

## **FAQ for new applicants and students entering the MA program in Fall 2021. (6 8 21)**

### **I'm starting the MA program in Fall 2021, and I have a few questions. Whom should I contact with my questions?**

If you have an administrative question, you can email Jen Waller at [phlsphr@sfsu.edu](mailto:phlsphr@sfsu.edu).

If you have an advising question, be sure to keep your eye out for an invitation to an information session in late July. This will be an opportunity for you to connect with each other and also ask questions about the MA program.

We will also have an orientation on August 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021. (You will receive more information about this in the coming weeks.)

### **I'm starting the MA program in Fall 2021 as a "classified" student, how should I choose which classes to take?**

We advise students to take Phil 715 in their first or second semester of doing MA-level work.

The schedule of all philosophy courses being offered in Fall 2021 can be found here: <https://webapps.sfsu.edu/public/classservices/classsearch> (enter PHIL in the search box).

At the end of this document there are longer descriptions of MA seminars and classes being offered in Fall 2021.

We realize that several seminars are now full. We encourage you to put yourself on the wait lists. We also notice that there is room in other seminars!

In addition, please consider taking some upper-division courses, which can also count toward the MA degree: Phil 302, 315, 330, 335, 351, 375, 380, 383, 395, 451, 455, 464, 470, 494, 502, 511, 517, 520, 525, 605, 610, 621.

### **I'm starting the MA program in Fall 2021 as a "conditionally classified" student, how should I choose which classes to take?**

If you have "conditionally classified" standing, then you likely have prerequisite courses to take. These will be listed in the email we sent to you in which we notified you that the department was recommending admission. You should do those classes in Fall 2021. (See above for the list of prerequisite classes.)

This is the list of prerequisite courses:

1. Logic (must be equivalent to PHIL 205)
2. Ancient Philosophy (PHIL 301) [or Phil 410 in Fall 2021]

3. Modern Philosophy (PHIL 303)
4. Ethics (PHIL 450)
5. One course in Metaphysics and Epistemology (broadly construed):
  - o Philosophy of Science (PHIL 350)
  - o Metaphysics (PHIL 605)
  - o Theory of Knowledge (PHIL 610)
  - o Philosophy of Perception (PHIL 611)
  - o Philosophy of Mind (PHIL 620)
  - o Philosophy of Language (PHIL 630)

**I need to take Phil 301 as a prerequisite course in Fall 2021, but it is not being offered. What should I do?**

If you need to complete Phil 301, note you can take Phil 410 in its place this Fall (this is because the course is focused on ancient philosophy).

**I'm not sure how many classes I should take in Fall 2021. Do you have some advice for me?**

Here is an excerpt on this topic from an email that we send to our MA students each semester:

Many of you who are taking MA-level classes are also working 20 hours a week. Some of you work more than that, or you have hefty family responsibilities, a long commute, or health issues of your own that need attention.

Given this, we wanted to give you some practical advising that will help you make decisions about this and upcoming semesters.

The statements below are in terms of individual obligations, which we will call "things." Candidates for "things" are both 3-unit graduate-level classes and 3-unit teaching obligations.

**Course load for someone who is focusing only on their studies (not working at all, is in good health, and has no other family obligations or a long commute):**

four "things" at SFSU

**Course load for someone who is working 20 hours a week (is in good health and has no other family obligations or a long commute):**

three "things" at SFSU

**Course load for someone who is working 20 hours a week and has one other hefty obligations (family responsibilities, long commute, health issues)**

two "things" at SFSU

**Course load for someone who is working 20 hours a week and has two other hefty obligations (family responsibilities, long commute, health issues)**

one "thing" at SFSU

The reason we suggest such workloads is because so often students who get Bs in their graduate seminars do so because they are not putting enough time toward their studies. We want our students rested up so that they can be strong seminar participants, responsible and effective teachers, and enjoy their foray into the philosophical research that is needed for their thesis work. (In addition, students need to be achieving all As and A-s in order to get into top PhD and JD programs....) We anticipate that the hardest thing about following this advice will be selecting which "things" to do each semester when there are so many amazing seminar and teaching opportunities!

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**SFSU Philosophy Graduate Seminar Descriptions  
Fall 2021**

**PHIL 715 [01]: Seminar in Philosophical Writing**

Thursdays from 4:00 PM – 6:45 PM with *Dr. Macy Salzberger*

The primary goal of this course is to improve our abilities to read, interpret, and write philosophical essays. To this end, we will study some of the advanced analytic, interpretive, and expressive skills essential to the writing of philosophy. Throughout the course, we will read assigned texts and practice different skills. Written assignments will include argument reconstructions and presentations of our own arguments.

**Phil 770 [01]: Seminar on Aristotle's Ethics**

Mondays from 4:00 PM – 6:45 PM in person with *Dr. Jeremy Reid*

The plan for this course is to work through Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* slowly, with reference to other texts in the Aristotelian corpus and recent secondary literature. We will explore how Aristotle's ethical discussion is informed by arguments he makes elsewhere (including the *Eudemian Ethics*, *Rhetoric*, *De Anima*, and *Metaphysics*), and try to map out systematically how these parts of Aristotle's philosophy fits together. We will also read recent scholarly articles and book chapters on Aristotle in order to get a sense of what contemporary Aristotle scholars are working on. Following the topics of the *Nicomachean Ethics* itself, we will discuss happiness; ethical naturalism; character virtue; the central place of pleasure, pain, desire, and the emotions in character virtue; voluntariness and deliberation; theoretical virtue; weakness of will; what pleasure is; friendship; and the value of contemplation in the good life.

**Phil 770 [02]: Seminar on Wittgenstein**

Tuesdays from 4:00 PM – 6:45 PM in person with *Dr. Mohammad Azadpur*

This course examines the various prominent interpretations of Wittgenstein's philosophy against the backdrop of Wittgenstein's own writings. The first part of the course tackles

*Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. We discuss Wittgenstein's ontological atomism, picture theory of language, views on sense and nonsense (especially philosophical nonsense), as well as his account of the ethical purpose of philosophy. We will work on the relevant writings of Bertrand Russell, Elizabeth Anscombe, P.M.S. Hacker, Cora Diamond, James Conant, and Meredith Williams. The second part explores the following themes in the *Philosophical Investigations*: the critique of the *Tractatus*, the paradox of rule-following and its competing solutions, meta-ethics, the method of Investigations, and the private-language argument. We will read from Saul Kripke, Stanley Cavell, Hilary Putnam, John McDowell, and Robert Brandom.

### **Phil 770 [03]: Seminar on Kant**

Wednesdays from 9:30 AM – 12:15 PM with *Dr. David Landy*

This course will take the form of a close reading of selections from Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. Topics may include among others: mental representation, first principles, the self, the external world, necessary connection, substance, space, time, quantity, quality, and modality.

### **Phil 805 [01]: Social Ontology**

Mondays from 9:30 AM – 12:15 PM with *Dr. Ásta*

This is a seminar in the metaphysics of the social world. The theme this semester will be social categories. These include, but are not limited to, categories of sex, gender, sexuality, race, disability, religion, and class.

### **Phil 828 [01]: Philosophical Issues in Artificial Intelligence**

Thursdays from 4:00PM – 6:45 PM with *Dr. Carlos Montemayor*

We will examine various forms of AI risk in the context of different cognitive capacities associated with intelligent behavior. A specific focus of the course will be the relation between consciousness and attention, and the consequences of this relation for the epistemology and ethics of AI.

### **Phil 890 [01]: Seminar on Well-Being**

Tuesdays from 9:30 AM – 12:15 PM in person with *Dr. Justin Tiwald*

This course addresses some of the fundamental issues raised in thinking about well-being and its significance for ethics. The seminar is organized around two basic questions.

First, what do we mean when we say that something is "good for you" or "contributes to your well-being"? In pondering this, we entertain some of the most popular theories about the nature and content of well-being, including hedonism, the informed desire theory, and more sophisticated variants and alternatives. A major concern is whether well-being consists solely in subjective states such as feeling pleased or happy about something, and whether it is possible to derive intrinsic benefit from objective states of which we have no direct awareness or experience (including events that occur after death).

Second, how does well-being factor into the good life overall? Is it the only good worth promoting or are there other goods as well? We will review theories that treat human well-being as the only good or ultimate good (sometimes called "welfarist" theories), and we will consider influential views that compete with it. We will also explore theories that suggest an intrinsic relationship between well-being and being good in the ethical sense.

**Phil 896: Directed Reading in Fundamental Philosophical Texts**

This is the MA exam course. We recommend that students take it in the second or third semester of graduate work, after completing at least one graduate seminar. The course is administered by the graduate coordinators, but students will choose a study group supervised by other faculty (tentatively for the Fall: Prof. Tiwald, Prof. Montemayor, or Prof. Ásta). The sections will be effectively combined, so please register for whichever one has fewer students. N.b., a mandatory course orientation will take place on Friday, August 27th at 3:00 PM. A Zoom link will be emailed to all registered students beforehand. Additionally, there are four required study group meetings that take place over the course of the semester. These group meetings are held on Fridays at 3:00 PM (exact dates TBD). Please email Professor David Landy with any questions at [landy@sfsu.edu](mailto:landy@sfsu.edu)