consult with the intended advisor and the Chair of the Committee on Graduate Students in Philosophy before registering.

B. Skow

24.892 Independent Study: Philosophy

Prereq: Permission of instructor

G (Fall, Spring, Summer)

Units arranged [P/D/F]

Can be repeated for credit.

Open to qualified graduate students in philosophy who wish to pursue special studies or projects. Consult with the intended advisor and the Chair of the Committee on Graduate Students in Philosophy before registering.

*Consult B. Skow***24.893 Dissertation Workshop**

Prereq: Permission of instructor

G (Fall, Spring)

2-0-1 units

Workshop for students working on their dissertations. Restricted to Philosophy doctoral students.

*J. Khoo***24.894 Placement Workshop**

Prereq: None

G (Fall, Spring)

2-0-1 units

Can be repeated for credit.

Workshop for students planning to apply for academic jobs in the following year. Advice and feedback on preparation of application materials, including writing sample, thesis abstract, and course syllabi. Limited to philosophy graduate students.

*J. Khoo***24.899 Topics in Linguistics and Philosophy**

Prereq: Permission of instructor

G (Fall)

Not offered regularly; consult department

3-0-9 units

Can be repeated for credit.

Selected topics at the intersection of linguistics and philosophy. Intended for graduate students in either linguistics or philosophy. Topics vary from year to year.

*K. von Fintel, S. Iatridou, J. Khoo***24.TAC Teaching Requirement in Linguistics and Philosophy**

Prereq: None

G (Fall, Spring)

Units arranged [P/D/F]

Can be repeated for credit.

For graduate students who are fulfilling an academic teaching requirement in the Department of Linguistics and Philosophy.

*Staff***24.THG Graduate Thesis**

Prereq: Permission of instructor

G (Fall, IAP, Spring, Summer)

Units arranged

Can be repeated for credit.

Program of research and writing of thesis, to be arranged by the student with supervising committee.

*Staff***24.S40 Special Seminar: Philosophy**

Prereq: None

Acad Year 2025-2026: Not offered

Acad Year 2026-2027: G (Fall)

3-0-9 units

Can be repeated for credit.

Graduate subject that covers topics not offered in the regular curriculum. Consult department to learn of offerings for a particular term.

*Staff***24.S41 Special Seminar: Philosophy**

Prereq: Permission of instructor

Acad Year 2025-2026: Not offered

Acad Year 2026-2027: G (Spring)

3-0-9 units

Graduate subject that covers topics not offered in the regular curriculum. Consult department to learn of offerings for a particular term.

*Staff***Linguistics*****Undergraduate Subjects*****24.900 Introduction to Linguistics**

Prereq: None

U (Fall, Spring)

4-0-8 units. HASS-S; CI-H

Credit cannot also be received for 24.9000

Studies what is language and what does knowledge of a language consist of. It asks how do children learn languages and is language unique to humans; why are there many languages; how do languages change; is any language or dialect superior to another; and how are speech and writing related. Context for these and similar questions provided by basic examination of internal organization of sentences, words, and sound systems. Assumes no prior training in linguistics.

Fall, N. Richards. Spring, K. von Fintel

24.9000 How Language Works

Prereq: None

U (Spring)

Not offered regularly; consult department

4-0-8 units. HASS-S

Credit cannot also be received for 24.900

Introduces the field of linguistics as the scientific study of the human capacity for language, and its interaction with other cognitive systems. Examines specific phenomena that reveal the general laws and principles that govern the structure of all human languages, as well as the ways in which languages do differ. Topics include language acquisition and use, language change, dialects, and language technologies, with a special focus on collection and analysis of linguistic data. Assumes no prior training in linguistics.

K. von Fintel

24.901 Language and Its Structure I: Phonology

Subject meets with 24.931

Prereq: 24.900 or 24.9000

U (Spring)

3-0-9 units. HASS-S

Introduction to fundamental concepts in phonological theory and their relation to issues in philosophy and cognitive psychology. Articulatory and acoustic phonetics, distinctive features and the structure of feature systems, underlying representations and underspecification, phonological rules and derivations, syllable structure, accentual systems, and the morphology-phonology interface. Examples and exercises from a variety of languages. Students taking graduate version complete different assignments.

D. Steriade

24.902 Language and Its Structure II: Syntax

Subject meets with 24.932

Prereq: 24.900 or 24.9000

U (Spring)

3-0-9 units. HASS-S

Introduction to fundamental concepts in syntactic theory and its relation to issues in philosophy and cognitive psychology. Examples and exercises from a variety of languages. Students taking graduate version complete different assignments.

E. Newman

24.903 Language and Its Structure III: Semantics and Pragmatics

Subject meets with 24.933

Prereq: 24.900 or 24.9000

U (Fall)

3-0-9 units. HASS-S

Introduction to fundamental concepts in semantic and pragmatic theory. Basic issues of form and meaning in natural languages. Ambiguities of structure and of meaning. Compositionality. Word meaning. Quantification and logical form. Contexts: indexicality, discourse, presupposition and conversational implicature. Students taking graduate version complete different assignments.

K. von Fintel

24.904 Language Acquisition

Subject meets with 24.934

Prereq: 24.900, 24.9000, or permission of instructor

Acad Year 2025-2026: Not offered

Acad Year 2026-2027: U (Spring)

3-0-9 units. HASS-S

Covers the major results in the study of first-language acquisition concentrating on the development of linguistic structure, including morphology, syntax, and semantics. Universal aspects of development are discussed, as well as a variety of cross-linguistic phenomena. Theories of language learning are considered, including parameter-setting and maturation.

M. Hackl

24.905[JJ] Laboratory in Psycholinguistics

Same subject as 9.59[JJ]

Prereq: None

U (Spring)

3-3-6 units. Institute LAB

See description under subject 9.59[JJ].

E. Gibson

24.906[J] The Linguistic Study of Bilingualism

Same subject as 21G.024[J]

Prereq: 24.900, 24.9000, or permission of instructor
U (Fall)

3-0-9 units. HASS-S; CI-H

Development of bilingualism in human history (from Australopithecus to present day). Focuses on linguistic aspects of bilingualism; models of bilingualism and language acquisition; competence versus performance; effects of bilingualism on other domains of human cognition; brain imaging studies; early versus late bilingualism; opportunities to observe and conduct original research; and implications for educational policies among others. Students participate in six online web meetings with partner institutions. Taught in English. Enrollment limited.

S. Flynn

24.908 Creole Languages and Caribbean Identities

Prereq: None

U (Spring)

3-0-9 units. HASS-S; CI-H

Caribbean Creole languages result from language contact via colonization and the slave trade. Explores creolization from cognitive, historical and comparative perspectives and evaluates popular theories about "Creole genesis" and the role of language acquisition. Also explores non-linguistic creolization in literature, religion and music in the Caribbean and addresses issues of Caribbean identities by examining Creole speakers' and others' beliefs toward Creole cultures. Draws comparisons with aspects of African-American culture.

M. DeGraff

24.909 Field Methods in Linguistics

Prereq: 24.901, 24.902, and permission of instructor

Acad Year 2025-2026: Not offered

Acad Year 2026-2027: U (Fall)

3-1-8 units. Institute LAB

Explores the structure of an unfamiliar language through direct work with a native speaker. Students complete a grammatical sketch of the phonology and syntax, work in groups on specific aspects of the language's structure, and assemble reports to create a partial grammar of the language. Provides instruction and practice in written and oral communication. Enrollment limited.

Staff

24.910 Advanced Topics in Linguistic Analysis

Prereq: (24.901, 24.902, and 24.903) or permission of instructor

Acad Year 2025-2026: Not offered

Acad Year 2026-2027: U (Fall)

3-0-9 units. HASS-S

Can be repeated for credit.

In-depth study of an advanced topic in phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax or semantics, with a focus on the interfaces among these grammar components. Provides practice in written and oral communication.

D. Steriade

24.912[J] Black Matters: Introduction to Black Studies

Same subject as 21H.106[J], 21L.008[J], 21W.741[J], CMS.150[J], WGS.190[J]

Prereq: None

U (Spring)

3-0-9 units. HASS-A, HASS-H; CI-H

Interdisciplinary survey of people of African descent that draws on the overlapping approaches of history, literature, anthropology, legal studies, media studies, performance, linguistics, and creative writing. Connects the experiences of African-Americans and of other American minorities, focusing on social, political, and cultural histories, and on linguistic patterns. Includes lectures, discussions, workshops, and required field trips that involve minimal cost to students.

D. Wood, D. Harrell, M. DeGraff

24.914 Language Variation and Change

Prereq: 24.900 or 24.9000

Acad Year 2025-2026: Not offered

Acad Year 2026-2027: U (Spring)

3-0-9 units. HASS-S

Explores how linguistic systems vary across time and space. Uses case studies in particular languages to examine how language transmission and social factors shape the grammatical systems of individual speakers, and how grammar constrains variation and change. Students work in groups to analyze corpus or survey data. Provides instruction and practice in written and oral communication.

E. Flemming

24.915 Linguistic Phonetics

Subject meets with 24.963

Prereq: 24.900 or 24.9000

U (Fall)

3-0-9 units. HASS-S

The study of speech sounds: how we produce and perceive them and their acoustic properties. The influence of the production and perception systems on phonological patterns and sound change. Acoustic analysis and experimental techniques. Students taking the graduate version complete different assignments.

E. Flemming

24.916[J] Old English and Beowulf

Same subject as 21L.601[J]

Prereq: None

U (Fall)

3-0-9 units. HASS-H

See description under subject 21L.601[J]. Limited to 16.

A. Bahr

24.917 ConLangs: How to Construct a Language

Prereq: None

Acad Year 2025-2026: Not offered

Acad Year 2026-2027: U (Spring)

3-0-9 units. HASS-S

Explores languages that have been deliberately constructed (ConLangs), including Esperanto, Klingon, and Tolkien's Elvish. Students construct their own languages while considering phenomena from a variety of languages of the world. Topics include writing systems, phonology (basic units of speech and how they combine), morphology (structure of words), syntax (how words are put together), and semantics (the expression of meaning, and what language leaves unexpressed). Through regular assignments, students describe their constructed language in light of the topics discussed. Final assignment is a grammatical description of the new language.

N. Richards

24.918 Workshop in Linguistic Research

Prereq: (24.901, 24.902, and 24.903) or permission of instructor

U (Spring)

3-0-9 units. HASS-S

Students pursue individual research projects in linguistic analysis under the guidance of an advisor. Class meets weekly for presentation of student research and to critically discuss background reading. Focuses on developing skills in linguistic argumentation and presentation of findings. Provides practice in written and oral communication. Includes a 20-page final paper that each student presents to the class.

S. Flynn

24.919 Independent Study: Linguistics

Prereq: None

U (Fall, Spring, Summer)

Units arranged

Can be repeated for credit.

Open to qualified students who wish to pursue special studies or projects.

Consult Department Headquarters

24.UR Undergraduate Research

Prereq: None

U (Fall, IAP, Spring, Summer)

Units arranged [P/D/F]

Can be repeated for credit.

Research opportunities in linguistics and philosophy. For further information, consult the departmental coordinators.

Staff

24.URG Undergraduate Research

Prereq: None

U (Fall, IAP, Spring, Summer)

Units arranged

Can be repeated for credit.

Research opportunities in linguistics and philosophy. For further information consult the departmental coordinators.

Staff

24.S90 Special Subject: Linguistics

Prereq: 24.900 or permission of instructor

Acad Year 2025-2026: Not offered

Acad Year 2026-2027: U (Fall)

3-0-9 units

Can be repeated for credit.

Undergraduate subject that covers topics not offered in the regular curriculum. Consult department to learn of offerings for a particular term.

Staff

Graduate Subjects**24.921 Independent Study: Linguistics**

Prereq: Permission of advisor

G (Fall, Spring, Summer)

Units arranged

Can be repeated for credit.

Open to qualified graduate students in linguistics who wish to pursue special studies or projects.

Consult Department Headquarters

24.922 Independent Study: Linguistics

Prereq: Permission of advisor

G (Fall, Spring, Summer)

Units arranged [P/D/F]

Can be repeated for credit.

Open to qualified graduate students in linguistics who wish to pursue special studies or projects.

Consult Department Headquarters

24.931 Language and Its Structure I: Phonology

Subject meets with 24.901

Prereq: 24.900, 24.9000, or permission of instructor

G (Spring)

3-0-9 units

Introduction to fundamental concepts in phonological theory and their relation to issues in philosophy and cognitive psychology. Articulatory and acoustic phonetics, distinctive features and the structure of feature systems, underlying representations and underspecification, phonological rules and derivations, syllable structure, accentual systems, and the morphology-phonology interface. Examples and exercises from a variety of languages. Students taking graduate version complete different assignments.

D. Steriade

24.932 Language and Its Structure II: Syntax

Subject meets with 24.902

Prereq: 24.900, 24.9000, or permission of instructor

G (Spring)

3-0-9 units

Introduction to fundamental concepts in syntactic theory and its relation to issues in philosophy and cognitive psychology. Examples and exercises from a variety of languages. Students taking graduate version complete different assignments.

E. Newman

24.933 Language and Its Structure III: Semantics and Pragmatics

Subject meets with 24.903

Prereq: 24.900, 24.9000, or permission of instructor

G (Fall)

3-0-9 units

Introduction to fundamental concepts in semantic and pragmatic theory. Basic issues of form and meaning in natural languages. Ambiguities of structure and of meaning. Compositionality. Word meaning. Quantification and logical form. Contexts: indexicality, discourse, presupposition and conversational implicature. Students taking graduate version complete different assignments.

K. von Stechow

24.934 Language Acquisition

Subject meets with 24.904

Prereq: 24.900 or permission of instructor

Acad Year 2025-2026: Not offered

Acad Year 2026-2027: G (Spring)

3-0-9 units

Covers the major results in the study of first-language acquisition concentrating on the development of linguistic structure, including morphology, syntax, and semantics. Universal aspects of development are discussed, as well as a variety of cross-linguistic phenomena. Theories of language learning are considered. Students taking graduate version complete different assignments.

M. Hackl

24.942 Topics in the Grammar of a Less Familiar Language

Prereq: 24.951

G (Spring)

3-0-9 units

Can be repeated for credit.

Students work with a native speaker of a language whose structure is significantly different from English, examining aspects of its syntax, semantics, and phonology. In the course of doing this, students acquire techniques for gathering linguistic data from native speakers. Enrollment limited.

N. Richards, M. Kenstowicz

24.943 Syntax of a Language (Family)

Prereq: Permission of instructor

Acad Year 2025-2026: Not offered

Acad Year 2026-2027: G (Fall)

3-0-9 units

Detailed examination of the syntax of a particular language or language family, and theories proposed in the existing literature to account for the observed phenomena.

Staff

24.946 Linguistic Theory and Japanese Language

Prereq: Permission of instructor

G (Fall)

Not offered regularly; consult department

3-0-6 units

Detailed examination of the grammar of Japanese and its structure which is significantly different from English, with special emphasis on problems of interest in the study of linguistic universals. Data from a broad group of languages studied for comparison with Japanese. Assumes familiarity with linguistic theory.

S. Miyagawa

24.947 Language Disorders in Children

Prereq: None

Acad Year 2025-2026: Not offered

Acad Year 2026-2027: G (Spring)

3-0-9 units

Reading and discussion of current linguistic theory, first language acquisition and language disorders in young children. Focus on development of a principled understanding of language disorders at the phonological, morphological and syntactic levels. Examines ways in which these disorders confront theories of language and acquisition.

S. Flynn

24.948 Linguistic Theory and Second and Third Language Acquisition in Children and Adults

Prereq: Permission of instructor

G (Spring)

3-0-9 units

Students read and discuss current linguistic theory, first language acquisition research, and data concerning second and third language acquisition in adults and children. Focuses on development of a theory of second and third language acquisition within current theories of language. Emphasizes syntactic, lexical, and phonological development. Examines ways in which these bodies of data confront theories of language and the mind. When possible, students participate in practica with second and/or third language learners.

S. Flynn

24.949 Language Acquisition I

Prereq: 24.952, 24.970, and 24.973

G (Fall)

3-0-6 units

Lectures, reading, and discussion of current theory and data concerning the psychology and biology of language acquisition. Emphasizes learning of syntax, semantics, and morphology, together with some discussion of phonology, and especially research relating grammatical theory and learnability theory to empirical studies of children.

Staff

24.951 Introduction to Syntax

Prereq: Permission of instructor

G (Fall)

3-0-9 units

Introduction to theories of syntax underlying work currently being done within the lexical-functional and government-binding frameworks. Organized into three interrelated parts, each focused upon a particular area of concern: phrase structure; the lexicon; and principles and parameters. Grammatical rules and processes constitute a focus of attention throughout the course that serve to reveal both modular structure of grammar and interaction of grammatical components.

S. Iatridou, N. Richards

24.952 Advanced Syntax

Prereq: 24.951

G (Spring)

3-0-9 units

Problems in constructing an explanatory theory of grammatical representation. Topics drawn from current work on anaphora, casemarking, control, argument structure, Wh- and related constructions. Study of language-particular parameters in the formulation of linguistic universals.

D. Pesetsky, E. Newman

24.954 Pragmatics in Linguistic Theory

Prereq: Permission of instructor

G (Fall)

3-0-9 units

Formal theories of context-dependency, presupposition, implicature, context-change, focus and topic. Special emphasis on the division of labor between semantics and pragmatics. Applications to the analysis of quantification, definiteness, presupposition projection, conditionals and modality, anaphora, questions and answers.

A. Anvari, D. Fox

24.955 More Advanced Syntax

Prereq: 24.951 and 24.952

Acad Year 2025-2026: Not offered

Acad Year 2026-2027: G (Spring)

3-0-9 units

An advanced-level survey of topics in syntax.

S. Iatridou, E. Newman

24.956 Topics in Syntax

Prereq: 24.951

G (Spring)

3-0-9 units

Can be repeated for credit.

The nature of linguistic universals that make it possible for languages to differ and place limits on these differences. Study of selected problem areas show how data from particular languages contribute to the development of a strong theory of universal grammar and how such a theory dictates solutions to traditional problems in the syntax of particular languages.

S. Iatridou, E. Newman, D. Pesetsky

24.960 Syntactic Models

Prereq: 24.951 and 24.952

Acad Year 2025-2026: Not offered

Acad Year 2026-2027: G (Spring)

3-0-9 units

Comparison of different proposed architectures for the syntax module of grammar. Subject traces several themes across a wide variety of approaches, with emphasis on testable differences among models. Models discussed include ancient and medieval proposals, structuralism, early generative grammar, generative semantics, government-binding theory/minimalism, LFG, HPSG, TAG, functionalist perspectives and others.

Staff

24.961 Introduction to Phonology

Prereq: Permission of instructor

G (Fall)

3-0-9 units

First half of a year-long introduction to the phonological component of grammar. Introduces the major research results, questions, and analytic techniques in the field of phonology. Focuses on segmental feature structure and prosodic structure while the sequel (24.962) considers the interfaces of phonology with morphology, syntax, and the lexicon. Students should have basic knowledge of articulatory phonetic description and phonetic transcription.

E. Flemming, M. Kenstowicz

24.962 Advanced Phonology

Prereq: 24.961

G (Spring)

3-0-9 units

Continuation of 24.961.

A. Albright, D. Steriade

24.963 Linguistic Phonetics

Subject meets with 24.915

Prereq: None

G (Fall)

3-0-9 units

The study of speech sounds: how we produce and perceive them and their acoustic properties. The influence of the production and perception systems on phonological patterns and sound change. Acoustic analysis and experimental techniques. Students taking the graduate version complete different assignments.

E. Flemming

24.964 Topics in Phonology

Prereq: 24.961

G (Fall)

3-0-9 units

Can be repeated for credit.

In-depth study of a topic in current phonological theory.

Staff

24.965 Morphology

Prereq: Permission of instructor

G (Fall)

3-0-9 units

Structure of the lexicon and its function in grammar. Properties of word-formation rules. Problems of selection, productivity, and compositionality. Systems of inflectional categories: case and tense. Phonological aspects of word structure: allomorphy, cyclic phonology, constituent structure, and boundaries. Detailed analysis of languages with complex morphology.

Staff

24.967 Topics in Experimental Phonology

Prereq: 24.961, 24.963, or permission of instructor

G (Spring)

3-0-9 units

Experimental techniques to test predictions drawn from current phonological theory. Includes a survey of experimental methodologies currently in use, an introduction to experimental design and analysis, and critical consideration of how experimental results are used to inform theory.

A. Albright, E. Flemming

24.970 Introduction to Semantics

Prereq: Permission of instructor

G (Fall)

3-0-9 units

Basic issues of form and meaning in formalized and natural languages. Conceptual, logical, and linguistic questions about truth. Reference, modal, and intensional notions. The role of grammar in language use and context-dependency. Ambiguities of structure and meaning, and dimensions of semantic variation in syntax and the lexicon.

K. von Stechow, V. Schmitt

24.973 Advanced Semantics

Prereq: Permission of instructor

G (Spring)

3-0-9 units

Current work on semantics and questions of logic and meaning for syntactic systems in generative grammar.

M. Hackl

24.979 Topics in Semantics

Prereq: Permission of instructor

G (Fall, Spring)

3-0-9 units

Can be repeated for credit.

Seminar on current research in semantics and generative grammar. Topics may vary from year to year.

Fall, A. Anvari, M. Hackl, V. Schmitt. Spring, D. Fox, G. Chierchia

24.981 Topics in Computational Phonology

Prereq: 24.961 or permission of instructor

Acad Year 2025-2026: Not offered

Acad Year 2026-2027: G (Spring)

3-0-9 units

Exploration of issues in the computational modeling of phonology: finding generalizations in data, formalisms for representing phonological knowledge, modeling grammar acquisition, and testing phonological theories by means of implemented models. Experience using and developing models, including preparing training data, running simulations, and interpreting their results. No background in programming or machine learning is assumed.

A. Albright

24.982 Topics in Computational Linguistics

Prereq: Permission of instructor

Acad Year 2025-2026: Not offered

Acad Year 2026-2027: G (Fall)

3-0-9 units

Exploration of current issues in computational linguistics and their relationship to linguistic theory.

Staff

24.983 Methods in Computational Linguistics

Prereq: Permission of instructor
 Acad Year 2025-2026: Not offered
 Acad Year 2026-2027: G (Fall)
 3-0-9 units
 Can be repeated for credit.

Seminar on current models and techniques in computational linguistics. Instruction provided in implementing and using models, including model training, evaluation, and interpretation. No background in programming or machine learning is assumed.

Staff

24.984[J] Natural Language and the Computer Representation of Knowledge

Same subject as 6.8630], 9.611[J]
 Prereq: Permission of instructor
 G (Spring)
 Not offered regularly; consult department
 3-3-6 units

See description under subject 6.8630].

R. C. Berwick

24.991 Workshop in Linguistics

Prereq: Permission of instructor
 G (Fall, Spring)
 3-0-9 units
 Can be repeated for credit.

An intensive group tutorial/seminar for discussion of research being conducted by participants. No listeners.

Fall, S. Iatridou, M. Kenstowicz. Spring, A. Anvari, M. Kenstowicz

24.993 Tutorial in Linguistics and Related Fields

Prereq: Permission of instructor
 G (Spring)
 Units arranged
 Can be repeated for credit.

Individual or small-group tutorial in which students, under the guidance of a faculty member, explore the interrelations with linguistics of some specified area.

Consult Department Headquarters

24.995 Linguistics Professional Perspective

Prereq: None
 G (Fall, IAP, Spring, Summer)
 0-1-0 units
 Can be repeated for credit.

Required for linguistics doctoral students to explore and gain professional perspective through industry and academic experiences. Professional perspective options include industry internships, academic internships, or training for academia. For an internship experience, an offer from a company or organization is required prior to enrollment. A written report is required upon completion of the experience. Proposals subject to departmental approval in consultation with advisor.

Consult Department

24.TAC Teaching Requirement in Linguistics and Philosophy

Prereq: None
 G (Fall, Spring)
 Units arranged [P/D/F]
 Can be repeated for credit.

For graduate students who are fulfilling an academic teaching requirement in the Department of Linguistics and Philosophy.

Staff

24.THG Graduate Thesis

Prereq: Permission of instructor
 G (Fall, IAP, Spring, Summer)
 Units arranged
 Can be repeated for credit.

Program of research and writing of thesis, to be arranged by the student with supervising committee.

Staff

24.S93 Special Seminar: Linguistics

Prereq: None
 Acad Year 2025-2026: Not offered
 Acad Year 2026-2027: G (Spring)
 Units arranged
 Can be repeated for credit.

Covers topics not offered in the regular curriculum. Consult department to learn of offerings for a particular term.

Staff

24.S94 Special Seminar: Linguistics

Prereq: Permission of instructor

Acad Year 2025-2026: Not offered

Acad Year 2026-2027: G (Fall; second half of term)

3-0-3 units

Can be repeated for credit.

Half-term subject that covers topics in linguistics not offered in the regular curriculum. Consult department to learn of offerings for a particular term.

Staff

24.S95 Special Seminar: Linguistics

Prereq: Permission of instructor

G (Spring)

3-0-9 units

Can be repeated for credit.

Graduate subject that covers topics not offered in the regular curriculum. Consult department to learn of offerings for a particular term.

Staff

24.S96 Special Seminar: Linguistics

Prereq: Permission of instructor

G (Spring)

3-0-9 units

Can be repeated for credit.

Graduate subject that covers topics not offered in the regular curriculum. Consult department to learn of offerings for a particular term.

Staff