PHILOSOPHY, POLITICS, ECONOMICS (PPE)

PPE 008 The Social Contract
This is a critical survey of the history of western modern political philosophy, beginning from the Early Modern period and concluding with the 19th or 20th Century. Our study typically begins with Hobbes and ends with Mill or Rawls. The organizing theme of our investigation will be the idea of the Social Contract. We will examine different contract theories as well as criticisms and proposed alternatives to the contract idea, such as utilitarianism. Besides the above, examples of authors we will read are Locke, Rousseau, Hume, Mill and Marx.
For BA Students: Society Sector
Taught by: Freeman, Tan
Course usually offered in spring term
Also Offered As: PHIL 008
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit

PPE 036 Law and Economics
The relationship of economic principles to law and the use of economic analysis to study legal problems. Topics will include: property rights and intellectual property; analysis of antitrust and economic analysis of legal decision making.
Course usually offered in fall term
Also Offered As: ECON 036
Prerequisite: ECON 001 or ECON 010
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit
Notes: Credit cannot be received for both ECON 036 and 234.

PPE 072 Biomedical Ethics
This course is an introduction to bioethics, focusing on ethical questions arising at the beginning and end of life. Topics will include procreative responsibilities, the question of wrongful life, and prenatal moral status as well as questions of justice related to markets for sperm, eggs and gestation. We will also attend to dilemmas at the end of life, including the authority of advance directives, euthanasia and the allocation of life-saving therapies.
For BA Students: Society Sector
Taught by: Gibbons
Course not offered every year
Also Offered As: PHIL 072
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit

PPE 153 Judgment and Decisions
Thinking, judgment, and personal and societal decision making, with emphasis on fallacies and biases.
One-term course offered either term
Also Offered As: PSYC 253
Prerequisite: One semester of statistics OR microeconomics
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit
Notes: An LPS section may be given

PPE 225 Philosophy of Biology
This course consists of a detailed examination of evolutionary theory and its philosophical foundations. The course begins with a consideration of Darwin’s formulation of evolutionary theory and the main influences on Darwin. We will then consider two contemporary presentations of the theory: Richard Dawkins’ and Richard Lewontin’s. The remainder of the course will deal with a number of foundational issues including adaptation, the units of selection, the evolution of altruism, and the possibility of grounding ethics in evolutionary theory.
For BA Students: Natural Science and Math Sector
Taught by: Domotor, Spencer, Weisberg
Course not offered every year
Also Offered As: PHIL 226, PHIL 521
Activity: Lecture
0.0 Course Units
Notes: Application required through Penn Global: https://global.upenn.edu/pennabroad/pgs

PPE 233 Philosophy of Economics
In this course, general philosophy of science issues are applied to economics, and some problems specific to economics are tackled. While analytical questions like "What is economics?" or "What is an economic explanation" must be pursued, the ultimate goal is practical: What is good economics? How can economists contribute to a better understanding of society, and a better society? How can we make economics better? Topics to be discussed include the following: specific object and method of economics as a social science; its relation with other disciplines (physics, psychology and evolutionary theory); values in economics (welfare, freedom, equality and neutrality); the role of understanding and possible limits of a quantitative approach to human behavior (purposefulness, freedom, creativity, innovation); prediction, unpredictability and the pretension of prediction; causation in econometrics and in economic theory (equilibrium); selfishness and utility maximization (cognitive and behaviorist interpretations); economic models and unrealistic assumptions (realism and instrumentalism); empirical basis of economics (observation and experiment); microeconomics and macroeconomics (reductionism and autonomy); pluralism in economics (mainstream economics and heterodox schools).
Course usually offered in fall term
Also Offered As: PHIL 233
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit

PPE 244 Introduction to Philosophy of Mind
This course will survey several central topics in philosophy of mind, as well as investigating how philosophy of the mind interacts with scientific study of the mind. Among the questions we'll be asking are: What is it to have a mind? What is the relationship between the mind and the brain? Can there be a science of the mind? What can it tell us? What can philosophy contribute to a science of the mind? What is consciousness? What is it to think, to perceive, to act? How are perception, thought, and action related to one another?
Taught by: Domotor, Miracchi
Course not offered every year
Also Offered As: PHIL 244, VLST 221
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit
PPE 271 Global Justice
This course is an introduction to some of the central problems in global justice. Samples of these topics include: What are our duties to respond to world poverty and what is the basis of this duty? Is global inequality in itself a matter of justice? How universal are human rights? Should human rights defer to cultural claims at all? Is there a right to intervene in another country to protect human rights there? Indeed can intervention to protect human rights ever be a duty? Who is responsible for the environment? We will read some influential contemporary essays by philosophers on these topics with the goal of using the ideas in these papers as a springboard for our own further discussion and analysis.
Taught by: Tan
Course not offered every year
Also Offered As: PHIL 271
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

PPE 275 Introduction to Political Psychology
This course will explore psychological approaches to understanding political beliefs, attitudes, and actions at the levels of both individual citizens and national leaders. It will also explore the possibility that psychological science itself is not immune to the political debates swirling around it. Specific topics will include: the workings of belief systems (and their power to shape what we “see”), cognitive biases (and their power to cause miscalculations), sacred values and their role in stabilizing belief systems and social interaction, personality and ideology (the linkages between the personal and the political), and clashing conceptions of morality and distributive and corrective justice (striking variations among people in what they consider to be fair). We shall also explore some topics that have sparked controversy in the psychological research literature and that tend to polarize opinion along political lines, including work on intelligence and unconscious bias.
Taught by: Tetlock
One-term course offered either term
Also Offered As: PSYC 275
Prerequisite: PSYC 001 or COGS 001
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit
Notes: NOTE: Students who are more interested in business-related issues may want Wharton 276x which is a modified version of this course specifically for Wharton undergraduates.

PPE 277 Justice, Law and Morality
The course will focus on the philosophical background to the individual rights protected by the U.S. Constitution, including 1st Amendment freedoms of religion, expression, and associaton; the 14th amendment guarantee of Due Process and the rights of privacy, abortion, assisted suicide, and marriage; the Equal Protection clause and equal political rights and the legitimacy of affirmative action; and the Takings and Contract clauses and their bearing on rights of private property and economic freedoms. In addition to Supreme Court decisions on these issues, we will read works by political philosophers and constitutional theorists, including J.S. Mill, Ronald Dworkin, Cass Sunstein, Martha Nussbaum, Katherine MacKinnon and others.
Taught by: Freeman, Allen
Course not offered every year
Also Offered As: PHIL 277
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit

PPE 311 Strategic Reasoning
This course is about strategically interdependent decisions. In such situations, the outcome of your actions depends also on the actions of others. When making your choice, you have to think what the others will choose, who in turn are thinking what you will be choosing, and so on. Game Theory offers several concepts and insights for understanding such situations, and for making better strategic choices. This course will introduce and develop some basic ideas from game theory, using illustrations, applications, and cases drawn from business, economics, politics, sports, and even fiction and movies. Some interactive games will be played in class. There will be little formal theory, and the only pre-requisites are some high-school algebra and having taken Econ 1. However, general numeracy (facility interpreting and doing numerical graphs, tables, and arithmetic calculations) is very important. This course will also be accepted by the Economics department as an Econ course, to be counted toward the minor in Economics (or as an Econ elective).
Taught by: Dillenberger
Course usually offered in fall term
Also Offered As: ECON 013
Prerequisites: Some high school algebra, ECON 001.
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit
Notes: This course may NOT be taken concurrently with or after Econ 212.

PPE 312 Public Policy Process
This course introduces students to the theories and practice of the policy-making process. There are four primary learning objectives. First, understanding how the structure of political institutions matter for the policies that they produce. Second, recognizing the constraints that policy makers face when making decisions on behalf of the public. Third, identifying the strategies that can be used to overcome these constraints. Fourth, knowing the toolbox that is available to participants in the policy-making process to help get their preferred strategies implemented. While our focus will primarily be on American political institutions, many of the ideas and topics discussed in the class apply broadly to other democratic systems of government.
Taught by: Levendusky, Meredith
Course usually offered in spring term
Also Offered As: PSCI 236
Activity: Recitation
1.0 Course Unit

PPE 313 Behavioral Economics and Psychology
Our understanding of markets, governments, and societies rests on our understanding of choice behavior, and the psychological forces that govern it. This course will introduce you to the study of choice, and will examine in detail what we know about how people make choices, and how we can influence these choices. It will utilize insights from psychology and economics, and will apply these insights to domains including risky decision making, intertemporal decision making, and social decision making.
Taught by: Bhatia
Course usually offered in fall term
Also Offered As: PSYC 265
Prerequisites: ECON 265
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit
Notes: Prerequisite: ECON 1
PPE 314 Philosophy of Social Science
This course is about the foundations of contemporary social science. It focuses on the nature of social systems, the similarities and differences between social and natural sciences, the construction, analysis, and confirmation of social theories, and the nature of social explanations. Specific topics may include: What are social norms and conventions? What does it mean to have one gender rather than another, or one sexual orientation rather than another? Should social systems be studied quantitatively or qualitatively?
Taught by: Bicchieri, Weisberg
Course usually offered in spring term
Also Offered As: PHIL 228
Prerequisites: ECON 001, ECON 002, and PHIL 008.
Activity: Lecture
1.0 Course Unit

PPE 401 Independent Study
Student arranges with a faculty member to pursue a research project on a suitable topic. For more information about research and setting up independent studies, visit: https://ppe.sas.upenn.edu/study/curriculum/independent-studies
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Independent Study
1.0 Course Unit

PPE 402 Research in Philosophy, Politics & Economics
Led by fellows in the Philosophy, Politics and Economics program, this course teaches students how to conduct research in PPE with an emphasis on creating a well-formed research question, determining what kinds of data or scholarly research bears on that question, and how to carry out an interdisciplinary, research-driven project on that question. One-term course offered either term
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

PPE 460 Experiments in Behavioral Ethics
In reality, our understanding of different mechanisms and (economic) relationships is hampered by the lack of data. More often than not, either the observation itself is difficult or the data is not reliable. Over the last decades, economic experiments have become a vital part of the scientific discourse, facilitating our understanding of the world we live in (much like in Biology, Chemistry, Physics or the like). Economic experiments allow exploring economic behavior under controlled conditions by generating observations under different experimental designs and controlled conditions. Pioneering this field of research, Daniel Kahneman and Vernon Smith were awarded the Nobel memorial prize in recognition of their work on behavioral and experimental economics. In this course, we provide you with the methodology of how to develop a research idea and a proper experimental design that allows to explore this idea. Essentially, you will learn how to think about ideas, generate predictions, and how to use economic experiments to test them.
Taught by: Bicchieri, Dimant
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

PPE 470 Capstone: Social Policy
Social policy is the study of human wellbeing and is concerned with the effects in areas of health care, criminal justice, inequality, and education, among others. As a PPE Capstone, this is an integrative senior seminar (open to others by departmental permission). For more see: https://ppe.sas.upenn.edu/study/curriculum/advanced-interdisciplinary-courses
Taught by: Dimant
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

PPE 471 Capstone: Political Economy
Political Economy studies the relationships between individuals and society and between markets and the state. As a PPE Capstone, this is an integrative senior seminar (open to others by departmental permission). For more see: https://ppe.sas.upenn.edu/study/curriculum/advanced-interdisciplinary-courses
Taught by: Danese
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

PPE 472 Capstone: Networks
Network Theory studies graphs as a representation of the structure of relationships between social entities. It can be used to examine how the behavior of individuals in a socio-economic system affects - and is affected by - the structure of connections of the system. As a PPE Capstone, this is an integrative senior seminar (open to others by departmental permission). For more see: https://ppe.sas.upenn.edu/study/curriculum/advanced-interdisciplinary-courses
Taught by: Sontuoso
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

PPE 473 Capstone: Modeling
Modeling provides a way to identify and analyze the salient features of complex problems or dynamic social situations. Using models can further provide a way to see what strategies may be rational over time. As a PPE Capstone, this is an integrative senior seminar (open to others by departmental permission). For more see: https://ppe.sas.upenn.edu/study/curriculum/advanced-interdisciplinary-courses
Taught by: Funcke
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

PPE 474 Capstone: Judgment and Decision Making
The interdisciplinary study of individual's and groups' judgments and decisions, including normative, descriptive, and prescriptive theories. As a PPE Capstone, this is an integrative senior seminar (open to others by departmental permission). For more see: https://ppe.sas.upenn.edu/study/curriculum/advanced-interdisciplinary-courses
Taught by: Hart
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit
PPE 477 Capstone: Social Psychology
Social psychology explores how an individual's judgments and behaviors can be influenced or determined by others and their social context.
Taught by: Royzman
Course not offered every year
Also Offered As: PSYC 478
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit
Notes: As a PPE Capstone, this is an integrative senior seminar (open to others by departmental permission).

PPE 481 Capstone: Political Science
A PPE capstone offered by faculty in Political Science. As a PPE Capstone, this is an integrative senior seminar (open to others by departmental permission). For more see: https://ppe.sas.upenn.edu/study/curriculum/advanced-interdisciplinary-courses
Taught by: Berger
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

PPE 482 Capstone: Psychology
A PPE Capstone offered by faculty in Psychology. As a PPE Capstone, this is an integrative senior seminar (open to others by departmental permission). For more see: https://ppe.sas.upenn.edu/study/curriculum/advanced-interdisciplinary-courses
Taught by: Bhatia
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

PPE 483 Capstone: Economics
A PPE Capstone seminar offered by faculty in Economics. As a PPE Capstone, this is an integrative senior seminar (open to others by departmental permission). For more see: https://ppe.sas.upenn.edu/study/curriculum/advanced-interdisciplinary-courses
Taught by: Dillenberger
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

PPE 484 Capstone: Philosophy
A PPE Capstone seminar offered by faculty in Philosophy. As a PPE Capstone, this is an integrative senior seminar (open to others by departmental permission). For more see: https://ppe.sas.upenn.edu/study/curriculum/advanced-interdisciplinary-courses
Taught by: Bicchieri
Course not offered every year
Activity: Seminar
1.0 Course Unit

PPE 498 Directed Honors Research
Student arranges with a faculty member to do research and write a thesis on a suitable topic. For more information on honors visit: https://ppe.sas.upenn.edu/study/curriculum/honors-theses
One-term course offered either term
Activity: Independent Study
1.0 Course Unit

PPE 499 Advanced Research
This course may be taken by a PPE student for advanced research. Enrollment by permit only.
Course not offered every year
Activity: Independent Study
1.0 Course Unit