Nebraska Wesleyan University

Philosophy and Religion

Catalog

2015-2016

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 and Religion (B.A.)

Minors

1. Philosophy and Religion

Courses

PHIL 1100 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.

PHIL 1100FYW Introduction to Philosophy First Year Writing

4 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.

PHIL 1900 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 1950 Independent Study

1-4 hours

This is a research course. The student initially meets with the department chair to select a study topic and review research methods. At this time the student will be assigned a faculty resource person to guide his or her work and assist in an advisory capacity. A copy of the student's work is filed in the archives for the department. Independent study may not duplicate courses described in the catalog.
Prerequisite(s): Senior standing or permission of the department chair.

PHIL 2020 Ethics

3 hours

We are all raised to behave in accordance with some kind of ethical or moral code. It could be a Christian, Muslim, or Buddhist code or even a secular code based on personal freedom and respect. But, the fact remains that we adhere to some kind of moral code, whether reflectively or unreflectively, and bring these deeply inculcated moral beliefs and commitments to bear on any number of decisions we may make throughout our lives. However, these decisions are often the result of mere "knee-jerk" reactions based on our previously held beliefs rather than on a rational principle, criterion or measure. The main purpose of this course is to provide a forum wherein students can examine and scrutinize their own moral commitments, and perhaps make a rational choice as to which moral principles to accept or reject.

PHIL 2030 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 2040 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 origin of democracy and community, the character of the divine, ancient concepts of nature, the concepts of the soul, the scope of human knowledge, the conditions for rationality, and the good life.

PHIL 2050 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 2060 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 2070 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, Dewey, Heidegger, Sartre, Wittgenstein, Habermas, Foucault, Derrida, and Irigaray may be included among others. Topics may include but are not limited to: the concept and practice of power, who and what counts as human, the conditions for human freedom, the character of language and interpretation, the construction of meaning.

PHIL 2300 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 2400 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 2900 Selected Topics

1-4 hours

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

PHIL 2950 Independent Study

1-4 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 3210 Philosophy of Religion

3 hours

This is a survey of issues in the philosophy of religion. The main focus will be on issues found in western religious traditions, especially Christianity, with brief excursions into non-western traditions. These issues may include: arguments for the existence of God, the problem of evil, understanding the divine attributes, miracles, mysticism, religious pluralism, and life after death.

PHIL 3240 Metaphysics and Epistemology

3 hours

The subfield of philosophy known as "metaphysics" can be described as a study of fundamental reality, whereas "epistemology" is just the study of knowledge - what it is, the possibility of having it, and how to get it if it is at all possible. In this course, students will learn analyze, and research some of the more popular problems and concepts within these subfields as they pertain to the nature of persons and their intellectual relationship with the world around them. This will be done largely through close readings of several historical and contemporary texts on these subjects.

PHIL 3250 Philosophy of Science

3 hours

An examination of selected topics in philosophy of science. Topics may include theories of explanation, confirmation, reduction, laws, the status of theoretical entities, and the epistemological foundations of scientific theories. This course may be taken more than once with department approval.

PHIL 3260 Philosophy of Education

3 hours

This course examines variety of classical, modern, and contemporary philosophical accounts of, and prescriptions for, education. Some general questions for the course include: What is education? What are its cultural and personal values? Does education have a specific purpose? How does a person become educated? Some of the philosophers we study may include Plato, Aristotle, Avicenna, John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Michel Foucault, Paulo Friere, Nel Noddings, and Bell Hooks. This course may be repeated with departmental permission.

PHIL 3270 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 3340 Ethics Health System

3 hours

See department for course description.

PHIL 3950 Independent Study

1-4 hours

See department for course description.

PHIL 3960 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 3990 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 4900 Selected Topics

1-4 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 4910 Directed Readings

1-6 hours

An opportunity for students, under the supervision of a faculty member, to pursue scientific literature not covered in other coursework.

PHIL 4950 Independent Study

1-4 hours

This is a research course. The student initially meets with the department chair to select a study topic and review research methods. At this time the student will be assigned a faculty resource person to guide his or her work and assist in an advisory capacity. A copy of the student's work is filed in the archives for the department. Independent study may not duplicate courses described in the catalog.
Prerequisite(s): Senior standing or permission of the department chair.

PHIL 4960 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 4970 Internship

1-8 hours

An on-the-job experience oriented toward the student’s major interest. The student is to secure a position in an organization that satisfies the mutual interests of the instructor, the sponsor, and the student.
Prerequisite(s): Permission of the department chair.

PHIL 4980 Senior Seminar

3 hours

A research seminar in which students conducting their research to satisfy the senior comprehensive requirement meet regularly to share insights, progress, and problems encountered along the way.

PHIL 4990 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 1150 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, Confuciansim, 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 1200 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 1210 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 1240 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 1250 Jews and Christians

3 hours

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. Designed as an inquiry into the meaning and function of religion, 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.

RELIG 1260 Christians and Muslims

3 hours

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. Designed as an inquiry into the meaning and function of religion, 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.

RELIG 1900 Selected Topics

3 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.

RELIG 1950 Independent Study

1-4 hours

This is a research course. The student initially meets with the department chair to select a study topic and review research methods. At this time the student will be assigned a faculty resource person to guide his or her work and assist in an advisory capacity. A copy of the student's work is filed in the archives for the department. Independent study may not duplicate courses described in the catalog.
Prerequisite(s): Senior standing or permission of the department chair.

RELIG 1960 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.

RELIG 1980 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 1990 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 1980 New Testament Greek I or permission of the instructor.

RELIG 2250 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 2300 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 2340 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 2800 Apocalyptic Imagination in America

3 hours

This course explores a religiously diverse range of end of time stories. Ancient and modern, oral and written, apocalypitc scenarios can function as ethical and political criticism of the status quo, a literature of, by, and for the marginalized, and offer alternative, cosmic justice or future renewal. All of the religions examined, which include tribal, world religions as well as movements that prioritize ethnicity, race, and anti-colonialism are international but will be examined in the context of their contemporary North American expressions.

RELIG 2900 Selected Topics

1-4 hours

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

RELIG 2950 Independent Study

1-4 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 2960 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.

RELIG 2970 Internship 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 3120 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 3130 Life and Teachings of Jesus

3 hours

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

RELIG 3200 Constructing Religious Identity

3 Hours

The course explores the modern construction of religion and religions as a legal, international, historical, and cultural category. We will investigate what definitions and assumptions are at work and who religious tradition is invented, maintained, or changed and for what ends. Classifications interrogated include religious, spiritual and secular, academic and folk. Materials and movements examined include intentionally provocative juxtapositions of ancient, new, tribal, world, localized and international. It is common in contemporary discourse to privilege individual freedom to choose or create a religious identity, therefore, this course will pay special attention to the ways in which spirituality obscures the extent to which individualistic ideology legitimates the creation of self-identity through consumer and lifestyle choices.

RELIG 3950 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 3960 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.

RELIG 3990 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 4260 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 4270 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 4900 Selected Topics

1-4 hours

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

RELIG 4910 Directed Readings

1-6 hours

An opportunity for students, under the supervision of a faculty member, to pursue scientific literature not covered in other coursework.

RELIG 4940 Special Projects in Religion

3 hours

See department for course description.

RELIG 4950 Independent Study

1-4 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 4960 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 4970 Internship

1-15 hours

An on-the-job experience oriented toward the student's major interest. The student is to secure a position in an organization that satisfies the mutual interests of the instructor, the sponsor, and the student.
Prerequisite(s): Permission of the department chair.

RELIG 4980 Senior Seminar

0-4 hours

A research seminar in which students conducting their research to satisfy the senior comprehensive requirement meet regularly to share insights, progress, and problems encountered along the way.

RELIG 4990 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.

RELPH 1100FYW Introduction to Philosophy First Year Writing

4 hours

An introduction to philosphical 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.

RELPH 2040 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, Artistotle, representative Stoics, Skeptics, and the new Platonism that culminates classical thinking. Topics include but are not limited to: questions about the origin of democracy and community, the character of the divine, ancient concepts of nature, the concepts of the soul, the scope of human knowledge, the conditions for rationality, and the good life.

RELPH 2060 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.