

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

QUESTIONING ANSWERS

“At Reading you will explore a wide range of topics in philosophy. We teach classic philosophy in the Western tradition, looking at the major figures from the ancient world through to contemporary times. We also teach philosophy in the Eastern tradition and explore the diversity of thinking across the globe.



You will learn the skills of critical thinking – sifting good arguments from bad arguments, questioning assumptions, exploring diverse answers to the most difficult and puzzling problems.

Yet philosophy is not just about coming to grips with abstract problems and paradoxes. It is about the real world and its challenges. What separates logic from propaganda? What moral duties might we owe to future generations? Will artificial intelligence ever replicate the human mind? How should we live? What is a meaningful life? We will help you develop the skills and conceptual tools to work out the answers for yourselves.

We look forward to discussing philosophy with you at Reading.”

Professor David Oderberg

Head of the Department of Philosophy

www.reading.ac.uk/philosophy

“Philosophers should be, as Seneca put it, ‘lawyers for humanity’. Make what you think and feel count; the examined life has global dimensions.”

Martha C. Nussbaum
American philosopher



OUT-THINKING PAIN

“Philosophy doesn’t take place in a vacuum. The way philosophers think about issues have real-world applications, and can advance our understanding of a variety of problems, moving us towards a solution.”



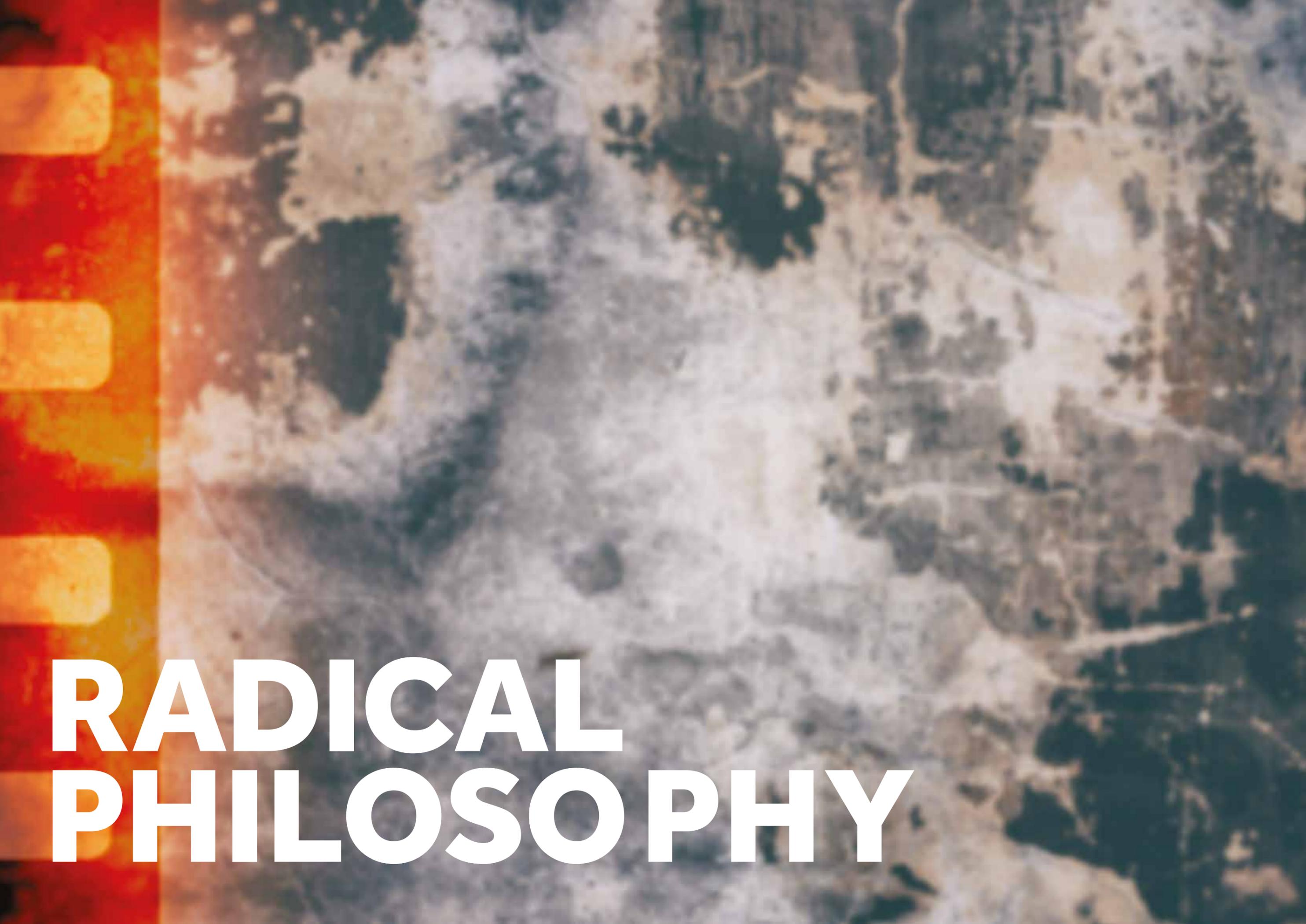
**Professor
Emma Borg**

Emma’s research into chronic pain demonstrates how philosophers are leaving their armchairs behind to apply their learning to real-world problems, across a variety of disciplines.

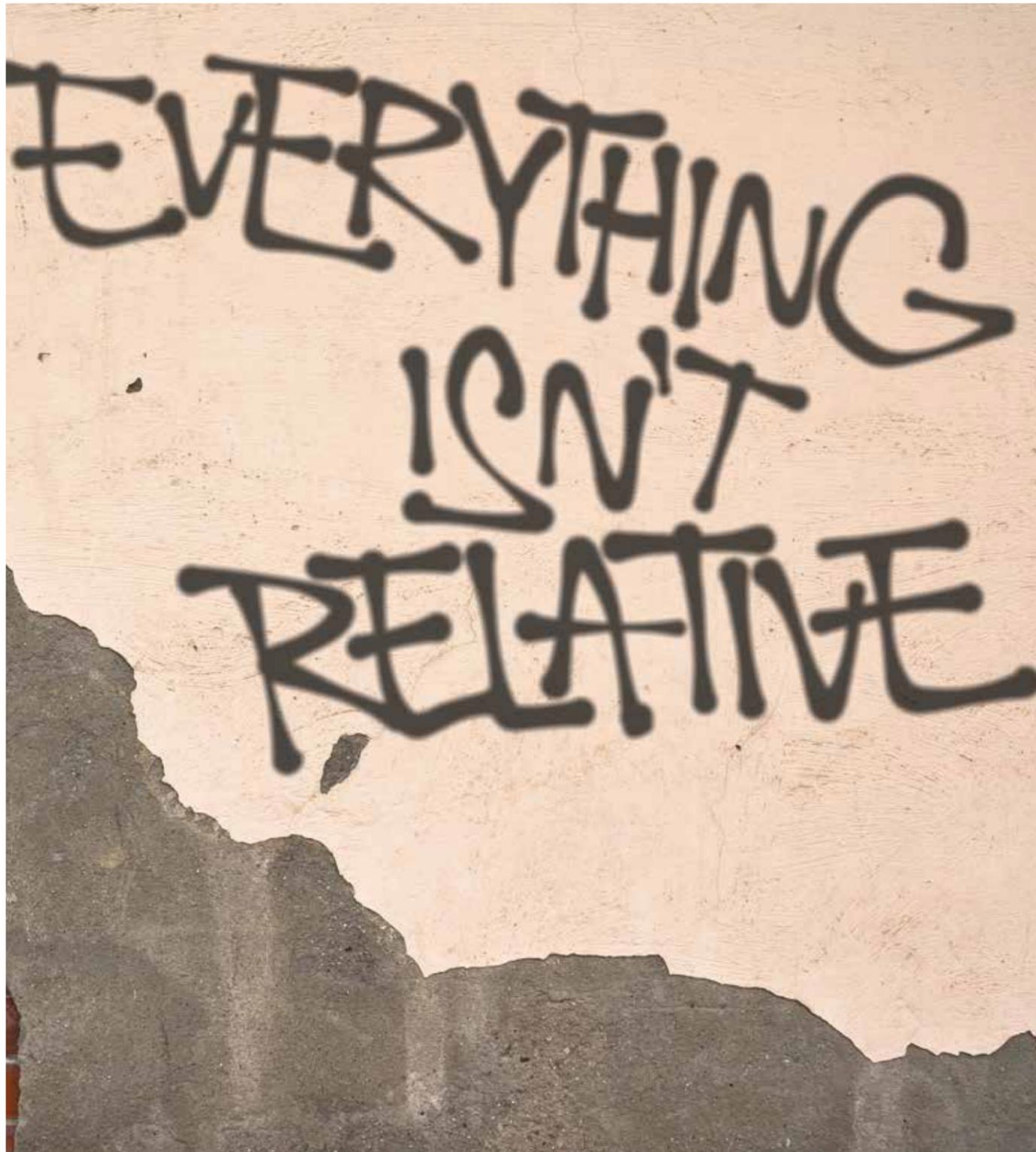
The project on pain is run through the University of Reading’s Centre for Cognition Research, of which Emma is the Director. It is truly interdisciplinary, involving colleagues from the Departments of Philosophy, Psychology, History, English and Typography, as well as clinicians and patients. The University is creating a generation of interdisciplinary researchers who will naturally seek out other people thinking about the same problems, regardless of which discipline they are from.

Emma believes that a better understanding of the concept of pain will lead to improved methods of assessing, communicating and treating pain. She works with various pain support networks and the Royal Berkshire Hospital pain clinic, which is designed for patients who have exhausted all the regular routes for pain management. The clinic recommends a range of different therapies, including workshops on how to live with pain, and mindfulness.

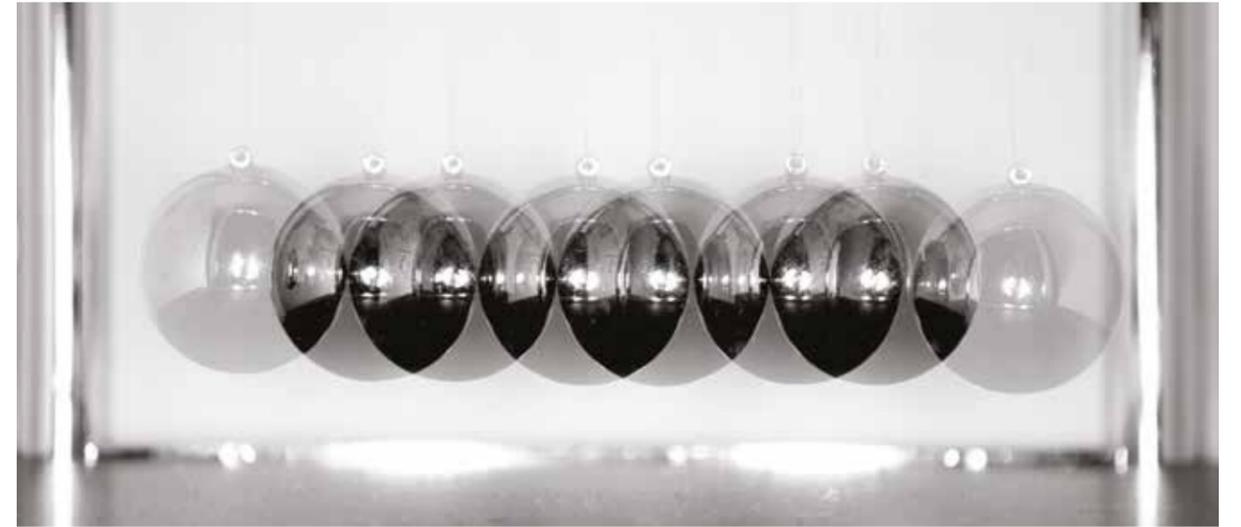
Emma hopes that her research into the assessment of pain will lead to the design of therapeutic interventions that help patients to cope with pain better, making a huge difference to their everyday lives.



RADICAL PHILOSOPHY



“ Working with my students has opened my eyes to many new, fascinating areas of research that I would otherwise have completely overlooked. ”



Professor Maximilian de Gaynesford

Professor Max de Gaynesford specialises in philosophy of language, philosophy of mind, aesthetics and philosophy of literature. He strongly advocates the idea of teaching- led research, alongside the more familiar approach of research-led teaching.

This method gives Max the opportunity to connect research questions and classic philosophical debates on the one hand, and important problems that we're grappling with in contemporary life on the other. Max's students explore interests and raise questions that allow him to dig deeper. He encourages his students to consider the subject matter from all angles without necessarily endorsing or agreeing to it.

Through his 'Radical Philosophy' module for first year students, Max familiarises his students with the idea that philosophy can be used to deal with the everyday issues they encounter, rather than to only deal with very abstract or technical questions. He also encourages students to confront their deepest beliefs and assumptions in a characteristically philosophical way. This informs students about current debates in philosophy and develops a sense of the significance of philosophical thinking in dealing with contemporary issues.

The module introduces students to non-mainstream philosophers and encourages them to compare and contrast very different ways of approaching philosophy, such as 'analytic philosophy', 'phenomenology', 'post-structuralism', 'continental philosophy', 'deconstruction', and 'postmodernism'.

Max's module, *The Scandal of Film*, on the other hand discusses how films play a central role in our cultural life, employing philosophical investigation to explore those aspects that remain unclear. Max has worked for many years on a monograph studying the relationship of film and philosophy. His research recently included working with a student, funded by the UROP scheme. Together, they considered the philosophical issues that were raised in a particular film, such as how we think about space and time and how the combination of different filming techniques was used to represent the film's story.

Max uses a combination of lectures and seminars to stimulate group discussions and learn from his students. Teaching in this way enables him to gain a new perspective on his research and explore new areas.

PHILOSOPHY SANS FRONTIÈRES



**Dr Shalini
Sinha**

“My own multicultural background instilled a need in me to take account of different traditions and cultures, and to realise that there isn’t just one truth and one approach.”

Shalini is a global philosopher who approaches social and political issues which are both globally and personally relevant – such as race, gender, debt, war and terrorism – using cross-cultural philosophy to develop new perspectives.

To establish a cross-cultural view, Shalini teaches Chinese, Indian, Native American and Aboriginal, Christian, Islamic and Buddhist philosophy. By integrating philosophical perspectives from a variety of cultures, she encourages a dialogue with her students at the University of Reading about how these different approaches can be used to tackle current issues.

To develop alternative approaches to contemporary issues we need to understand the core concepts and ideas of other philosophical cultures and traditions, before we can have a dialogue about how these might be used to tackle or resolve issues.

Shalini encourages her students to use real-world examples in their work. For example, when looking at gender, students may pick an issue from the media on gender assignment, or differentiating gender on the basis of biological features such as hormone levels at the Olympics. Students investigate these issues using approaches from feminist philosophy and then proceed to compare these with the Buddhist perspectives on gender and identity.

Cross-cultural conversations of this sort broaden the perspective of both partners in the conversation, allowing new ideas and approaches to arise. Shalini believes that every tradition has its limitations, and thus philosophical conversation across different cultures is mutually enriching.

By questioning core concepts and beliefs we take for granted, and by approaching contemporary issues with a broader and more philosophical mindset, Shalini believes that we can positively impact attitudes and help to achieve social change.



**LIVING
IN COLOUR**

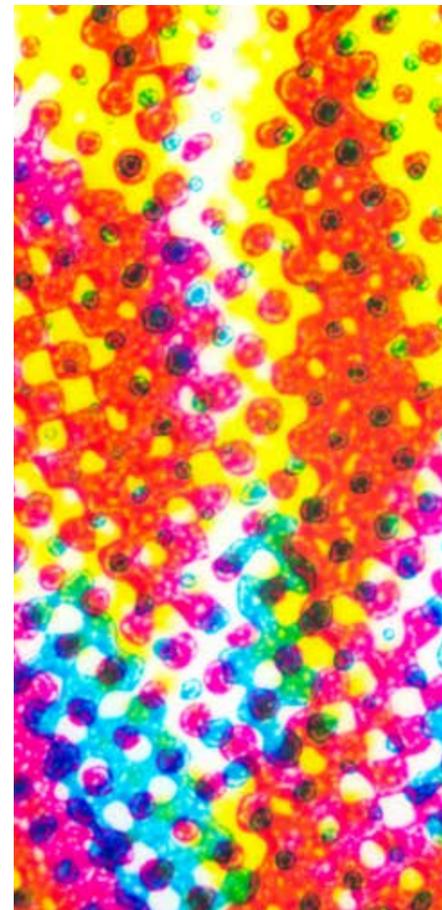
“I am proud of the fact that my research has become thoroughly interdisciplinary, uncovering cool and unexpected facts about meaning and colour.”



Dr Nat Hansen

Nat is working across disciplines to understand the nature of linguistic meaning, leading to unexpected real-world applications.

Nat's main research area is the philosophy of language, and he is particularly interested in the meaning of colour words, such as 'green' and 'red'. Nat believes that understanding the meanings of such words requires collaboration across academic disciplines and he works with linguists, psychologists, and researchers in the digital humanities to better understand how language and colour interact.



In his third-year module "Colour" at the University of Reading, Nat connects classic philosophical debates with contemporary findings in psychology and linguistics to ask and answer questions about whether different languages shape the way people perceive and cognise colour, and how ordinary conceptions of colour line up with our best understanding of colour science: are colours physical properties, or do they depend on our eyes and minds? Can the meanings of colour words be different for different people?

Nat's aim in his research is to improve our understanding of how experimentation in linguistics and psychology should inform theories of linguistic meaning, but his research has also had unexpected real-world applications. For example, his research on context-sensitive words inspired a graphic design firm in New York City to create a context-sensitive typeface, "Visage", which was used on T-shirts and promotional materials for the Yale University art museum.





HOW YOU'LL LEARN

We offer a range of learning and assessment methods, which focus on developing the skills you need for an ever-changing future.

There are no end-of-year examinations for any course in the Philosophy Department. This means you will benefit from a full three terms of teaching each year, and will be assessed through a variety of methods – including essays, presentations, group work and blog posts – which aim to support different learning styles to enable you to reach your highest potential.

“The no-exams aspect of the course allows me to really concentrate on researching, planning and perfecting my essays in all three terms, and writing something that I'm really proud of.”

Rhiannon Snook
BA Philosophy

Developing your skills

Our methods are designed to teach you the skills you need step-by-step throughout your degree, aiming to prepare you for each new module, and each new academic year, as well as your future career.

Year 1 modules focus on developing two vital skills: making your own arguments and assessing the arguments of others. We teach you to present your ideas, orally and in writing, in a clear and effective way. Year 2 modules focus on developing your skills of research and enquiry, and how to effectively present arguments in public. Year 3 modules focus on developing independent research and self-awareness.

Our courses are designed to enable you to become a fully independent learner, able to reflect critically on your progress and strengths, and on the goals you wish to achieve.



GET REAL

Choose from a vast breadth of modules and study philosophy connected to the world around you.

Our interdisciplinary approach to teaching and research is grounded in the real world. The modules we teach stem directly from our academics' research, which is informed by current events and problems, such as democracy, freedom, religion and climate change.

Thought-provoking modules

We offer a wide array of modules on subjects ranging from biomedical ethics, climate justice, philosophy of crime and law, and Indian philosophy, to colour, experimental philosophy, death, and speech attacks.

Apart from “Reason and argument” in your first year, every module you take is your choice. You can either choose diverse modules to broaden your knowledge, or themed modules to focus your interests, enabling you to make an informed choice as to how to specialise as you progress through your degree.

If your passion lies in ethics, you can specialise in this area on our BA Ethics, Value and Philosophy degree.

Explore another perspective

You can opt to study another subject alongside philosophy on our joint degrees, or you can take modules in other subjects, either to complement or diversify your studies. Popular choices include history, classical studies, politics, English literature and psychology.

“Studying philosophy at Reading has given me greater confidence in my ability to understand, recognise and remain informed of arguments used in everyday politics, current affairs and ethics.”

Will Burgess
BA and MRes in Philosophy graduate



HANDS-ON

Our philosophy degrees aim to prepare you for your future career, with 91% of leavers in work and/or study 15 months after the end of their course.¹

We will support you to undertake placements and gain practical, hands-on experience in a field you may be interested in. You can also apply for a paid summer placement in our Undergraduate Research Opportunities Programme (UROP), working with an academic on their research. There is also the opportunity to undertake a credit-bearing placement during your degree forming all or part of an optional module.

Professional placement year

Transfer to a 4-year programme and complete a professional placement year, gaining invaluable experience and putting your knowledge into practice. Our Placement Coordinators will support you throughout securing a placement, during the placement and while transitioning back to university life.²

Shape your future

Our degrees aim to develop your transferable skills, including: communicating ideas clearly and precisely, formulating complex problems, criticising arguments effectively, engaging in productive debate, and developing high-quality literacy skills.

Previous graduates have gone on to work in a variety of institutions, including: KPMG, the civil service, IBM, PwC, Lloyds, museums, charities and various schools and universities. Other graduates choose to continue their studies at postgraduate level.

“The Department was keen to show me opportunities outside the curriculum that enhanced my academic experience: lectures, conferences, workshops, summer schools and seminars. This gave me the edge I needed in applying successfully to Oxbridge master’s programmes.”

Harry Tappenden
BA Philosophy

¹ Graduate Outcomes Survey 2018/19; First Degree responders from Philosophy.

² Subject to availability, see inside back cover.



IT'S WHAT WE DO

Community is at the heart of our Department and we strive to create a friendly and inclusive environment.

Students and staff regularly socialise in relaxed, informal settings. Enjoyable social events mark the year, from Welcome Week right through to the end-of-year Summer Philosophy Day.

Our academics get to know you through our personal tutor system and small-group teaching. You will meet with your personal tutor at least once a term, although you are welcome to drop in at any time, and your tutor will aim to support you in pursuing your goals and aspirations.

Creating memories

You will be warmly welcomed by the philosophy society through a range of social events, from staff vs. student rounders, to study advice sessions, film nights and meals out. The society also produces an undergraduate philosophy journal, *Lateralis*, which you are welcome to get involved in. Join the society to build great friendships and create memories that will last a lifetime.

Go global

Apply to study abroad as part of your degree, broadening your horizons, enhancing your studies and developing your skill set. You can study abroad for either a term or a year at a university in Europe, the USA, Canada, Japan or Australia.¹

“There’s a very friendly and inclusive philosophical community at Reading. The good relationships I developed with staff and other students through platforms like the philosophy society really benefited my academic progress, and helped support my professional aspirations.”

Josh Matthews
BA Philosophy graduate

¹ Subject to availability, see inside back cover.



COURSES

OUR PHILOSOPHY DEGREES

BA Philosophy

BA Ethics, Value and Philosophy

OUR JOINT DEGREES

BA Philosophy, Business and Ethics

BA Philosophy, Politics and Economics

BA Art and Philosophy

BA History and Philosophy

BA Philosophy and Classical Studies

BA Philosophy and English Literature

BA Philosophy and International Relations

BA Philosophy and Politics

BA Psychology and Philosophy



YEAR 1

Year 1 introduces life's big questions and trains you in the methods of rigorous argument.

Choose from optional modules such as: "Radical philosophy", challenging our deepest beliefs about society and politics; and "The meaning of life", asking what makes life worth living.

Optional modules*

Reason and argument

Radical philosophy

Global justice

The meaning of life

The right and the good

Mental machines

Elementary logic

Writing the philosophical essay

YEAR 2

Year 2 modules focus on enduring philosophical problems, develop further analytical skills, and trace the development of ideas through history.

You will have the opportunity to work on semi-independent research projects with a supervisor, in which you devise your own research questions.

Ethics, Value and Philosophy students deepen their knowledge of normative and moral philosophy through their two compulsory modules, while their other modules are typically taken in philosophy, with the option to take one module from another subject area.

Philosophy, Politics and Economics students can continue pursuing all three subjects, or focus on any two of the three.

Optional modules*

Ignorance, doubt and relativism: the nature of knowledge and how we acquire it

Global philosophies: non-Western and multicultural perspectives on philosophy

Meaning and the mind: the nature of the mind and of language

From scepticism to therapy: Hume, Kant and Wittgenstein – leading figures in the history of philosophy

Ethical argument: approaches to morality and ethics

Oppression, inequality and enemies of democracy: leading themes in current political philosophy

YEAR 3

In Year 3 you study your chosen areas of philosophy in much greater depth.

Many of our modules apply the tools of philosophy to practical problems facing contemporary society, while others explore connections with other academic subjects, such as politics, linguistics, and cognitive science. You will be taught in small groups with in-class discussions, and one-on-one meetings with the lecturer.

Guided by your supervisor, you will carry out an independent research project exploring a topic of your choice in either the Dissertation or the Independent learning module.

Ethics, Value and Philosophy students take at least five modules from among a selection in ethics, political philosophy and aesthetics.

Philosophy, Politics and Economics students continue to divide their modules between either three or two subjects.

Year 3 optional modules*

Are we free?

Business ethics and social responsibility

Chinese philosophy

Fairness

Happy, good, and meaningful lives

Philosophy of law

Philosophy of language

Christian, Islamic, and Jewish medieval philosophy

The morality of abortion

Philosophy of religion

Reason, value & knowledge

The scandal of film

Speech attacks: bullshit, lies, propaganda

Society and State in Ancient Greece

Dissertation

Independent learning module

* These modules run regularly, and are provided as a taster of some of the modules that may be available on these courses.

Disclaimer

This brochure was issued in 2021 and is aimed at prospective undergraduate students wishing to apply for a place at the University of Reading (the University) and start a course in autumn 2022.

The University makes every effort to ensure that the information provided in the brochure is accurate and up-to-date at the time of going to press (Oct 2021). However, it may be necessary for the University to make some changes to the information presented in the brochure following publication – for example, where it is necessary to reflect changes in practice or theory in an academic subject as a result of emerging research; or if an accrediting body requires certain course content to be added or removed. To make an informed and up-to-date decision, we recommend that you check www.reading.ac.uk/ready-to-study.

The University undertakes to take all reasonable steps to provide the services (including the courses) described in this brochure. It does not, however, guarantee the provision of such services. Should industrial action or circumstances beyond the control of the University interfere with its ability to provide the services, the University undertakes to use all reasonable steps to minimise any disruption to the services.

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Modules disclaimer

Sample modules are provided as a taster of some of the modules that may be available on each course. The sample modules listed may be compulsory (core) or optional modules. Information is correct at the time of going to press (Oct 2021) but the University cannot guarantee that a module appearing in this list will definitely run. Teaching staff on specific courses or modules mentioned in this brochure may be subject to change.

For optional modules, the University cannot guarantee that all optional modules will be available to students who may wish to take them, although the University will try to ensure that students are able to

take optional modules in which they have expressed interest at the appropriate time during their course. Optional modules vary from year to year and entry to them will be at the discretion of the Course Director.

Joint courses disclaimer

Our joint courses may have extra requirements, including English language requirements. Please check the individual course pages on our website for further details.

Year abroad and placement fees

Some courses include an optional or compulsory year abroad or placement year. During this year you will only pay a partial fee which is currently set at 15% of the normal tuition fee. Check the website for the latest information: www.reading.ac.uk/fees-and-funding.

Placements disclaimer

Programmes with a Professional Placement Year (also known as 'Year in Industry' or 'Placement Year') are fully dependent on students securing their own placement opportunity, normally through a competitive recruitment process. The University provides dedicated career and application support for placement year students. Students who do not secure a placement or who are unable to complete the placement year due to extenuating circumstances, have the option to transfer to a three year variant of their programme with agreement from their school/department.

Study abroad disclaimer

The partnerships listed are correct at the time of publication (Oct 2021). For up-to-date information on the University's partnerships contact studyabroad@reading.ac.uk.

Where Study Abroad is not a compulsory part of the degree programme, the University of Reading cannot guarantee that every applicant who applies for the scheme will be successful. Whilst efforts are made to secure sufficient places at partner institutions, the number of places available and the University's partners can vary year-on-year. In all cases, the University cannot guarantee that it will be possible for applicants to choose to study abroad at a particular institution. Further, certain courses and/or institutions may require you to satisfy specific eligibility criteria. It can be a competitive process. For further information on the University's Study Abroad Scheme please contact studyabroad@reading.ac.uk.



Department of Philosophy

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Ask us a question

www.reading.ac.uk/question