Philosophy at UOW

Philosophy teaches you how to think, not what to think. It explores the most fundamental topics, asks the deepest questions and scrutinizes the answers of the best minds rigorously and systematically. By studying philosophy you will acquire the intellectual discipline needed to articulate and challenge the concepts and assumptions that frame the way we think about the world and how we should behave in it. You will confront ethical and political questions about how we should live and treat others and investigate the nature of knowledge, the mind, personhood and freewill.

There is no realm of human existence we do not explore, no difficult question we are afraid to face, no serious idea we will not consider. Philosophy is essential for the education of citizens, uniquely rewarding for anyone who cares about ideas, and a distinctive contributor to the growth of knowledge - Robert Audi, John O’Brien Professor of Philosophy at Notre Dame.

Philosophers at the University of Wollongong work primarily in contemporary and applied philosophy, conducting research on problems such as the impact of biotechnology on humans and the environment, the ethical implications of global poverty, the limits of free speech, the relationship between mind, language, and the brain, and the nature of scientific investigation and explanation.

Our academic staff members are active researchers who regularly publish on the subjects that they teach and whose research is rated ‘above world standard’ by the Australian Research Council 2015 Excellence in Research for Australia.
Subjects On Offer in 2017

100 LEVEL SUBJECTS

PHIL 107 Introduction to Philosophy
Can any of us be held morally responsible for being the way we are? Do we ever act freely? Are psychopaths responsible for their actions? How are minds and bodies related? Does one’s body shape one’s sense of self? Does gender matter to who we are and how we perceive the world? Do animals feel pain and anxiety? If so, how should we treat them? Does science deliver truths? Does it have all the answers? This subject will prepare you to think deeply about various answers to these and other persistent questions. You will learn how to philosophize by actively engaging with thought experiments and evaluating philosophical arguments. You will discover why philosophical reflection matters when it comes to dealing with practical problems of real world significance. By taking this subject, you will gain an initial understanding of what philosophy is, how to do it and why it matters.

PHIL 151 Logic: The Art of Reasoning
What are the differences between good arguments and bad ones? What rules and principles should we use in our reasoning, and how can we identify flaws in other people’s arguments? In this subject, we will study a variety of techniques for evaluating arguments, distinguishing good arguments from bad ones, recognizing common flaws in reasoning, and assessing evidence.

PHIL 106 Media, Art and Society
What roles do the mass media and art play in society? Are journalists obliged to report the truth? Are there any limits to freedom of expression? Is there a clear line between fact and fiction in news reporting? Can there be truth in fiction? What is the nature and significance of artistic expression? Can the arts educate? Can we really feel for fictional characters? This subject will consider the impact of the digital revolution on individuals and society, with regard to personal identity, communication, relationships, artistic expression and the significance of virtual experiences.

"THINK DEEPER ABOUT EVERYTHING"
### 200 LEVEL SUBJECTS

**PHIL 218 Ethics: Good, Bad and Evil**

This subject provides a basic grounding in ethics. We will examine a variety of influential ethical theories, and we will consider some issues in moral psychology, such as the role of intuition, the structure of self-deception and the nature of evil. We will examine the practical application of moral theories with regard to issues such as drug prohibition, memory modification and digital identity.

**PHIL 219 Knowledge, Science and Understanding**

What is the difference between knowledge and opinion? Does knowledge require a special kind of evidence, or a special degree of certainty? What do we do when we try to explain something? Is there a difference between explanation and understanding? These are some of the questions we examine in this subject on theories of knowledge and philosophy of science.

**PHIL 234 Mind, Body and World**

How can a few pounds of soggy grey matter give rise to the sensational world of our conscious experience? Where do minds begin and end? Do experiments in neuroscience show we lack free will? Is it possible for intentions to cause actions? How do we understand others in everyday life? We will explore and evaluate possible answers to these questions to better understand the most distinctive features of minds.

**PHIL 227 The Meaning of Life: Absurdity and Existence**

Our lives matter to us and we think they are meaningful. But is existence ultimately meaningful? Or, is it absurd given the inevitability of death? We will explore such themes from the perspective of existentialism. Existentialist thinkers also address issues about our bodies, our sexuality, and our affective grip on the world. We will examine these issues along with key existentialist concepts such as authenticity, freedom, the Other, and responsibility.
PHIL236 Philosophy in Film and Literature

Great films and works of literature are the perfect media for exploring philosophical questions. In this subject we will engage with central philosophical topics in metaphysics, aesthetics, epistemology and ethics by examining a choice selection of great films and literary works. These works provide spurs for philosophical reflection and a target for philosophical investigations. This is a natural pathway for anyone without a prior background in philosophy to explore deeper questions of lasting concern through familiar media.

PHIL 226 Global Ethics

Many of the most important ethical and political issues today have global dimensions. Examples include poverty and development; multiculturalism; intellectual property; climate change and other environmental problems; and human rights. Global Ethics reflects on these and related issues to help improve our capacity to think well about such topics.

PHIL 256 Environmental Philosophy: Animals, Nature and Ethics

What are our obligations to non-human animals? Do wilderness areas have value independently of their value to humans? What are our obligations to future generations? This subject provides a study of these evaluative issues concerning animals, nature, and the environment. We look both at some theoretical approaches to these issues, and at a number of practical problems such as overpopulation, climate change, and ever-growing levels consumption.
300 LEVEL SUBJECTS

PHIL 304/309 Key Thinkers, Big Questions
We will conduct a detailed examination of the work of major philosophical figures and their approaches to fundamental questions in philosophy. Through sustained examination of influential bodies of work, this subject aims to develop a deeper understanding of contemporary philosophical debates and methodologies, and to develop an awareness of the potential impact of philosophical work on other areas of research and beyond the academy.

PHIL 314/318 Narratives in Mind, Self and Psychosis
Everyone enjoys a good story, but might narratives be playing much more fundamental roles in our lives? This subject critically examines claims that our ability to narrate – to tell stories – might be necessary for understanding what it is to act for a reason, for certain forms of memory, and, remarkably, for constituting us as persons. Relatedly, we will also consider what part our narrative capacities, or lack thereof, might play in explaining certain kinds of psychopathology, looking at the roles they may have in fostering and maintaining particular kinds of mental disorders and delusions.

PHIL 325/320 Philosophy of Health and Happiness
What does it mean to be healthy? Are health and disease objective phenomena or are they subjectively or culturally constituted constructs? Are mental health and mental illness comparable to bodily health and illness, or do they involve completely different considerations? How does health relate to happiness and other forms of human flourishing? We will examine these questions, situating them within a broader framework of problems concerning the differences between the living world and the non-living world.
PHIL 317/319 Political Philosophy: Justice, Equality and Rights

What are human rights? Are they universal? In what sense, if any, is equality an important value? What is social justice? Is it just, for example, that the better off be taxed in order to support the worse-off? If so, is this just only within the confines of a particular country, or also on a global scale? This subject offers an in-depth study of such questions.

PHIL 336 Philosophy: East and West

Eastern and Western thinkers grapple with many of the same questions of longstanding philosophical interest. This subject brings these great traditions into direct dialogue, in an exercise of cross-cultural philosophy. It engages with ideas in Eastern traditions, especially Buddhism, and puts them into conversation with Western philosophical perspectives. Topics may include: the nature of reality, consciousness, the self, suffering and happiness, the scope of knowledge, ethics and the ultimate goal of human existence.

PHIL 326 Bioethics

This subject provides a philosophical examination of a range of important issues in bioethics, such as euthanasia, surrogacy, assisted reproduction, human enhancement, genetic pre-selection of embryos, human and animal experimentation and the allocation of healthcare resources.

HONOURS

Honours students will gain a practical understanding of issues of fundamental importance for carrying out advanced independent research in academic philosophy. Training in this subject will focus on the following topics: how to choose a non-trivial thesis topic; how to write a research proposal; which methods should be used in designing and planning a philosophical research project; and what is required for writing strong research papers. Students will have the opportunity to test their ideas by presenting their work through Work-in-Progress sessions. Students will learn: what is required for developing a research career in philosophy; strategies for publishing in strong venues; why it is important to work on topics that have impact beyond academia; and what should be included in a competitive CV.
Academic Staff

Prof. Shaun Gallagher (Professorial Fellow) specializes in Phenomenology, Philosophy of Mind, Philosophical Psychology, Embodiment, Intersubjectivity, Hermeneutics, and the Philosophy of Time. He has published extensively on these and related topics. Some of his most prominent books are: *How the Body Shapes the Mind* (OUP, 2005); *The Phenomenological Mind, 2nd edition* (Routledge, 2012); *Enactivist Interventions* (OUP, 2017). He is the founding editor, and continues as a co-editor-in-chief of *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*, an interdisciplinary journal.

Dr. Keith Horton is an expert in Moral Philosophy. He has published work on moral philosophy in top journals including *The Philosophical Quarterly, Utilitas* and *The Journal of Applied Philosophy*, and is a founding member of the organisation Academics Stand Against Poverty.

Prof. Daniel D. Hutto specializes in Philosophy of Psychology/Mind and the Foundations of Cognitive Science. He is also interested in questions of Philosophical Method and Meta-Philosophy, and – especially the role narratives play in enabling us to understand others and ourselves. Some of his recent books include: *Wittgenstein and the End of Philosophy* (Palgrave, 2006); *Folk Psychological Narratives* (MIT, 2008) and – he is co-author of the award-winning *Radicalizing Enactivism* (MIT, 2013) and it is soon to be published sequel, *Evolving Enactivism* (MIT, 2017).

Dr. Michael Kirchhoff is an expert in Philosophy of Mind, Cognition and Phenomenology. His has appeared in first class journals including *The Australasian Journal of Philosophy, Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, and Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*.

Dr. Patrick McGivern is an expert in Logic, Philosophy of Science, and Epistemology. He has published work in first-rate journals, including *Philosophy of Science* and *Synthese*, on topics such as emergence and reduction in physics, and the role of modelling in theories of space-time.

Dr. David Neil is an expert in Ethics, Applied Ethics, and Biomedical Ethics.
**Dr. Glend Satne** specializes in Philosophy of Mind, especially focusing on intentionality, social cognition and shared agency. She has published extensively on normativity, intersubjectivity and the emergence and development of human cognition.

**Dr. Sarah Sorial** specializes in Political Philosophy and Philosophy of Law. She is author of *Sedition and the Advocacy of Violence* (Routledge, 2011) and is currently focusing on the emotions and law. She has also published extensively on the limits of free speech, deliberative democracy and rights theory.

### Extra-Curricular Activities

The UOW Centre for Student Engagement our highly active, student-run, staff supported Philosophy Forum. The Philosophy Forum organizes: staff-student socials; a start-of-session wine and cheese welcome; BBQs; film nights and meets on selected days during session. Its talks are free of charge and open to staff, students and members of the public.

The Philosophy Forum works closely with the staff-run Philosophy Seminar that schedules invited talks from world-class philosophers from Australia and the rest of the world. The Philosophy Forum often organises pre-talks to prepare anyone in the early stages of the studying philosophy who wishes to participate in the more research-focused seminars.

The Philosophy Forum organises an annual Philosophy Training Conference at which students and staff spend time away from the University discussing philosophy, giving and listening to a programme of talks and getting to know one another in an informal setting. The most recent event was held in Bunadnoon in the Southern Highlands in November 2016. There were talks by invited speakers from other Universities and a special discussion panel – comprised of past, present and up-and-coming post-graduate students and staff – which aimed to clarify the value of studying philosophy, the many opportunities available for students of philosophy in the wider world of work, and what is required for further study for those considering Honours and Higher Degree Research pathways.
What Our Students Say

• “really makes me think, especially outside of the classroom”
• “allows you to think deeper about everything”
• “provides the skills to think more deeply”
• “useful not only in my studies but in the real world too”
• “topics are varied and fascinating”
• “easy to discuss and get involved”
• “Really enlightening lectures, great in-class discussions”
• “introduced me to new way of thinking which I feel has assisted me in my other subjects”
• “staff interested in supporting students, through feedback and interaction”
• “I now know the meaning of life”
Future Pathways

Philosophy’s specialized training instills the enterprise skills and attributes that young people need today – rare skills that all sorts of employers highly value (The New Basics, Foundation for Young Australians, 2016). Philosophy teaches you to clearly and systematically express your ideas, to develop logical arguments and to carefully use examples and analogies. A philosophical education develops your communication skills, persuasive powers, problem solving and writing abilities. Crucially, philosophy graduates can think critically about unfamiliar, novel problems.

A philosophical training is directly applicable to and complements other intellectual disciplines, professions and non-academic careers. These include: broadcast media; computing; espionage; international diplomacy; law; management; postgraduate research; publishing; social work, teaching; and systems analysis. Unsurprisingly, the employment figures for and earning power of philosophy graduates is high.

‘A Philosophy degree trains the individual’s brain and gives them the ability to provide management-consulting firms with the sort of skills they require and clients demand’ – Fiona Czerniawska, Director, Management Consultancies Association Think Tank

Additional sources:

Be employable, study philosophy – The Salon

The discipline teaches you how to think clearly; a gift that can be applied to just about any line of work

I think, therefore I earn – The Guardian

Philosophy graduates are suddenly all the rage with employers.

Degrees that Pay You Back – The Wall Street Journal

A survey of 1.2 million people revealed that graduates in Philosophy earned 103.5% more, compared to other undergraduate disciplines, about 10 years post-commencement.