



university of  
 groningen

faculty of philosophy

# Honours Programme in Philosophy



## **Honours Programme in Philosophy**

The Honours Programme in Philosophy is a special track of the Bachelor's Honours Programme. It offers students a broad and in-depth introduction to the main areas of Western philosophy and the philosophy of their own field. The programme comprises an introductory overview of historical and systematic elements of philosophy for a total of **30 ECTS**, a specialization in the philosophy of your own field for a further **5 ECTS** and a choosing between a Broadening Module from the Honours College Petrus Camper Track (in year 2) or a third year course philosophy (year 3) of **5 ECTS**. In addition, you can choose another **4 ECTS** from the skills modules provided by the Honours College, and you will take part in the Honours College Talent Development Programme (Pick Your Own-talent, **1 ECTS**). The Honours Programme in Philosophy comprises a total of **45 ECTS**.

This Honours programme is an interesting option for all University of Groningen students (except Philosophy degree students) interested in learning about philosophy and the philosophy of their field from a broad academic and social perspective.

### **Group size**

Each cohort of the Honours Programme in Philosophy comprises a maximum amount of students (25).

### **Teaching & Examination**

Examination takes place mainly by writing assignments and presentations. Students are expected to be interested in improving their writing skills.

### **Schedule**

Classes are normally scheduled on Tuesday evenings (19.00-21.00 hours). Please check the schedule generator for up to date information.

### **Attendance**

Honours College students are expected to attend all classes (100% attendance policy).

### **Selection & Duration**

You can find all information about the selection procedure on the Honours College website. Selection takes place after the first semester of year 1 of your regular Bachelor's Programme. The first Honours course starts in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of year 1. The Honours Programme is completed with the Petrus Camper Festival in June of your third year.

### **Student profile**

Previous experience with philosophy is not a prerequisite but a good motivation is indispensable. Potential candidates often have a broad interest and like theoretical questions.

## Course units in the Honours Programme in Philosophy<sup>i</sup>

Year 1 Q4	Philosophy of Science	5 ECTS
Year 2 Q1	History of Philosophy I	5 ECTS
Year 2 Q2	History of Philosophy II	5 ECTS
Year 2 Q3	Reasoning and Arguing	5 ECTS
Year 2 Q4	Good and Evil: Introduction to Ethics	5 ECTS
Year 3 Q1	Social and Political Philosophy	5 ECTS
Year 3 Q2	Specialization: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Philosophy of Humanities</li><li>• Philosophy of the Life Sciences</li><li>• Philosophy of the Natural Sciences</li><li>• Philosophy of the Social Sciences</li><li>• Philosophy of AI and Cognition</li></ul>	5 ECTS

Year 1 & 2	Two skills modules (2 x 2 ECTS) from the Honours College Petrus Camper Track	4 ECTS
Year 2 & 3	Broadening Module from the Honours College Petrus Camper Track (year 2, sem. 1) OR third year course philosophy (year 3, sem. 1+2)	5 ECTS
Year 1, 2 & 3	Pick Your Own-talent (PYO-t)	1 ECTS

### Philosophy of Science

Philosophy of science is a relatively young discipline, but the questions it addresses are as old as philosophy itself. During the lectures, we will focus on some central questions, such as: What is science? What is the scientific method? How do we justify scientific knowledge? Does science provide a reliable view of the world? Which role is played by observations, experiments, and models in various scientific disciplines? How does the scientific world view depend on the social and historical context? Traditionally, philosophy of science focuses on the philosophy of the natural sciences, in particular on physics. However, in this course, relations to other fields of study (including social sciences, medicine, law, and politics) will be made explicit.

### History of Philosophy I

This course unit serves as an introduction to a few of the philosophical giants on whose shoulders we stand. You will read some central texts, focusing primarily upon Aristotle. Students are required to develop knowledge of the texts and a critical understanding of the views and arguments of the relevant philosophers. At the same time, you will exercise your own judgement on the interpretation of the texts and the arguments they contain.

### History of Philosophy II

This course is divided into two parts. The first part of the course focuses on the dramatic transformation in the philosophical landscape between the eighteenth and

mid-twentieth century. The first part of the course will discuss the fundamental milestones of this process by examining four fundamental figures: Hegel, Nietzsche, Heidegger and Arendt. In this way, the course will provide an introduction to the philosophical approach usually labelled “continental philosophy”, which is characterized by the importance attributed to the historically and socially embedded nature of philosophical reflection.

The second part of the course examines the origins and development of analytic philosophy: a philosophical school which highlights the importance of studying language, logic and scientific methodology. The emphasis on scientific rationality of this school of thought (Frege, Russell, Wittgenstein) also gave rise to philosophical counter movements which asked itself, for example, how can we attribute meaning to a world dominated by science and technology?

### **Reasoning and Arguing**

This course unit is made up of an introduction to the theory of argumentation, an initial encounter with formal logic and a guest lecture about what is known as practical reasoning. During the theory of argumentation, we will discuss questions like: In which ways can people disagree with each other? What does a critical discussion involve? Can you hold a discussion partner to something he or she has not actually said? What are fallacies and what is wrong with them? In formal logic (syllogism and proposition logic), the following questions will be among the subjects we explore: What is the meaning of ‘meaning’? What do we mean when we say someone is inconsistent? What exactly is formal logic? And when exactly is a line of reasoning valid or invalid?

### **Good and Evil: Introduction to Ethics**

Why is it wrong to lie? Why do we hate arrogance? What makes someone’s life ‘successful’? And if it is good to donate money to charity, is it bad not to? These are just a few examples of questions thrown up by ethics, which we study during this course unit. First of all, we try to define what makes a question a moral question. What do we understand by ‘good’ and ‘evil’? And is there even a purpose to contemplating moral questions? We then study the work of philosophers such as Aristotle, Hobbes, Kant and Mill, whom you touched upon during History of Philosophy I and II, examining the foremost ethical theories: virtue ethics, contract theory, deontology and utilitarianism. These theories, and the problems they bring to light, are discussed on the basis of concrete, up-to-date examples (the environment, euthanasia, financial services, etc.).

### **Social and Political Philosophy**

Social and political philosophy is concerned with asking philosophical questions about the different ways in which human beings live together. In particular, it focuses on the role which political institutions play in our societies. Political philosophers ask questions such as: What is the ultimate end of politics? How should we decide between different forms of government? Is there one single end that all governments should pursue - such as justice or equality - or should governments be only concerned

with protecting the freedom of everyone to live as they please? To what extent may society limit the freedom of individuals? Is it ever justified to resist the state? In the course, we will focus on the different answers these questions have received throughout the history of philosophy and on how they inform contemporary debates about political issues.

## **Specialization**

For this course unit you choose the specialization course most suited to your own field. The course unit then looks into the basis, the methods and the specific philosophical issues involved in the field concerned. In addition, we examine the conceptual assumptions and theoretical viability of various subjects and strategies within that particular academic field.

The course unit on *Philosophy of Natural Sciences* focuses on the philosophical aspects of a number of important presuppositions in natural sciences, such as causality, space, time and space-time, the direction of time, etc.

*Philosophy of AI and Cognition* goes into some of the theoretical principles of cognitive sciences and the fast developing field of AI. AI is used for medical diagnosis, for composing music, for self-driving cars, and so on. This raises also many philosophical questions: Can machines think and become conscious? What are the limits of AI? What can AI tell us about human cognition? In this course, we study these questions by discussing both traditional literature on philosophy of AI (e.g., Turing, Searle) as well as recent scientific and philosophical developments (e.g., deep learning and its philosophy).

*Philosophy of Humanities* revolves around the question: what is interpretation? Everything that we do or produce is subject to interpretation: texts, buildings, works of art, historical actions, etc. In this course unit, we discuss several theories and strategies commonly used to interpret these matters within the various areas of humanities like hermeneutics, structuralism, psychoanalysis, Neo-Marxism and deconstruction.

In *Philosophy of Life Sciences*, we study the conceptual and theoretical viability of many subjects, including evolution, genes, units of selection, adaptation and fitness, development, nature-nurture, functional explanations, biological categories and human nature. The course unit provides an introduction to this philosophical reflection on life sciences.

The course unit in *Philosophy of Social Sciences* focuses on philosophical questions relating to the study of social aspects of human behaviour. What is human behaviour? What makes it social? Is human behaviour rational? Can human behaviour be explained along the same lines as natural phenomena? Or do we need a special methodology with a major focus on interpretation? Do functionalist explanations still

have a place in social sciences? Did social groups and social structures acquire a kind of autonomous status or are they simply a sum of their constituent parts?

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<sup>i</sup> Warning: the Honours Programme in Philosophy is subject to change, both in form as well as in content of courses. For an up to date overview of the courses, please visit [Ocasys](#).