

Department of  
Philosophy

and

Religious Studies  
Program

Course Descriptions  
Spring 2024

## 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  
(Sharon.Ryan@mail.wvu.edu)

## Philosophy Major Requirements, BA

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

# Spring 2024 Philosophy 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 18<sup>th</sup>–21<sup>st</sup> centuries, we will also come to appreciate several distinctive ways of doing philosophy.

**PHIL 100                      Problems of Philosophy                      3 hr**  
**Matthew Talbert**

This class offers an introduction to several long-standing questions about the place of human beings in the world and about how we should conduct our lives—questions such as: “Does God exist?”; “Is the mind a part of the body?”; “Do we have free will?”; “When is an action wrong?”; “What is the nature of a just society?” We will approach these questions by closely reading the writings of contemporary and historical philosophers who have thought hard about these issues. The aim of this course is for students to come to an understanding of these authors’ views and to clarify their own thinking about questions like the above. Another goal is to engage students’ capacities for critical reflection and to give students the opportunity to improve their ability to think and speak about complex, abstract topics.

Philosophy 130 satisfies area 5 of the GEF

**PHIL 130                      Current Moral Problems                      3 hr**  
**David Hoinski**

Our historical era will have been marked by extensive human migrations and also by the response of wealthy countries like the US and others of the “Global North” to these “strangers at our door.” Refugees, human beings in flight from persecution, war, crime, poverty, and natural disasters come to countries like the US often at great risk to themselves in an attempt to secure their basic human rights. Here we confront one of the great political and ethical questions of our time, namely, (and as the philosopher Bruno Latour puts it) “how can we organize to welcome the refugees?” Answering this question requires us to consider the further questions of who should count as a refugee and what our ethical obligations are to such persons. In this course we will advance an answer to precisely these questions. Our particular investigation will place special

emphasis on the application of ethical theories to real-world problems, while also focusing our thought on particular concepts, including strangers, humanity, and hospitality. We will read and discuss a number of short books that approach these topics—and the refugee crisis as a whole—from a variety of angles. Taking into account the conceptual and ethical difficulties that surround the questions of the stranger, hospitality, and humanity, we will aim to outline an ethical response to refugees, both those to come and those who are even now arriving at our door.

**PHIL 130**                      **Current Moral Problems**                      **3 hr**  
**Ariane Nomikos**

This course will examine several contentious moral issues of the day using the tools of philosophy. Among the topics that may be discussed are abortion, capital punishment, climate change, euthanasia, distributive justice, global poverty, human enhancements, immigration, mass incarceration, online dating, policing, procreation, reparations, sex work, and vegetarianism. Some of the specific issues we consider will be predetermined by the professor; others will be selected based on student interest. To set up our engagement with these issues, whatever they may be, we will begin the course with an introduction to some basic terminology in ethics and a brief survey of some major moral theories.

**PHIL 130**                      **Current Moral Problems**                      **3 hr**  
**Megan Hungerman**

Over the duration of this course, we will be examining four current moral problems, which will carry us through the complete human life cycle; from sex, to birth, to death, and what comes between. You will get the opportunity to examine the topics from multiple angles, and differing viewpoints.

Course Objectives:

- Identify several current moral problems
- Evaluate those problems from differing angles
- Formulate personal opinions about the problems, and support those opinions

Philosophy 147 area 6 of the GEF
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**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**

**David Hoinski**

Plato's Republic (or, in Greek, Politeia) is arguably the greatest single work of philosophy ever written. It concerns the question whether it is better for a person to be just rather than unjust. Is it really so important to try to become a good person? In order to answer this question, Plato gives us a dialogue of epic proportions, in which Socrates, Glaucon, Adeimantus, and others discuss the nature of social and political life, childrearing, the four cardinal virtues (wisdom, courage, moderation, and justice), the nature of the soul (psychology), the relations between men and women, the family, the nature of philosophy and philosophical education, epistemology, metaphysics, the different kinds of political regimes, and the relation between pleasure and the good, amongst many other topics. Republic also features some of the most famous and profound stories and allegories in all of philosophy including the story of the ring of Gyges, the noble lie, the allegory of the cave, and the myth of Er. In this course we will conduct a careful study of the ten books of Republic paying special attention to Plato's famous (and infamous) notion of philosopher-rulers or the idea that philosophers should lead the political community for the good of humanity. We will also pay special attention to the way Plato discusses women in light of his proposal that women should receive the same education as men, should be able to serve in the military alongside men, and should have the same opportunity as men to become philosopher-rulers.

Philosophy 248 area 5 of the GEF

**PHIL 248**                      **History of Modern Philosophy**                      **3 hr**

**David Hoinski**

Modern western philosophy is a broad historical category that covers roughly the period from 1600 to 1900 in European philosophy and is often further divided into early modern philosophy and late modern philosophy, with 1781 (the publication year of the first edition of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason) frequently cited as the turning point. This course will focus on early modern philosophy and in particular on the debate between rationalism and empiricism. We will study in depth the works of three philosophers, namely, René Descartes, John Locke, and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, who are central to this debate. The debate between rationalism and empiricism is frequently presented as concerning epistemology (the study of what knowledge is, how we obtain it, and what we can know), and this characterization of the rationalism/empiricism debate is accurate so far as it goes. The deeper import of this debate, however, concerns the possibility of metaphysics, understood as the science of the basic nature of reality and/or god. Metaphysics in its early modern formulation (and one that has been in many ways decisive for all subsequent philosophy) concerns such subjects as the nature and existence of god, the nature of substance, the nature of soul and or mind, the nature of matter, the relation between body and mind, and the question of free will, amongst other topics. The nature of mind in particular will constitute a central theme of this course, especially insofar as we will be examining a central point of contention between empiricism and rationalism, namely, whether or not the mind possesses certain innate ideas independently of sense-perception. We shall see that the possibility of metaphysics looks very different depending on how we decide this fundamental question.

Philosophy 260 area 3 of the GEF

**PHIL 260**                      **Intro to Symbolic Logic**                      **3hr**  
**Geoff Georgi**

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.

Philosophy 306 satisfies GEF 5 and also requirements for philosophy major and minor

**PHIL 306**                      **Philosophy of Mind**                      **3 hr**  
**Devin Curry**

This course will survey important historical and contemporary strands in the philosophy of cognition and consciousness. We'll begin by asking whether you're made out of meat, and end by asking whether you're made out of stories. Along the way, via close engagement with philosophical and scientific texts, we'll discuss the relationship between minds and brains, the philosophical foundations of cognitive science, the possibility that your iPhone is literally part of your mind, and the mysteries of consciousness.

Philosophy 308 satisfies area 5 of the GEF.  
Pre-Requisite – 3 Hr. Philosophy or Religious Studies interdepartmental major

**PHIL 308**                      **Philosophy of Religion**                      **3 hr**  
**Daniel Miller**

This course explores a number of questions about religious belief and the nature and existence of God as conceived in the major monotheistic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam). Questions include: Is God the best explanation for the existence and order of the universe? Is it ever rational to accept a miracle claim? Does science threaten the rationality of religious belief? What bearing does the



pervasiveness of religious experience have on the rationality of religious belief? Does the existence of evil or of divine hiddenness disprove God? What is the relationship between God and morality? If God exists and has infallible foreknowledge of all future events, can humans nevertheless act freely? Should religious belief be based on reasoned evidence, faith, or both?

With Department Chair approval, PHIL 308 can be used to satisfy the 300-level course requirement for the minor in Religious Studies. Please contact Dr. Sharon Ryan ([Sharon.Ryan@mail.wvu.edu](mailto:Sharon.Ryan@mail.wvu.edu)) for approval.

**PHIL 309**

**Asian Philosophy**

**3 hr**

**Alex Snow**

*This class is intended to engage students in the process of understanding Asian thought and practice at its most fundamental level by examining how philosophical questions have been considered, critiqued, and compared in the major Asian traditions. This understanding is an invaluable resource in meeting two of the most important needs of our mutually global times, namely, the need to understand the ideas and values of people throughout the world, and the desire for each person to develop an interpersonal philosophy or worldview that can provide direction and guidance for life.*

*Basic human ideas and values derive from answers to fundamental questions about existence and human life: What is the nature of the universe? What is the nature of human existence? What is the nature of goodness? What is the nature of knowledge? However, these questions arise and evolve in different geographic contexts and assume different linguistic forms for people living at different times and in different places, and thus the answers given, and lessons applied, often vary accordingly in these specifically Asian contexts. But these are also basic questions that most persons and communities seek to answer, questions arising either out of wonder, human suffering, or the efforts to improve the conditions of human existence. And the answers to these questions and concerns provide the fundamental ideas and values that guide the development of Asian cultures as well as the lives of individual persons.*

*By reading, studying, discussing, and writing about the great philosophical traditions of Asia, it is possible to better understand these traditions' carefully considered answers to these questions, answers that are supported and engendered by profound insights and good historical reasons. Because these answers have guided the thought and action of the peoples of Asia over the centuries, they provide the basic clues to the guiding ideas and values of Asian societies today and tomorrow. And in today's world, where the very future of humankind depends upon understanding and cooperation among people with diverse values and ideas, it is imperative that these values and ideas be understood.*

With Department Chair approval, PHIL 309 can be used to satisfy the 300-level course requirement for the minor in Religious Studies. Please contact Dr. Sharon Ryan ([Sharon.Ryan@mail.wvu.edu](mailto:Sharon.Ryan@mail.wvu.edu)) for approval.

**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.

**PHIL 314      Philosophy of Sex and Gender**

**3 hr**

**Alyssa Beall**

This course explores the diversity of thought about sex, sexuality, and gender, while engaging with the cultural background of those ideas. We will foreground concerns about ethical and moral behavior in different societies, as well as critically examining the ways that certain ideas and values come to be constructed in U.S. society and around the globe.

With Department Chair approval, PHIL 314 can be used to satisfy the 300-level course requirement for the minor in Religious Studies. Please contact Dr. Sharon Ryan ([Sharon.Ryan@mail.wvu.edu](mailto:Sharon.Ryan@mail.wvu.edu)) for approval.

Philosophy 315

Pre-Requisite: 3 hours of Philosophy

**PHIL 315                      Free Will and Moral Responsibility**

**3hr**

**Matthew Talbert**

This course begins with an introduction to different theories about what is required for free will and to the central positions in the debate about whether free will is compatible with determinism. Next, we turn to theories about what it means to hold others responsible for their behavior, and theories about what is required for moral responsibility. In the last context, we will consider whether environmental factors (such as having been raised in a certain cultural context), or psychological and behavioral impairments (such as addiction), can undermine moral responsibility.

Philosophy 321 satisfies area 5 of the GEF

Pre-Requisite- 3 hrs. philosophy

**PHIL 321                      Ethical Theory**

**3 hr**

**Ariane Nomikos**

Topics to be selected from the following: an examination of major ethical theories, justification in ethics, moral truth, ethical skepticism, moral rights and duties, and the meaning of ethical concepts.

Philosophy 325 satisfies GEF5

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****Daniel Miller**

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, 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 make medical decisions concerning patients who fail to meet the standards of competence but lack an advance directive? To what degree should we prioritize the life of a fetus? Is healthcare a moral right? Would it be permissible for parents to genetically enhance their children?

**PHIL 341****Philosophy and Death****3 hr****David Cerbone**

Whether we like it or not, all of us will (eventually, someday, inevitably) die. While this course cannot change that, it may change how you think about that inevitable eventuality. Over the course of the semester, we will examine a variety of philosophical questions and arguments pertaining to our mortality. We will start by considering views that make our earthly demise only a transition rather than an end by arguing for the immortality of the soul. In thinking about the adequacy of these arguments, we will also consider both the coherence and desirability of living forever (whether by continuing to exist after our worldly deaths or by never dying in the first place). In the second part of the course, we will examine questions and views oriented around the finality of death: Is death something to fear? What role does death play in contemplating the question of life's meaning? If death marks the absolute end of my existence, does that in some way deprive my life of meaning? In the final part of the course, we will examine a very different take on the idea of an afterlife by considering the ways in which the continued existence of others after my death affects the meaning of my life. Throughout the course, we will be reflecting on the status of our mortality: is it merely a contingent feature of our existence or is it rather in some way essential

or constitutive of being the kind of beings we are? Readings will be drawn from classical sources (Plato, Epicurus, and Lucretius), the continental tradition (Heidegger, Sartre, and Camus), recent and contemporary work in Anglo-American (or analytic) philosophy (Bernard Williams, Thomas Nagel, John Fischer, Samuel Scheffler), as well as more “hybrid” approaches (Martin Hägglund).

Philosophy 480 Satisfies the Capstone Experience and Writing requirement  
Pre-Requisite: 12 hrs in philosophy, 6 hrs of PHIL 300 or higher

**PHIL 480     Capstone Seminar** The Philosophy of Saul Kripke     **3 hr**  
**Geoff Georgi**

Saul Kripke (born Nov. 13, 1940; died Sep. 15, 2022) was one of the most important logicians and philosophers of the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. He made major (and often controversial) contributions to the study of logic, metaphysics, epistemology, the philosophy of language, the philosophy of mathematics, and the philosophy of mind, and some of the concepts and arguments introduced by Kripke are now a standard part of contemporary philosophical discussions on almost any subject. In this class, we will read some of Kripke’s most influential texts, and some influential responses to those texts, in order to better understand and assess his philosophical legacy.

## Religious Studies Courses

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**  
**Joseph 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**  
**(Half-Semester, Online)**

**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 231 satisfies area 7 of the GEF
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**RELG 231                      Religions of China and Japan                      3 hr**

**Joseph Snow**

**We** begin our study of China and Japan with a brief introduction and review of the history, texts, and practices encompassing East Asian spirituality in general, covering some 3,500 years and including many of the major traditions – Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, and Shinto. We will explore a great variety of topics, including: the life of the Buddha; *karma* and rebirth; inspiring teachers; the life of Confucius; sacred Taoist texts; holy landscapes, shrines and festivals; enlightenment; and—for all the faiths—the spiritual and ethical teachings, art and architecture, sacred writings, ritual and ceremony, and death and the afterlife. We will also examine the rise of new religious movements in the East, the spread of religious pluralism, and the movement toward interfaith dialogue at the beginning of the new millennium. We will engage the conceptual structure underlying Confucian social and Taoist philosophical reflections, suggesting that examinations of Chinese and Japanese cosmology provide alternative definitions of religion that could be used to address some of the pressing issues of the Western cultural tradition.

**With** the growing popularity of traditions like Zen in the West, we shall consider how *koans* – riddles such as “What is the sound of one hand clapping?” – are embedded in larger narratives that belong to ancient traditions of “encounter dialogues.” These dialogues feature dramatic contests between masters, disciples, and an array of natural and supernatural forces: rogue priests, “wild

foxes,” hermits, wizards, shape-shifters, magical animals, and dangerous women. Lastly, we will enter into the realm of nature as it has been experienced by the Japanese. Central to this experience is the felt presence of *kami* — the “spirits” that invest every tree, rock, flower, mountain, river, and other natural object. This course pivots precariously on one paradoxical experience/expression: the experience which we might embody by looking closely, in wonder, at the intricacy of the petals of a flower, or contemplating the spreading shadow of a tree, or feeling the awesome majesty of a mountain waterfall!

Religious Studies 304 satisfies area 5 of the GEF
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**RELG 304                      Studies in Hebrew Scriptures                      3 hr**

**Alyssa Beall**

This course examines the Hebrew Bible (Tanakh) using a variety of scholarly methodologies, including the historical-critical method, source criticism, and literary theory. While exploring how the text reached its current form, we will be comparing and contrasting it with other texts from the Ancient Near East and discussing questions of politics, ritual, and mythology.

**RELG 330                      Religion and Music                      3 hr**

**Joseph Snow**

The myth of Orpheus articulates what social theorists have known since Plato: music matters. It is uniquely able to move us, to guide the imagination, to evoke memories, and to create spaces within which meaning is made. This class will explore religion through music -- a source of spiritual elation, social cohesion, and empowerment in cultures around the world. The only art form named after a divinity; music has been documented from prehistory to the present age in virtually all known cultures. For many, music is a vehicle for spiritual growth and community empowerment, whether it's understood as a gift of the gods or simply a practice for achieving mental states conducive to enlightenment. Traditionally, when religious scholars talk about music, it's as a kind of aesthetic supplement to the important spiritual content of a religion, analogous to stained-glass windows or temple paintings. In contrast, this class will acknowledge the critical role of musical activity in religious life. Music is not incidental in religious practice but a sacred treasure that is central to the growth and sustenance of religions throughout the world. Musical sound is sacred in most religions because it embodies the divine and can be shared by all participants. It endures among diverse communities of people despite theological differences. We will specifically apply such ideas, theories, and methods to the diverse contours and contexts of post-1960s popular music; the relatively new 'keywords' within the growing academic field of "sound studies" (e.g., noise, acoustics, music, and silence); and the ways sacred music effects cultural, political, and religious transitions in the contemporary world.