Nebraska Wesleyan University

Philosophy and Religion

Catalog

2025-2026

About the Program

The department offers a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) degree with a major in Philosophy and Religion. If a student has a second major that requires a Bachelor of Science degree, the department may approve a B.S. degree.

Majors and minors have the option of blending courses between philosophy and religion. Study in philosophy and religion prepares students for a variety of professions in health, business, government, as well as graduate study. Graduating majors will complete a traditional thesis with opportunities for public presentation and publication, or a culminating project with real-world focus and opportunities for practicum.

Department Learning Outcomes
Majors will be able to:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of varieties of religious and philosophical traditions.
2. Develop multiple critical skills and modes of expression.
3. Explain how concepts and movements differ across practices, traditions and schools of thought.
4. Engage and contribute to discipline specific scholarship.

Majors, Minors & Degrees

Majors

1. Philosophy and Religion (B.A.)

Minors

1. Artificial Intelligence (AI) Literacy
2. Philosophy and Religion
3. Religious Diversity

Courses

AIL 1000 AI For Everyone

3 hours

Artificial Intelligence is changing the world. It is changing jobs, creating them, and even replacing them (but less than you think). More than everbefore, companies need employees who can use AI tools to solve problems creatively and responsibly. This non-technical AI crash course builds the foundational skills needed to do that and is designed to be valuable to anyone. Learn how to distinguish problems that AI is useful for, master prompt engineering to improve outputs, detect AI-generated output, analyze ethics and privacy, and stay up-to-date on one of the most transformative technologies of our lifetimes.

AIL 2000 AI For Decision Making

3 hours

Artificial Intelligence decisions are often only as good as the person asking the question. In this course, you'll learn how to ask the right ones and increase the productivity and innovation you can achieve with AI. Create better prompts,compare and contrast strengths and limitations, evaluate outcomes, and by the end of this course, understand and leverage the power of AI for decision-making across any discipline, opening up new career paths and personal growth.

AIL 2020 AI For Creativity

3 hours

Generative AI has introduced a new paradigm of AI the co-creator. Top professionals and companies use AI to improve productivity and creativity every day, and in this course, you'll learn the iterative prompting, search, and functional evaluation metrics powering these uses. By the end of this course, you'll integrate AI tools into a variety of creative skill sets, and your own projects, building new avenues for creativity in your career.

Prerequisite(s): AIL 1000 AI For Everyone

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

4 hours

This course examines a variety of philosophies and practices types of philosophical writing. As part of the Archway Curriculum Chaos thread, this course asks about what is or was radical and transformative in the history of philosophy, and engages with what is - or could be - radical and transformative by today's standards.
(Normally offered each fall semester.)

PHIL 1200FYW Critical Thinking

2 hours

This course teaches and applies some of the elements of critical thinking and formal writing to an inquiry and analysis of "power," including its different definitions and manifestations in 21st century life.
(Normally offered every two years.)

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): Permission of the department chair.

PHIL 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.

PHIL 1970 Internship

1-8 hours

This course allows students to participate in an internship
Pass/Fail only.
Prerequisite(s): Permission of the department chair.

PHIL 2020 Ethics

4 hours

This course examines several normative ethical principles and examines how these principles are used to argue for and justify ethical conclusions. Students will study normative principles from the western philosophical tradition and examine applied ethical issues including, but not limited to animal ethics, abortion, euthanasia, economic justice, and capital punishment. Students will develop their critical thinking and writing skills by evaluating real-world case studies in light of what they learned.

PHIL 2030 Logic

3 hours

Logic offers the study and application of the four integrated systems of formal logic: categorical, propositional, symbolic, and predicate logic. Study of these systems provides in-depth analysis of deductive reasoning and arguments. You will learn how to quantify ordinary language statements, analyze their component logical functions, evaluate and construct deductive arguments, classify premises and conclusions, test for truth value, prove the validity of arguments, test and provide for missing premises, and apply the skills and methods of formal logic to complex arguments.

PHIL 2040 The Origin of Western Democratic Thinking: Ancient Greece

3 hours

We engage with ideas from a variety of ancient Greek sources, including the preserved texts of mythmakers, philosophers, "sophists," politicians, and playwrights, to explore the philosophical origins and practices of Western democracy. We examine Athenian and non-Athenian forms of life through the collapse of Athenian democracy, and conclude with an examination of the 'schools of thought' that emerge from this collapse. Along the way, we discern and evaluate a variety of concepts and practices integral to ancient political life, including the defining features and cultural requirements of a democracy, criticisms and challenges to these features and requirements, and multiple accounts of citizenship and justice.

PHIL 2050 God and Science in Medieval Christian, Jewish, and Islamic Philosophies

3 hours

This course examines issues about God, faith, reason, knowledge, causation, whether the world is eternal or has a beginning, and science among other issues as found in the Christian, Jewish, and Islamic philosophical traditions from about 400 CE to about 1400 CE.

PHIL 2060 God and Science in Early Modern Philosophies from 1600-1899

3 hours

This course examines issues about God, faith, reason, certainty, doubt, causation, immortality of the soul, and science among other issues as discussed in mostly European philosophical traditions from 1600-1899.

PHIL 2070 AI Ethics

3 hours

This course critically examines ethical considerations surrounding the development and deployment of artificial intelligence now and in the future. Students will explore fundamental philosophical ethical theories such as Utilitarianism, Deontology, and Virtue Ethics which will shape concepts such as fairness, transparency, and accountability. Through a combination of discussions, case studies presentations, and practical applications, students will critically assess issues like algorithmic bias, privacy, moral responsibility, the use of autonomous vehicles, and weapons, and the implications of automation on employment. The course aims to equip students with the analytical skills necessary to navigate the ethical dilemmas faced by AI practitioners and to foster a responsible approach to the advancement of technology in society.

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. Cross listed with GEND 2300P.
(Normally offered alternate years.)

PHIL 2400 Social-Political Philosophy

4 hours

This course focuses upon modern, late modern, and contemporary thinking that influences the philosophy and practice of "democracy." We study a variety of a traditional and innovative writings that support and challenge 'democratic' living. We also engage in informed analyses and discussions of our own social and political experiences, culminating in the collaborative creation of our own 'democracies' toward the end of the semester.

PHIL 2410 Theories Of Justice

4 hours

Theories of Justice explores the theoretical foundations of justice work by studying diverse theories of justice, examine the inter-relationships between theory and practice, considering the possibilities inherent in such a relationship, and prompting critical assessment of subject positions within "efforts to realize a more just society".

PHIL 2800 Mythologies Mythologies

4 hours

In this course we study and assess a variety of mythologies from around the world, paying attention to the cultural circumstances from which these myths emerge, and the different types of belief systems the myths answer to and inspire. The instructor of the course will determine which mythologies are studied. These may include, but are not limited to: Greek, African, Celtic, Egyptian, Buddhist, and Hindu mythologies. Students may repeat the course with departmental permission when the study of different mythologies is offered.

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 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.

PHIL 2970 Internship

1-8 hours

This course allows students to participate in an internship for the purpose of supplementing their academic coursework, exploring vocational options, and professionalizing their approach to career choices. Students might intern as a volunteer in a non-profit organization, as a research or field case study assistant, or in formal or informal ministry or in other relevant areas. P/F only.
Prerequisite(s): Permission 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 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 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 given 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. Cross listed with GEND-3270.

PHIL 3300 Radical Philosophies

4 hours

This course focuses on a radical thinker or radical thinking within the late modern, postmodern, or contemporary era. We explore what is radical, revolutionary, experimental, or 'avant garde,' and learn to identify what places a person, idea, or movement outside the "norm." We address questions like: What influences or impacts a philosophically innovative idea? How do we distinguish what is radical or subversive from what is merely repetitive or conservative? What is the impact of a philosophy on its larger culture? What role does experience and context play on the radicals who live these ideas? The course may be taken more than once with departmental approval.

PHIL 3900 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 3950 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): Permission of the department chair.

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 3970 Internship

1-8 hours

This course allows students to participate in an internship for the purpose of supplementing their academic coursework, exploring vocational options, and professionalizing their approach to career choices. Students might intern as a volunteer in a non-profit organization, as a research or field case study assistant, or in formal or informal ministry or in other relevant areas. P/F only.
Prerequisite(s): Permission of the department chair.

PHIL 3990 Senior Proposal

1-3 hours

Required of graduating majors prior to or concurrent with their senior projects. The course consists of designing, preparing, and developing the proposal for the final project. Schedules and requirements to be determined in consultation with the student's primary reader or departmental supervisor.
Prerequisite(s): Permission 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 and 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 instuctor. 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 studentâ??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. P/F Only.
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 Project

3 hours

A semester-long project for majors that fulfills the requirements of PHIL 3990 Senior Proposal.
Prerequisite(s): PHIL 3990.

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, 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 1220 Introduction to the Old Testament

3 hours

This course provides the historical, cultural, and religious contexts of the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible (the Torah, Prophets, and Writings) - a collection of texts whose creation, interpretation, and transmission takes place over many generations and represents a multiplicity of voices.

(Normally offered each fall semester.)

RELIG 1230 Introduction to the New Testament

3 hours

This course offers an introduction to the collections of materials documenting the origins of Christianity, commonly known as the New Testament. Focus lies in the texts and beyond, including the social, literary, ideological, and theological contexts in which they emerged and which they reflect, and to the various critical methodologies and terms employed in interpreting them. (Normally offered each spring semester.)

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): 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 1970 Internship

1-8 hours

This course allows students to participate in an internship
Pass/Fail only.
Prerequisite(s): Permission of the department chair.

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. Particular focus is lent to the distribution of resources, gender and racial discrimination, war and other forms of violent behavior and the historical, philosophical, religious, economic, cultural influences therein. The course will also show some implications that theories and implementations of justice have that could aid in framing public policy and social justice activism around particular issues.

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.
Cross listed with GEND-2300R.
(Normally offered every year.)

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.
(Normally offered every year.)

RELIG 2350 Judaism, Christianity and Islam

3 hours

This course explores the formation, differences and conflicts among and between Judaism, Christianity, and Islam through comparative themes.

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, apocalyptic 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.
(Normally offered every year.)

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 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

This course allows students to participate in an internship for the purpose of supplementing their academic coursework, exploring vocational options, and professionalizing their approach to career choices. Students might intern as a volunteer in a non-profit organization, as a research or field case study assistant, or in formal or informal ministry or in other relevant areas. P/F only.
Prerequisite(s): Permission of the department chair.

RELIG 3110 The Life and Times of Jesus

3 hours

A study of ancient and modern interpretations of the story of Jesus with a focus on the New Testament, cultures of the early Christian world, and contemporary scholarly issues surrounding the search for the historical Jesus.

RELIG 3120 Life and Letters of Paul

3 hours

This course will discuss the life and teachings of the apostle Paul and explore how the Pauline legacy that comprises nearly half of the New Testament is received and interpreted. The purpose of this course is to deepen the knowledge of Paul and the Pauline trajectory in the through primary and secondary sources, including non-Christian and contemporary sources.

Prerequisite: 3 credits in Religion or instructor permission.

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 3900 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 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 3970 Internship

1-8 hours

This course allows students to participate in an internship for the purpose of supplementing their academic coursework, exploring vocational options, and professionalizing their approach to career choices. Students might intern as a volunteer in a non-profit organization, as a research or field case study assistant, or in formal or informal ministry or in other relevant areas. P/F only.
Prerequisite(s): Permission of the department chair.

RELIG 3990 Senior Proposal

1-3 hours

Required of graduating majors prior to or concurrent with their senior projects. The course consists of designing, preparing, and developing the proposal for the final project. Schedules and requirements to be determined in consultation with the student's primary reader or departmental supervisor.
Prerequisite(s): Permission 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 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 study of literature not covered in other coursework.
Prerequisite(s): Permission of the department chair.

RELIG 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 and permission 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 studentâ??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. P/F Only.
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 Project

3 hours

A semester-long project for majors that fulfills the requirements of RELIG 3990 Senior Proposal.
Prerequisite(s): RELIG 3990.