Nebraska Wesleyan University

Philosophy and Religion

Catalog

2011-2012

About the Program

The department offers Bachelor of Arts degrees in religion and philosophy. If a student has a second major that requires a Bachelor of Science degree, philosophy majors may choose the Bachelor of Science degree.

Majors, Minors & Degrees

Majors

1. Philosophy (B.A., B.S.)
2. Religion (B.A.)

Minors

1. Philosophy
2. Religion

Courses

PHIL 010 Introduction to Philosophy

3 hours

An introduction to philosophical thinking by way of an examination of persistent philosophical questions raised by significant and representative voices in our (primarily Western) philosophical heritage. We will attempt to clarify the meanings of such concepts as good and evil, right and wrong, justice, virtue, the beautiful, and the ugly. We will attempt, further, to use this understanding to evaluate our own philosophical views and those of our society.

(Normally offered each semester.)

PHIL 102 Ethics

3 hours

An introduction to moral philosophy. We will analyze the meanings of moral concepts such as virtue and vice, good and evil, and moral obligation, and consider historical attempts (mostly Western) to determine what, if any, moral system is true. Our aim will be to sustain and strengthen our capacity for the making of moral decisions.

(Normally offered each fall semester.)

PHIL 103 Critical Thinking

3 hours

This is an excellent course for students looking to enhance their own argument skills generally and especially for those planning to take the standardized tests for law or graduate school. Students will learn to understand and evaluate formal and informal arguments, the principles that support their logical forms, and how to apply these principles in the construction of arguments. Students will learn to distinguish arguments from other forms of language (e.g. descriptive or imperative uses of language) as well as develop the ability to recognize good and bad reasoning. This will include general examinations of common fallacies, valid and invalid deductive and strong and weak inductive arguments, standards of reasoning and the principles that sustain these standards in professional fields.

(Normally offered each spring semester.)

PHIL 130 Philosophies of Race and Gender

3 hours

Most Americans have some understanding of how the categories of race and gender influence our personal and social identities. Yet many Americans also assume that race and gender are "natural," i.e., that we are born into a certain race and naturally embody a certain sex. In this course, we will examine these assumptions by reading, discussing, and critically assessing the arguments for and against the "naturalness" of race and gender. We will consider how categories of race and gender position us, historically and philosophically, as a person of a certain "type" from whom certain behaviors are expected. We will look at socio-economic conditions and philosophic positions that support or challenge racism, sexism, classism, segregation, and violence.

PHIL 140 Social-Political Philosophy

3 hours

This course will begin with a close examination of some classic works of social and political philosophy, which may include but are not limited to Aristotle's Politics, Hobbes' Leviathan, Locke's Second Treatise on Government, Rousseau's Social Contract, Marx's Grundrisse, and Mill's On Liberty. Once this historical foundation is put in place, students will move on to examine current trends in social and political philosophy that may include but are not limited to: what is the best form of government, the social contract, socialism, the nature of justice, democracy, nationalism, and environmentalism.

PHIL 190 Selected Topics

1-5 hours

A course designed to treat subject matter not covered in other departmental courses or to provide study of subject matter introduced in other courses. The title, content, and credit hours will be determined by current mutual interests of faculty and students.

PHIL 195 Independent Study

1-12 hours

An examination of a particular topic selected by the instructor and the student. This course is primarily research oriented and serves to fill in gaps in the student's academic program or to pursue topics not covered by the regular course offerings. Depending on the topic and the material available, it will be decided whether one final paper, a series of papers, or a reading program is the format to be followed. The student may take this course no more than four times.

Prerequisite(s): Permission of the instructor and approval of the department chair.

PHIL 196 Special Projects

1-15 hours

Supervised individual projects for students on topics selected by the student in consultation with the instructor. Special Projects may not duplicate courses described in the catalog.

Prerequisite(s): Permission of the instructor.

PHIL 204 Ancient Philosophy

3 hours

This course will examine the origin of western philosophy in ancient Greece and trace the development of philosophical thought from the received wisdom prior to Plato, through the works of Plato, Aristotle, representative Stoics, Skeptics, and the new Platonism that culminates classical thinking. Topics include but are not limited to: questions about the character of the divine, the substance of the world, the nature of the soul, the scope of human knowledge, the requirements of rationality, and what constitutes the good life.

PHIL 205 Medieval Philosophy

3 hours

This course will examine the philosophical tradition as manifested in the works of the more prominent Christian, Jewish and/or Islamic philosophers from the 5th century into the 14th century. Selections from the works of the following major figures may be studied: Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus and/or William of Ockham in the Christian tradition; Alfarabi, Avicenna and/or Averroes in the Islamic tradition; and Saadia, Solomon Ibn Gabirol, and/or Maimonides in the Jewish tradition. Topics may include but are not limited to: the roles of faith and reason in belief formation, the nature and existence of God, the nature of human beings, the conflict between human freedom and Divine foreknowledge, and the nature of virtue and sin.

PHIL 206 Modern Philosophy

3 hours

This course will examine the western philosophical tradition as manifested in the works of prominent European and/or American philosophers of the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. Philosophers who may be included are Descartes, Hobbes, Spinoza, Berkeley, Hume, Kant, Marx, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Pierce among others. Topics may include but are not limited to: issues such as the existence and nature of God, responses to whether or not the mind (or soul) can exist separately from the body, skepticism and doubt, the nature of the self, and the relation of the individual to society.

PHIL 207 Twentieth Century Philosophy

3 hours

This course will examine the western philosophical tradition as manifested in the works of prominent European and/or American philosophers of the 20th century. Philosophers such as Ryle, Ayer, Heidegger, Sartre, Wittgenstein, Merleau-Ponty, Habermas, Foucault, and Derrida may be included among others. Topics may include but are not limited to: the nature of the mind, human freedom, the nature of language and interpretation, and the construction of meaning.

PHIL 227 Feminist Theories

3 hours

An exploration of the varieties of contemporary feminist thought. We will examine ideas of convergence among feminist philosophers but also attend to the issues that divide them. Special consideration will be give to race, class, and gender both in terms of the sex/gender distinction and theorists who argue against this distinction. Having established that feminism is not a single, homogeneous system, we will also explore the local, national, and global implications of feminisms for the 21st century.

PHIL 290 Selected Topics

1-5 hours

A topical course designed to investigate any relevant subject matter not included in the standard courses. The title, content, and credit will be determined by current mutual interests of students and faculty. This course may be offered to meet requirements for a major or minor only by approval of the department chair.

PHIL 295 Independent Study

1-12 hours

An examination of a particular topic selected by the instructor and the student. This course is primarily research oriented and serves to fill in gaps in the student's academic program or to pursue topics not covered by the regular course offerings. Depending on the topic and the material available, it will be decided whether one final paper, a series of papers, or a reading program is the format to be followed. The student may take this course no more than four times.

Prerequisite(s): Permission of the instructor and approval of the department chair.

PHIL 296 Special Projects

1-15 hours

Supervised individual projects for students on topics selected by the student in consultation with the instructor. Special Projects may not duplicate courses described in the catalog.

Prerequisite(s): Permission of the instructor.

PHIL 298 Seminar in Philosophy

3 hours

This is an advanced course in which special philosophical problems or particular philosophers or certain philosophical movements are selected for study. The subject matters for the course will be determined by a configuration of student and faculty interest. May be repeated with permission of the instructor.

Prerequisite(s): Junior standing or permission of the instructor.

PHIL 299 Senior Thesis

3 hours

A semester-long project for philosophy majors involving a study of some philosopher or philosophical problem or movement and a paper submitting the results. The student will present an oral defense of the thesis to members of the departments and, usually, nondepartmental readers.

RELIG 015 World Religions

3 hours

This course is a study of the cultural settings, lives of founders when appropriate, oral or written traditions and literature, worldviews, myths, rituals, ideals of conduct, and development of some of the world's religions. Religions studied will typically include tribal religions, Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Shinto, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Sikhism, and Bahai. Readings, videos, and websites will help introduce and illustrate not only the cultural settings in which these religions appear, but also the voices and faces of contemporary religious practitioners.

(Normally offered each fall semester.)

RELIG 020 Introduction to the Old Testament

3 hours

A survey of the contents of the Jewish Bible/Christian Old Testament. These texts will be studied as they developed within the unfolding history of the Hebrew people in relationship to other nations and cultures of the ancient Near East from about 1200 B.C.E. - 150 B.C.E. Emphasis will be placed upon the literary, historical, and theological issues presented by these ancient texts. The methods, tools, and technical language of scholarly research appropriate to the texts of the Bible will be introduced.

(Normally offered each fall semester.)

RELIG 021 Introduction to the New Testament

3 hours

A survey of the contents of the Christian New Testament. These texts will be studied within the context of the unfolding history of the earliest Christian community as it sought to relate to the Hellenistic-Jewish culture, which gave it birth. Emphasis will be placed upon the literary, historical, and theological issues presented by these ancient texts. The methods, tools, and technical language of scholarly research appropriate to the texts of the Bible will be introduced.

(Normally offered each spring semester.)

RELIG 098 New Testament Greek I

3 hours

An introduction to the alphabet, the basic vocabulary, grammar, and elementary syntax of koine Greek, the Greek used by the writers of the New Testament. The course will focus on developing a reading knowledge of koine Greek and sufficient skills in pronunciation so that Greek texts may be cited orally and discussed.

RELIG 099 New Testament Greek II

3 hours

A continuation of Religion 98. More elements of Greek syntax, the standard reference works, and the basic methods for the study of the Greek New Testament will be introduced. Representative texts from the entire Greek New Testament will be used for translation assignments.

Prerequisite(s): RELIG 098 New Testament Greek I or permission of the instructor.

RELIG 124 Understanding Religion

3 hours

An inquiry into the meaning and function of religion through a comparison of different religious traditions. Students will discuss how the different traditions understand the divine, worship, and scripture. Emphasis will be placed on the development of the students' own perspective on religion and the ability to express this perspective clearly and effectively.

"Understanding Religion: Jews and Christians" This course considers historical, comparative, and methodological issues in the academic study of religion by focusing on the scriptures and history of two different religious traditions and how their theologies and ethical systems originated and developed.

"Understanding Religion: Greco-Romans and Christians" This course considers historical, comparative, and methodological issues in the academic study of religion by focusing on religious practice in Ancient Greece and Rome.

"Understanding Religion: Christians and Muslims" This course considers historical, comparative, and methodological issues in the academic study of religion by focusing on the two different religious traditions that originated in the Middle East.

RELIG 125 Religion, Peace and Social Justice

3 hours

This course explores religious responses to social justice issues such as conflict, poverty, oppression, discrimination, and the environment.

RELIG 130 Women and Religion

3 hours

This course will examine the roles and views of women in religious traditions. Students will encounter scholarship on gender, religion, and feminist theology in different traditions. The primary focus of this course will be on the religious traditions of

Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, although other traditions and contemporary religious movements may be considered.

RELIG 134 Religious Diversity in the United States

3 hours

Religion in the U.S. is vital and diverse and its study illuminates not only early American society, but also the current pluralism within our contemporary culture. This course will introduce religious traditions in the U.S. through thematic, historical, denominational, and cultural considerations. Though the Puritan roots of U.S. religious history will be considered, this course emphasizes the variety and diversity of religious experiences in the U.S., including Native American, Protestant, Catholic, African-American, Jewish, Islamic, Hindu, and Buddhist traditions.

RELIG 181 The World of Classical Greece

3 hours

This course will investigate English translations of the great works of Greek literature. Students will become familiar with the uniquely rich and influential world of Classical Greece. Offered as part of the Classics Department at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

RELIG 186 Literature of Ancient Near East

3 hours

This course will investigate literary works from ancient Mesopotamia, Canaan, and Egypt, seeking to understand their culture and values. It will end the literature from one of the founding documents of our own culture, the Hebrew Bible, to see how it was affected by the surrounding culture. Offered as part of the Classics Department at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

RELIG 190 Selected Topics

1-5 hours

A topical course designed to investigate any relevant subject matter not included in the standard courses. The title, content, and credit will be determined by current mutual interests of students and faculty. This course may be offered to meet requirements for a major or minor only by approval of the department chair.

RELIG 195 Independent Study

1-12 hours

An examination of a particular topic selected by the instructor and the student. This course is primarily research oriented and serves to fill in gaps in the student's academic program or to pursue topics not covered by the regular course offerings. Depending on the topic and the material available, it will be decided whether one final paper, a series of papers, or a reading program is the format to be followed. The student may take this course no more than four times.

Prerequisite(s): Permission of the instructor and approval of the department chair.

RELIG 196 Special Projects

1-15 hours

Individualized study of the history, doctrine, or practice of any of the world's religions for beginning and intermediate students in religion. The student and instructor will determine the scope and direction of the course. It may involve a reading program, a specific project related to the church and/or religious concerns, or a project relating religion to other disciplines. Special Projects may not duplicate courses described in the catalog.

Prerequisite(s): Permission of the instructor.

RELIG 197 Intern Practicum

1-8 hours

The student is assigned 10 hours of work each week dealing with youth, church school administration, or any area of a local church program assigned by the host pastor and approved by the department coordinator. All interns must attend a weekly session to discuss the theological, moral, and social implications of problems common to their tasks. A student may repeat the course and earn a maximum of 3 hours credit. A student may also serve as an intern without registering for credit.

Pass/Fail only.

RELIG 206 Religion and Science

3 hours

An exploration of the making and discovery of meaning through the broad based disciplines of science and religion. Are these disciplines hostile, separate, convergent, or complementary? This course will examine diverse possibilities of synthesis and relationship.

Prerequisite(s): One course in philosophy or religion and one course in science, or the instructor's permission.

RELIG 212 Life and Letters of Paul

3 hours

A study of Pauline literature, Paul's interpretation of Jesus, and his work as missionary to the Gentiles. The Pauline Epistles are primary sources. Some contemporary analyses of Pauline thought and its importance for the contemporary situation will be emphasized.

RELIG 213 Life and Teachings of Jesus

3 hours

A discussion of the sources used in the attempt to write the life of Jesus.

RELIG 221 Psychology of Religion

3 hours

This course is designed to explore religious thought and behavior from a psychological perspective. Examination of the empirical research and predominate theories related to the function and structure of religiosity will be explored. General topics to be considered will include the nature of religiosity through the lifespan, the psychological understanding of religious phenomena such as conversion and mysticism, and the relationship between religiosity and coping, mental illness, personality, and social interaction.

Prerequisite(s): PSYCH 002 Applied Psychological Science.

RELIG 226 Christian Theology from the Enlightenment to the Mid-Twentieth Century

3 hours

This course examines the beginnings of modern theological reflection, following the Reformation, and moves forward, following historical developments in Christian theology, into the first half of the twentieth century. The impact of the Enlightenment on theology characterizes the first third of the course. The rise of nineteenth century liberal theology and varied responses to it characterize the second, while the last third of the course takes up neo-orthodoxy, process, and secular theologies.

RELIG 227 Religious Studies from the Mid-Twentieth Century to the Present

3 hours

This course is an examination of movements in theology and religious studies from the mid-twentieth century to the present. Jewish, Catholic, and Protestant theologians and other contemporary scholars of religion will be considered. Topics to be covered will include theological responses to the holocaust, the modern state of Israel, the debate over the historical Jesus, liberation theologies, and the place of theological and religious scholarship in both the academy and society.

RELIG 241 Women in the Biblical World

3 hours

This course will examine the role and status of women as depicted in the Hebrew Bible and New Testament. Students will focus on the stories and laws concerning women that are found in the Bible as well as in extra-biblical materials.

Prerequisite(s): Junior standing.

Offered as part of the Classics Department at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

RELIG 290 Selected Topics

1-5 hours

A topical course designed to investigate any relevant subject matter not included in the standard courses. The title, content, and credit will be determined by current mutual interests of students and faculty. This course may be offered to meet requirements for a major or minor only by approval of the department chair.

RELIG 295 Independent Study

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An examination of a particular topic selected by the instructor and the student. This course is primarily research oriented and serves to fill in gaps in the student's academic program or to pursue topics not covered by the regular course offerings. Depending on the topic and the material available, it will be decided whether one final paper, a series of papers, or a reading program is the format to be followed. The student may take this course no more than four times.

Prerequisite(s): Permission of the instructor and approval of the department chair.

RELIG 296 Special Projects

1-15 hours

Supervised individual projects for advanced students in religion on topics selected by the student in consultation with the instructor. Special Projects may not duplicate courses described in the catalog.

Prerequisite(s): Permission of the instructor.

RELIG 299 Senior Thesis

3 hours

Every religion major is required to write a senior research paper dealing with a topic selected by the student in consultation with any member of the department.

Prerequisite(s): Senior standing and approval of the department chair.