

Fall 2024

Course Descriptions

Philosophy, Humanities, and Religious Studies

140 Arnold Hall
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Is Philosophy a Great Major for YOU?

The WVU Philosophy Department is an intellectually vibrant department, with an energetic faculty devoted to outstanding research, teaching, and service. We offer a BA in Philosophy and minors in Religious Studies (both a regular and an online option), Applied Ethics, and Philosophy. We have a well-earned reputation for outstanding undergraduate teaching and mentoring that is comparable to a top-tier liberal arts college. Our faculty also have a well-earned reputation for producing research that is comparable to our peers at R1 institutions with PhD programs.

We have a long and distinguished tradition of student success and fulfillment. Our graduates include Truman Scholars and Fulbright Scholars. In 2022-2023 alone, 3 of WVU's 25 Eberly Scholars are philosophy majors. The 2023 recipients of WVU's Outstanding Senior and Order Augusta include five philosophy majors. One of our 2023 graduates has been recognized as a Fulbright Scholar, Neil S. Bucklew Scholar, Mountaineer of Distinction, Newman Civic Fellow, and Eberly Scholar. Our students are gaining admission, often with generous funding, to top graduate programs, law schools, and medical schools.

If you are a person who wants to live a purposeful and meaningful life, the study of philosophy will be valuable, interesting, and deeply enjoyable for you. Philosophy students have the opportunity to grapple with deep questions and pressing contemporary problems about ourselves, our societies, and our world. How should we live our lives? What are our ethical obligations toward others? What is a just society? Are race and gender social constructs? Is time real? Is consciousness a purely physical phenomenon? Do human beings have free will? Is it possible to know anything? Students practicing philosophy often come up with enlightening answers to those questions and learn to support their answers with sound reasoning.

Beyond the personal satisfaction of engaging in a careful study of life's big questions, the study of philosophy prepares students for employment in fields that demand sophisticated critical thinking skills, clear communication of complex ideas, and the ability to deal effectively with ambiguity. The analytical and communication skills emphasized in philosophy are a valuable asset in many satisfying careers, including law, health care, education, politics, public policy, counseling, and business. As you probably know already, philosophy students consistently score exceptionally well on standardized exams such as the LSAT, GRE, MCAT, and GMAT.

Data collected by PayScale.com and shared by the World Economic Forum compared mid-career salaries among graduates from 20 different undergraduate majors. Philosophy came in 5th place, earning the highest rating among all humanities majors, all social science majors, all business majors (except economics), and several STEM majors. PayScale.com also collected data on starting salaries among 50 different majors and philosophy majors ranked #16. These data demonstrate that philosophy offers a great return on investment that is comparable to engineering.

For more info, contact:

Dr. Sharon Ryan, WVU Philosophy Department Chairperson
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Philosophy Major Requirements, BA

Basic Core Requirements Phil 244, Phil 248, Phil 260
Philosophy Upper-Division Courses <u>Select one of the Following:</u> Phil 301 or Phil 302 <u>Select one of the Following:</u> Phil 321 or 332 or Phil 346
Philosophy Upper-Division Electives Select 9 hours at the 300 Level or Above in Philosophy
Philosophy General Electives Any PHIL Course at the 100-level or above
Capstone Experience PHIL 480 or PHIL 496

Philosophy Minor Requirements

The Philosophy minor is designed to acquaint students with a broad range of philosophical topics and skills, and to introduce them to the fundamental issues in philosophy. The minor consists of fifteen hours in Philosophy, with at least nine hours at the upper level (300 level or above). A grade of C- or higher must be earned in all courses counted toward the minor.

Religious Studies Minor Requirements

The Religious studies Minor gives all WVU students the opportunity to explore the world through a careful and respectful study of various religions, histories, and cultures. In addition to a well-rounded list of exciting on campus and online course offerings, the Program leads many outstanding study abroad adventures throughout the year. For more information, contact Dr. Alyssa Beall @ Alyssa.Beall@mail.wvu.edu.

A Minor in religious studies is an ideal addition for any student who would like to better understand humanity, the depths of current world events, the complexity of religious ideas, cultures, and practices. A minor in Religious Studies prepares you for careers in politics, history, public policy, ministry, theology, and many other fields. The course work develops critical thinking and research skills that will serve you well in law school and medical school. Students choosing the Religious Studies minor will coordinate with an advisor to design 15 hours of coursework within Religious Studies that best represents the student's interests within the minor. Students must earn a minimum grade of C in all courses applied to the minor.

- Course requirements: The minor consists of 15 hours of coursework in religious studies (any RELG courses), with at least 9 hours at the upper-level (300-level or above).
- With Department Chair approval, PHIL 308, 309, or 314 may be used to satisfy the upper-level course requirements for the minor in RS.

Applied Ethics Minor Requirements

Core Courses		6
Phil 130	Current Moral Problems	
Phil 321	Ethical Theory	
or Phil 346	History of Ethics	
APPLIED THEORY*		6
Select two of the following:		
Phil 313	Philosophy of Race	
Phil 314	Philosophy of Sex and Gender	
Phil 315	Free Will and Moral Responsibility	
Phil 331	Health Care Ethics	
Phil 332	Environmental Ethics	
SPECIFIC AREA OF PRACTICE *		3
Select one of the following:		
Phil 285	Ethics Bowl	
Phil 491	Professional Experience	
Phil 497	Research	
Total Hours		15

Students must have completed at least 6 credits in the minor before being eligible to complete the Specific Areas of Practice requirement. A grade of C- or higher must be earned in all courses counted toward the minor.

* With the approval of the Philosophy Department, students may substitute up to one relevant course in philosophy or another department and apply it toward the Applied Theory or the Specific Area of Practice.

Fall 2024 Course Descriptions

Philosophy 100 satisfies area 5 of the GEF

PHIL 100 Problems of Philosophy 3 hr

Devin Curry

In this course, we will take a whirlwind tour of philosophical inquiry. We'll begin by acquiring some of the basic tools of logical thinking, and sharpen those tools by identifying good, bad, and bullshit arguments in a US presidential debate. We'll then bring our critical tools to bear on the metaphysical and epistemological work of a few of the greatest philosophers in the European tradition. Finally, we'll read and discuss recent essays on science and religion, color, racism, moral partiality, and the meaning of life, amongst other topics. By the end of the course, we will have studied many (though not nearly all) of the big questions that make up the subject matter of philosophy. We may not walk away with satisfactory answers to these questions, but we will develop a deeper understanding of both the questions themselves and various possible ways of answering them. By immersing ourselves in Plato's 4th century BCE dialogues, Descartes's 17th century *Meditations*, and essays, polemics, and analyses from the 18th–21st centuries, we will also come to appreciate several distinctive ways of doing philosophy.

PHIL 100 Problems of Philosophy 3 hr

Sharon Ryan

This course is an introductory exploration of some exciting, important, and challenging philosophical questions. For example, we will consider the following questions: How should human beings treat one another, non-human animals, and the environment? What makes actions right or wrong? What are the central elements of a just society? Do human beings have free will? If God exists, can we ever be sure about that? What is a true friend and why does friendship matter? What makes you the unique individual that you are? Is death bad? What can we know? What makes some beliefs more reasonable than others? What is wisdom and why is it valuable?

We will begin the course with a brief introduction to logic and argument analysis. After solidifying the methods of logic and the terminology for argument analysis, we jump in and apply those skills as we grapple with some of the big questions of philosophy!

Philosophy 130 satisfies area 5 of the GEF

PHIL 130 Current Moral Problems 3 hr

Matthew Talbert

This class will begin by introducing students to fundamental questions in ethics such as those having to do with ethical relativism and the relationship between ethics and God. Next, students will be introduced to several theories about what makes actions right or wrong. These ethical theories will be applied to contemporary debates concerning issues such as abortion, animal rights, euthanasia, and distributive justice.

Philosophy 147 area 6 of the GEF

PHIL 147 Philosophy and Film

3 hr

David Cerbone

This course provides an introduction to philosophical questions and problems using the medium of film. We will be viewing a variety of films over the course of the semester to consider how they frame, develop, and enact philosophical ideas pertaining to the nature of reality and our knowledge of it, the nature of the self and personal identity, the character of contemporary society and technology, and the meaning and value of life. The films we view will be accompanied by a variety of readings from the Western philosophical tradition.

Philosophy 244 satisfies area 5 of the GEF

PHIL 244

History of Ancient Philosophy

3 hr

Geoff Georgi

Philosophy as it is practiced in many places around the world today (including here at WVU) originated in ancient Greece. This course introduces students to ancient Greek thought, with an emphasis on how philosophy was understood by those who first took themselves to be doing it. While the majority of the course will focus on Plato and Aristotle, we will also read selections from the pre-Socratic philosophers who influenced them and from the philosophical traditions that developed in Greece after the death of Alexander the Great.

Philosophy 260 area 3 of the GEF

PHIL 260

Intro to Symbolic Logic

3hr

Matthew Talbert

This course is an introduction to contemporary formal (or symbolic) logic. Historically, the study of logic originated with Aristotle and the Stoic philosophers of ancient Greece. Discoveries in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, however, led to a far more sophisticated understanding of logic. Thanks to these developments, formal logic is now central to many disciplines, including computer science, linguistics, mathematics, and philosophy. More generally, an understanding of the basic concepts of formal logic is indispensable for reasoning critically on any topic.

Philosophy 301 satisfies GEF5

PR: 3 hours of philosophy.

PHIL 301

Metaphysics

3 hr

Geoff Georgi

This course is an introduction to contemporary analytic metaphysics. Metaphysics deals with some of the oldest and most basic questions in philosophy: what kinds of things exist? What is the status of the categories we use to think and talk about things that exist? What is the nature of time and space? What is change? What is it for one thing to cause another? What is it for some things to exist necessarily, while other things exist only contingently? Analytic metaphysics approaches these classic questions using the tools of rigorous argument, analysis, and intuition.

PHIL 313**Philosophy of Race****3 hr****Devin Curry**

We will begin this course on the epistemology, ethics, metaphysics, and political philosophy of race with an examination of several varieties of racism and race-thinking. Studying the ethics of lay, medical, and scientific (mis)uses of the concept of race will inevitably lead us back to the basics. What is race, anyway? Is it biologically real? Is it illusory? Is it socially constructed? If so, how, precisely? As we'll see, several theorists have converged on the view that these metaphysical questions should be pursued always with an eye towards pragmatic ends in the fight against racism. Thus, we'll conclude by considering some of those political ends, including equal treatment under the law and reparations.

Philosophy 325 satisfies GEF.5
PR – 3 Hr. Philosophy or Pre-Law student

PHIL 325**Philosophy of Law****3 hr****Scott Davidson**

The central aim of this course is to teach students how to think like a lawyer. First, we will examine the question: What is law? When philosophers turn their attention to this question, they want to know what features are distinctive to law as law. The course thus begins with a study of some of the most influential answers to this question, such as natural law, legal positivism, American legal realism, and so on. After studying those theoretical paradigms, the course will turn to the topic of legal reasoning. Through the study of landmark cases, we will examine the role of reason in constitutional interpretation and construction. Students will learn how to think like a lawyer by carefully analyzing and evaluating complex legal arguments. Mastery of the common types of legal argument will prepare students for law school and more broadly to navigate complex and deeply contested topics of public concern.

Philosophy 331 satisfies area 5 of the GEF
Pre-Requisite – 3 hours of Philosophy or Pre-Med or Health Science Student

PHIL 331**Health Care Ethics****3 hr****Ariane Nomikos**

The course provides a framework for the ethical principles and concepts at work in medical decision-making, including the nature of rights, autonomy, justice, benefit, and harm. It explores difficult and controversial issues that arise in healthcare ethics, including autonomy and informed consent, life-sustaining treatment, reproduction, conscientious objection, justice and health care, organ donation, and emerging technologies. Questions include: What does consent involve, and to what extent must a patient be informed about what they consent to? How can we balance competing rights among patients, their families, and health care providers? How should we deal with cases of advance directives where a patient met the standards of competency at one point but later fails to meet those standards? To what degree should we prioritize the life of a fetus? Is healthcare a moral right? Should vaccines be mandatory? We will examine these issues from both a theoretical perspective and through realistic case studies.

Pre-Requisite - Prior coursework in philosophy or a major in the sciences
Phil 332 may be used to satisfy the ethics requirement for the major.

PHIL 332 **Environmental Ethics** **3 hr**
Ariane Nomikos

Imagine that you are the last human left on earth and that you will soon die. (Don't worry, you've lived a long, full life and you're actually pretty ready to go at this point.) When you are gone, the only life remaining will be plants, microbes, and invertebrates. For some reason, you find yourself standing next to the last remaining redwood tree and you think to yourself: "It sure would be fun to destroy this tree before I die!" Would it be *wrong* for you to destroy the last remaining redwood?

Perhaps the most fundamental question in environmental ethics concerns our attitude towards the nonhuman world. Thus, in the first part of this course, we ask: *what really matters?* Do beings without experiences, such as redwoods, have moral standing? In other words, are trees the sort of things to which we can have obligations? Are ecosystems? And how about nonhuman animals? Does the ability to suffer imply that an organism should be treated with respect, or is something more required, like the capacity for self-conscious moral agency? In the second part of this course, we will ask: *what really works?* That is, how can we apply our answers to the previous questions to concrete problems like climate change.

Philosophy 355 satisfies GEF5
PR: 3 Hrs. Philosophy

PHIL 355 **Existentialism** **3 hr**
David Cerbone

The term "existentialism" has come to be associated with a broad array of works and ideas in literature, psychology, drama, and film, but its original home is within philosophy. The aim of this course is to provide an introduction to the collection of philosophical views commonly labeled "existentialist." We will begin by considering two texts, from Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus, which articulate in broad brushstrokes a philosophical outlook or attitude often associated with existentialism. Both texts may be understood as responding to the felt absence of meaning or value in the world, what Nietzsche refers to as "the death of God." We will consider both the points of commonality and divergence between these two views, and use them as a basis for working our way through further and, in many cases, more difficult texts. The second part of the course will be devoted to a careful reading of selections from the four most prominent philosophers associated with the existentialist tradition: Søren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger, and, again, Jean-Paul Sartre.

WVU Religious Studies Program

Students choosing the Religious Studies minor will coordinate with an advisor to design 15 hours of coursework within Religious Studies that best represents the student's interests within the minor. Students must earn a minimum grade of C in all courses applied to the minor.

- Course requirements: The minor consists of 15 hours of coursework in religious studies (any RELG courses), with at least 9 hours at the upper-level (300-level or above).

Religious Studies 102 satisfies area 7 of the GEF

RELG 102 Introduction to World Religions 3 hr
Alyssa Beall

This online, accelerated course is both an introduction to World Religions and a introduction to the academic study of those religions. We will explore the history and development of religions around the world, and examine how those traditions are practiced today in a variety of contexts.

RELG 102 Introduction to World Religions 3 hr
Alex Snow

This course is an introduction to the comparative study of world religions. We hope to explore the ways that religious traditions construct worlds of meaning, analyze the human situation, and speak of power and mystery. We shall address the multi-religious contexts in which Americans and many other people live today in the 21st century; and consider how people with different religious beliefs and practices can cultivate respect for, and dialogue with, diverse traditions of others. Such inquiries can sometimes be disorienting, for the sense of religion many of us might feel in the United States has been mediated largely through the monotheistic histories contained within Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. Traditions like Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Shinto, Sikhism, and Jainism, as well as Indigenous religions and New Religious Movements, may have very different sets of assumptions, notwithstanding a multiplicity of divinities, an absence or abundance of scriptural authority, as well as historically and contextually specific ritual practices. With the more recent spread of religious pluralism and the movement toward inter-faith dialogue, many of these traditions will seem very much like an "other" way of being in the world. In order to learn about these other religions in a reflective way, we'll attempt to keep two important perspectives in mind: *Imaginative Sympathy*—Please take seriously the worlds of peoples involved, assume that religious thoughts and/or practices carry real meaning for any person or group under consideration; and *Critical Distance*—Try to raise questions that may not be raised by the participants, such as, what effect does this faith/practice have on the participant? On society? What kinds of values does a given text suggest or implicitly depend upon? What are the conceptions of human nature that texts and practices envision? What does a given dimension of any tradition show to be fundamental to human happiness and welfare?

RELG 102 Introduction to World Religions 3 hr
Aaron Gale

This course introduces students to five of the most widely recognized religions in the world today: Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism. Despite some commonalities, each religion is unique regarding its history and practice. Therefore, the goals of this course are primarily twofold: 1. to provide students with an understanding of how each religion evolved historically and spiritually, and 2. to explore the contemporary practice of each religion. In

addition, we will study some of the interactions that have taken place among the religions.

Religious Studies 219 satisfies area 5 of the GEF

RELG 219 The History of Christianity 3 hr
Aaron Gale

This course explores the birth and evolution of Christian thought from its inception until approximately the modern era. The emphasis of this course is therefore on the significant events and people that helped to shape Christianity. Some of the individuals we will discuss include Jesus of Nazareth, St. Paul, St. Augustine, and St. Thomas Aquinas. In addition, other topics related to the study of Christian thought will be examined. Examples of such topics include the early relationship between Judaism and Christianity, monasticism, and the Crusades. Ultimately, then, this course will: 1. explore how Christianity developed within the confines of the ancient world, and 2. provide students with the knowledge necessary to identify and explain key Christian events and people integral to the religion's growth.

Religious Studies 303 satisfies area 5 of the GEF

RELG 303 Studies in Christian Scripture 3 hr
Alex Snow

This course will approach the New Testament from a rigorously historical perspective. We will situate the writings of the New Testament thoroughly within the historical, cultural, social, political, literary, and ideological worlds from which it emerged. We will endeavor to explore beneath the surface to find clues not only about such traditional issues as authorship, sources, and dates, but also about what is a vibrant field of study and social history. We will ask historical questions of the texts and of the events that they either narrated or presupposed. We will maintain an interest in the history of the text and the formation of the canon of the New Testament; in the historical Jesus; in the historical Paul; in the history of the Johannine community; in the historical realities lying behind Matthew, and 2 Corinthians, and Revelation; just to name a few.

We will also strive to be highly comparative, asking potential and perennial questions like: How does John compare with the Synoptics? How do the Synoptics compare with each other? How does the preaching of Jesus compare with the accounts of the Gospels; or even more specifically, the theology of Paul? How does Paul's theology stack up against the letter of James; or even the book of Hebrews? How does the book of Revelation compare with everything else? We will strive to be contextually, inter-textually, and intra-textually critical, engaged in rigorous scholarship around both historical and contemporary constructions of Christian scriptures, so that we can see what the critical questions are and what evidence is typically adduced to answer them.

RELG 335 Religion and Science 3 hr
Alex Snow

This course is an introduction to, and survey of, the professional, popular, and academic relationships between religion and science, based on the issues raised by following questions: Where did we come from? Where are we going? In the beginning, why did the 'Big Bang' occur? Do quantum physics challenge our

assumptions about reality? Is evolution God's way of creating? Is human nature determined by its genes? Can God act in a natural, law-bound world? Will human life come to an end as the universe evolves? And what about the universe itself — will it come to an end at some point, or will it go on forever? In order to understand better what we mean by "religion" and "science" we must think more critically about the conceptual status of such categories, while simultaneously using and participating in the contexts of various religious and secular cultures, viewing them as diverse and complex expressions of the human condition.

RELG 350 **Biblical Ethics/Current Issues** **3 hr**
Alyssa Beall

In this course, we will examine both the relevant *texts* and the varying *contexts* for ethical issues in today's world, as discussed by practitioners in the Abrahamic religions. After a short review of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, we will divide our time between overviews of ethical topics and current events. Our goal is to understand the variety of ethical positions that exist within and between these religions, as well as how those views impact the secular world.

RELG 365 **Theories of Magic and Religion** **3 hr**
Alyssa Beall

Magic and religion are terms which are often understood in relation to each other; however, our own understanding of what these words mean impacts our understanding of how they relate to each other. Is magic something separate from religion? Is magic a part of religious practice? Is religion somehow more real or legitimate than magic? This course will explore ancient, premodern, and (post)modern ideas of the relationship between magic and religion.

WVU Humanities Program

Humanities 101 satisfies area 6 of the GEF
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HUM 101 **Introduction to Western Civilization 1** **3 hr**
Alyssa Beall

In this course, we cover a large span of time: from Prehistory to the Late Middle Ages. We also cover a variety of topics, including: art, architecture, religion, philosophy, music, and literature. This is an introductory course, therefore you should gain a broad understanding of western civilization during this time period, and have a foundation for further studies in these topics. Class will include lecture, small and large group discussions.

HUM 101 **Introduction to Western Civilization 1** **3 hr**
Staff

Presents the high points of Greco-Roman and Medieval European civilizations: their art, architecture, philosophy, religion, literature and music.

HUM 102 Introduction to Western Civilization 2 3 hr
Staff

Presents the art, architecture, philosophy, religion, literature and music of the following periods in Western civilization: the Renaissance, the Age of Classicism and the revolutionary nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

HUM 231 Greek and Roman Civilization and Culture 3 hr
Aaron Gale

Examination of the numerous ways in which Greek and Roman cultures intersected, coincided, and at times collided. The relationship has no parallel in world history in that their contact created a unique fusion of cultural expression identified as "Greco-Roman."