

## Philosophy and Religion

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**Departmental Mission Statement:** The Department of Philosophy and Religion aims to enable students to better pursue their own paths to wisdom. They will encounter the best that has been thought and said about basic human concerns throughout civilization by engaging some of the major philosophical, religious, and moral traditions of the world. They will be encouraged to see the relevance of these ideas and practices so that they engage conceptual, social, and religious concerns with greater coherence, perspective, and responsibility. Most importantly, students should be able to see the relevance of these ideas and use the skills developed to (1) respond to new problems and (2) become responsible citizens that can better relate to the diversity of thought, both religious and non-religious, found in the contemporary world.

### Philosophy

**Communicating Plus - Philosophy:** Philosophy majors develop skills in the four Communicating Plus skills areas - written communication, oral communication, critical thinking, and problem solving. The central activity of doing philosophy is solving philosophical problems - problems occurring when things don't make sense because conflicting ideas seem equally reasonable. Developing an understanding of philosophy as a problem solving activity is the main thrust of the introductory course, with other courses concentrating on particular domains of philosophical issues. Writing is given major attention in all classes, because it is especially valuable for describing problems and showing how creative ideas might be applied to solve them. Since the structure of philosophical problems is the same as a dialogue, participation in dialogues is relied on and cultivated in the discussion format of virtually all classes. The philosophy program culminates in a capstone experience in which students develop their own philosophy and dialogue with others in a public presentation of part of that philosophy.

**Requirements for a major in philosophy:** PHL 324 and 326; PHL 491 and 492; one 300-level additional philosophy course; one religion course at the 200-level or above; and three other courses in philosophy for a total of 32 credits.

**Requirements for a minor in philosophy:** PHL 324 or 326; at least one additional course in philosophy at the 300-level; one religion course, and other courses for a total of 20 credits in philosophy.

#### 120. Introduction to Philosophy

Staff

Four credits.

Topics may vary from section to section. Sample topics: contemporary moral problems; the meaning of life; philosophy and technology. Consideration of the nature of philosophical thinking, especially with respect to philosophical problems and the role of reasoning in identifying and responding to such problems. The relationship of these problems to one's ideas of reality, knowledge and value is approached with a view to developing one's skills in reading and writing arguments.

#### 200. Topics

Staff

Variable credit course, 1-4 credits.

Special subjects in philosophy not covered by regular courses. Sometimes taught in conjunction with PHL 300. This course may be repeated for credit when topics change. Please see the pertinent Schedule of Courses for the listing of topics courses and possible prerequisites. Some topics may count toward the global and cultural studies requirement; refer to the Academic Policies: Global and Cultural Studies Requirement section for more information.

#### 202. Business Ethics

Jeffries

Four credits.

Consideration of varying topics which involve philosophical questions arising in an economic context, such as: How does business serve individual freedom? Do pressures of economic competition affect one's freedom and responsibilities? The course will identify prominent alternative ethical criteria and consideration of their role in moral reasoning, with application of this reasoning to case studies. *Open to sophomores, juniors, and seniors.*

**222. Religion, Different Religions, and the Truth****Staff**

Four credits.

An examination of the nature of religion and the characteristic philosophical problems which emerge in trying to understand the nature and possible existence of the divine and the importance of that for our lives. Critical insight and appreciation will be developed for at least one major Western and one major Eastern religious tradition, along with attention to the problems which result when we become aware of conflicting religious viewpoints. May count toward the global and cultural studies requirement; refer to the Academic Policies: Global and Cultural Studies Requirement section for more information.

**241. Ethics****Jeffries**

Four credits.

Examination and development of the major Western historical and contemporary ethical theories, with particular attention to the issues of ethical relativity, ethical motivation, and reasoning about ways in which commitment to ethical norms can be supported. Examination of those relationships of conflict and cooperation among individual human beings and between individuals and society that we call moral relationships. Attention will be paid to comparing major approaches in Western and Eastern ethical thought with regard to issues of motivation and evaluation of conduct, with opportunities to examine applications of ethical theory to actual moral issues and problems in contemporary life.

**243. Philosophy and the Environment****Jeffries**

Four credits.

Exploration of the relationship of human beings to the natural world. Consideration of the conflicting claims about how we are interconnected with the rest of nature and also separate from it. An examination of such contested issues as what responsibilities, if any, do we have to the rest of nature and how can we wisely weigh competing claims about natural resources. Same as ENV 243.

**245. Professional Ethics****Jeffries**

Four credits.

An exploration of philosophical issues, with a special emphasis on ethics, as they apply in several professional settings. The course provides a basic overview of standard approaches to ethics and an examination of the concept of a profession. In addition to this theoretical background, philosophical and ethical issues from specific professions will be studied, primarily from the fields of medicine, law, and research at the professional level.

**251. Introduction to Philosophy of Science****Staff**

Four credits.

This course explores the philosophical elements involved in the study of science. Through the examination of historical and contemporary examples, a variety of philosophical concepts will be explored including issues such as the definition of a "science," the difference between science and pseudo-sciences, the nature of scientific theories, the processes of explanation and justification of scientific theories. The course will also consider how philosophy can illuminate debates about central questions in some of the sciences such as what is a natural law and what is a species. While there is no official prerequisite for the course, it may be helpful to have at least one course in philosophy and/or in a scientific discipline broadly construed.

*Prerequisite: one course in philosophy and/or one course in the natural sciences or instructor's consent.*

**281. Human Nature****Jeffries**

Four credits.

Exploration of fundamental ideas about ourselves. An examination of different ideas about the nature of the self (including its nonexistence) and the reasoning behind them. The course will also examine different viewpoints with respect to whether we are capable of genuinely free choice, whether we are basically good, whether there is a fixed and common human nature, and whether we are ultimately independent as individual persons.

**290. Reality and Knowledge****Staff**

Four credits.

An introduction to the ways in which philosophers have understood the fundamental nature of reality (metaphysics) and how, if at all, we might come to know about it (epistemology). Classical and contemporary efforts from Western and Asian traditions will be examined. *Prerequisite: four credits in philosophy.*

**300. Departmental Studies****Staff**

Variable credit course, 1-4 credits.

Special subjects in philosophy not covered by regular courses. Sometimes taught in conjunction with PHL 200. This course may be repeated for credit when topics change. Please see the pertinent Schedule of Courses for the listing of topics courses and possible prerequisites. Some topics may count toward the global and cultural studies requirement; refer to the Academic Policies: Global and Cultural Studies Requirement section for more information. *Prerequisites: three hours of credit in philosophy and consent of the instructor.*

- 308. Logic** **Staff**  
 Four credits.  
 Expansion of the logical techniques introduced in PHL 120, and an examination of philosophical issues associated with the development of logic, to include the relationships between ordinary language and logical symbolism, the development of inference rules and proof techniques, and the nature of the problems of consistency and completeness within a system of axioms. *Prerequisite: four credits in philosophy.*
- 324. History of Philosophy: From Classical Thought Through the Renaissance** **Jeffries**  
 Four credits. Offered in 2017-18 and alternate years.  
 An exploration of the history of philosophy from its currently known written beginnings to its initial attempts to come to grips with the legacy of the Renaissance in Europe and the beginnings of modern natural science. Some key primary texts will be studied, along with attention to major issues, thinkers, and ideas, as well as to the question, "What does it mean to say that philosophy has a history?"
- 326. History of Philosophy: From the Enlightenment to the Present** **Miller**  
 Four credits. Offered in 2016-17 and alternate years.  
 An examination of the history of philosophy from the beginnings of the Enlightenment's development of modern science and of individualism, to the present-day legacies of Anglo-American and Continental philosophy.
- 353. Human Rights** **Jeffries**  
 Four credits.  
 An examination of the concept of human rights in historical perspective in both Western and Eastern thought. Also, an exploration of some contemporary issues in human rights, including the rights of minority peoples and the relationship between human rights and the natural environment. *Prerequisite: four credits in philosophy.*
- 355. The Philosophy of Evolution** **Staff**  
 Four credits.  
 An examination of the philosophical idea of evolutionary change and its particular application to the subject of the origins and development of biological species. Particular attention will be given to Darwinian and pre-Darwinian theories of species evolution, to the criticisms of evolutionary theory from within and without the scientific community, including "punctuated equilibrium" and creationism, and to other non-biological applications of evolutionary theory. *Prerequisite: PHL 120 or 175, or BIO 121, or ANT 110.*
- 491. Senior Statement I** **Staff**  
 Two credits. Fall semester.  
 Students work at analyzing a particular philosophical problem of interest to them (fall) and on articulating their own systematic philosophy (spring). Attention will be given to consistency and coherence, the latter in the sense of an integration of the various aspects of philosophy. Reflective critiques of alternative positions will be expected, as well as an awareness of historical roots of one's ideas. *Prerequisites: 12 credits in philosophy and senior standing.*
- 492. Senior Statement II** **Staff**  
 Two credits. Spring semester.  
 Students will build upon the work begun in the fall semester, with a focus on both developing one's own philosophical commitments and developing a presentation to be delivered publicly to the Ripon College community at the end of the semester. *Prerequisite: PHL 491.*
- 540. Independent Study** **Staff**  
 Variable credit course, 2-4 credits.  
 Open to majors who have a 3.0 or better average in philosophy. To enroll, students must first submit an outline of a study project and research plans acceptable to the instructor with whom they intend to work. Such study normally results in a substantial research paper. No more than twelve credit hours of independent study or internship may be taken, and no more than eight credit hours may be in one department. A registration form is required. *Prerequisites: junior or senior standing, consent of the department chair and a department project director, and 12 credits toward the major.*

## Religion

**Requirements for a major in religion:** REL 121, 122, 221, 442, one of the indicated philosophy courses at the 200-level or above (PHL 202, 241, 281, 324, 326, 353, 355) and the senior capstone seminar (450, or 451 and 452). Additional 8 credits may be constituted from any other religion or philosophy courses or from the following courses in other departments: ANT 314; CLA 100/310, 220/320; HIS 221, 334; SOC 303. 309; for a total of 32 credits.

**Requirements for a minor in religion:** REL 121 or 122, and 221, 442 and one philosophy course. The other 4 credits may be constituted from any other religion or philosophy courses or from the following courses in other departments: ANT 314; CLA 100/310, 220/320, HIS 221, 334; SOC 303, 309; for a total of 20 credits.

**121. Introduction to the Hebrew Scriptures**

**Brusin**

Four credits.

This course is an introduction to the collection of literature known as The Hebrew Bible, or by the acronym, TANACH, standing for its three main divisions - Torah, Prophets (Nevi'im), and Writings [Ketuvim]. No prior knowledge and no particular religious commitment are presumed. Actually, we will put all religious preconceptions and beliefs aside as we try to confront the biblical text on its own. One issue we face is deciding to what extent this is possible. Our central concern is not to arrive at a definitive understanding of the texts we examine; our main purpose is to appreciate the genius and timelessness of the biblical writers and of biblical themes and ideas. There is a vast and growing body of scholarship focused on analyzing and interpreting the Hebrew Bible from several different points of view. We will familiarize ourselves with some of these trends, and we will consider the arguments of some of these biblical scholars. Still, our central objective will remain the same: to understand and appreciate the perspectives of the biblical writers, to do our best to grasp what they were trying to say, and to allow ourselves to respond to it, each in his or her own way. The Department of Religion thanks the Jewish Chautauqua Society for its support of this course.

**122. Introduction to the Christian Scriptures**

**Smith**

Four credits.

The main foci of the course will include the major themes in Jewish culture and religion in the centuries just before and after Jesus' life, the method and contributions of historical criticism to an understanding of the Bible, and the structure and theology of the Acts of the Apostles, the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke), the Gospel of John, selected Pauline epistles (I Corinthians, Galatians and Romans), and Revelation.

**220. Jesus of Nazareth: God or Man?**

**Brusin**

Four credits.

It is impossible to understate the importance of the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. But what do we really know about him? And how do we know what we think we know about him? Do the sources [both the Gospels included in the New Testament and those not included] provide a consistent and clear picture of Jesus? What other sources can we turn to?

This class will ask some difficult and, for many, some very disturbing questions about the historical Jesus. Everyone interested in the historical Jesus agrees that he was a Jew. Yet, why is the one thing we know for sure so rarely talked or written about? What do we know about first century Judaism and how might it help us in describing the religious outlook and experiences of Jesus? Did Jesus believe he had to die and, if so, what did he think his death would accomplish? What was Jesus trying to say by riding into Jerusalem on a donkey? Why did he overturn the tables in the Jerusalem temple? How reliable are the earliest reports of his resurrection? Do people believe in Jesus because of the Gospels or in the Gospels because of Jesus? Did Jesus believe he was the messiah? Did he believe he was divine? And when did others begin to believe he was divine?

Several bold and controversial attempts have been offered in recent years to answer these and related questions. One approach invites us to compare the New Testament with other early Christian documents discovered in Nag Hammadi, Egypt, in 1945—the so-called Gnostic Gospels—regarded for centuries as heretical and, for that reason, not included in the New Testament canon.

Two other studies address these questions more directly by asking how we know anything about Jesus of Nazareth, how we reconcile conflicting accounts and stories about him, how important it is to understand all this in its historical context [first century Judea], and how reliable the sources are that provide this information.

Our task this semester will be to engage in close textual analysis and careful interpretation in order to understand why we think the way we do about Jesus and believe what we think we believe about him.

**221. Comparative World Religions**

**Smith**

Four credits.

This course focuses on the origin and development of several world religions, including primal religions (in Africa and the United States), Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Basic texts of these religions will be analyzed as well as the historical evolution of the beliefs and practices of the respective adherents (and major subgroups) over time. May count toward the global and cultural studies requirement; refer to the Academic Policies: Global and Cultural Studies Requirement section for more information.

**224. A Convenient Hatred: A Study of Anti-Semitism**

**Brusin**

Three credits.

How can we explain the persistent and relentless hatred of Jews for more than 2000 years? What is certain is that anti-Semitism is as ancient as the Jewish people. This course examines some fateful, and often tragic, turning points in history that help to explain the persistence of this "convenient hatred": the separation of Christianity from Judaism; the impact of early Islam on attitudes toward Jews; the impact of the Crusades on Jewish communities throughout Europe; the effects of the Protestant Reformation and Catholic Counter-Reformation on Jews; the impact of the

Enlightenment, the Industrial Revolution and other modernizing forces on attitudes toward and treatment of Jews; the anti-Semitic conspiracy theories during and immediately following World War I, culminating in Nazi policies toward Jews prior to World War II. All this, and more, must be addressed before we can begin to understand the murder of more than six million Jews in the Holocaust, the way the world responded to the attempted genocide, and the ways anti-Semitism continues to play a role in the world today

**231. History of Christian Theology and Ethics**

**Smith**

Four credits.

An historical survey of the major themes in Christian religious and moral teachings from biblical times to the mid-20th century. Special attention will be given to how changes in Christian teaching have occurred in response to new intellectual developments in the Church and to new cultural and political challenges in secular society.

**232. The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Bible**

**Brusin**

Four credits.

This course will explore a new (old) world revealed by the ancient Jewish literature discovered at Qumran, Israel in 1947 - known as the Dead Sea Scrolls. We will examine the contribution of these documents to our understanding of the theological motifs emerging in Second Temple times and the diversity in Judaism from the third century BCE to the first century CE. We will also attempt to understand the culture and religious climate in which Rabbinic Judaism and early Christianity arose and the relationship between the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Hebrew Bible, and the Christian Scriptures.

**300. Departmental Studies**

**Staff**

Variable credit course, 2-4 credits.

Special subjects in religion not covered sufficiently by regular courses. This course may be repeated for credit when topics change. Please see the pertinent Schedule of Courses for the listing of topics courses and possible prerequisites. Some topics may count toward the global and cultural studies requirement; refer to the Academic Policies: Global and Cultural Studies Requirement section for more information.

**321. Ethics and International Affairs**

**Smith**

Four credits.

The central question addressed in this course is whether or not ethically motivated action in international affairs is possible. Do the absence of global consensus on moral values and the lack of a world government to impose sanctions mean that nations and trans-national organizations will engage in pursuit of political and economic interests without ethical restraints? The first part of the course will deal with contrasting arguments by political theorists on the role of morality in international relations. The second part focuses on specific issues in contemporary international relations that have moral implications - 1) new forms of international warfare; 2) international intervention inside nation states to stop genocide; 3) the protection of human rights; 4) the legitimacy of international tribunals to punish crimes against humanity; and 5) economic justice for developing countries. Same as IDS 321 and POL 383. *Prerequisites: junior or senior standing, and POL 111 or 112 or 280.*

**322. Religion and Politics in Comparative Perspective**

**Smith**

Four credits. Offered in spring 2018 and alternate years.

An analysis of the interaction between religious beliefs and practices (Christian, Jewish, Islamic, Hindu, and Buddhist), with political dynamics in various countries in the 20th century. Regional areas will include Central and South America, Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, Southern Asia, and the United States. May count toward the global and cultural studies requirement; refer to the Academic Policies: Global and Cultural Studies Requirement section for more information. Same as IDS 322 and POL 375. *Prerequisite: POL 111 or 112 or 280, or REL 221.*

**332. Comparative Religious Ethics**

**Smith**

Four credits.

An outline of various moral theories and what religious faith adds to ethical reflection. The religious traditions covered are: Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam. The current problems facing religious ethical reflection covered in the course include human sexuality, abortion, euthanasia, gender and racial justice, protection of the environment, and capital punishment. May count toward the global and cultural studies requirement; refer to the Academic Policies: Global and Cultural Studies Requirement section for more information.

**334. Topics in Western Spirituality**

**Mockridge**

Four credits.

Focusing on Christianity from its early days through the early modern era, this course will explore various topics in western spirituality. Topics include various beliefs and practices, including Gnosticism, mysticism, asceticism, monasticism, pilgrimage, and eucharistic devotion. The lives of various men and women will also be explored, including saints, anchorites and mendicants. Also central to the course is an examination of the use of material objects and artistic images in religious devotion. The course has no prerequisites, but students will find it helpful to have had some background in medieval history and/or Christianity. Same as HIS 334 and ART 334.

**340. The Book of Genesis: Where It All Begins****Brusin**

Four credits.

The Hebrew Bible is ancient literature that has greatly influenced the development of Western civilization and its most important writers and thinkers for more than two millennia. It gave rise to three monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. This course will study Genesis, the first book of the Hebrew Bible, in depth. The approach will be primarily literary, but we will also consider some classical and medieval commentaries. Despite the fact that modern scholars hear the voices of many different authors in the text, there is a distinctly unified theme throughout Genesis: the birth of a people and a nation with a unique understanding of its role in history and its relationship with God. Our central concern is to appreciate the genius and majesty of the writer(s) and the major biblical themes and ideas.

**362. The Arab-Israeli Conflict: Moral and Political Dimensions****Brusin**

Four credits.

How can we explain the persistent and relentless antagonism between Jews/Israelis and Arabs, both in Palestine and in neighboring Arab countries, whose roots go back to medieval times—if not before? Though we will begin our study in ancient times, the focus of this course will be the 20th century and our own. In addition to trying to understand the ongoing conflict from both the Arab/Palestinian and Jewish/Israeli perspectives, we will frame our discussions around a few interconnected central questions or issues:

Is it a religious conflict between Islam and Judaism in which both sides are motivated by deep-seated suspicions and hatreds that ultimately rest on divine mandates or revelations?

Is the conflict in essence the collision of two sets of historic and moral rights to the same land? And, if so, does this mean the conflict will never be resolved?

Is it an ethnic conflict between competing groups reflecting constantly changing demographic patterns?

Is it a war of self-defense in which a new state is defending itself against its neighbors whose objective is to destroy it?

Is it a war of territorial expansion in which one state seeks to expand its borders at the expense of its neighbors?

Not all these questions can be answered. But understanding their role in events unfolding in the Middle East is crucial if we are to find a way to bring some measure of peace and stability to the region and to the Israelis and Palestinians in particular. Counts toward the Global and Cultural Study Requirement. Same as HIS 200 and POL 362.

**442. The Problem of God in Comparative Perspective****Smith**

Four credits.

This course will explore the meaning of transcendence/God in various religious traditions, including primal religion, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism. It will also examine the challenges to religious belief articulated by classic proponents of atheism in the modern Western world - including Hume, Feuerbach, Marx, Freud, and Darwin. It will also assess the grounds for religious faith presented by some modern Western religious scholars, such as Wiesel, Barth, Tillich, Niebuhr, Gutierrez and Bonhoeffer, and explore through film some contemporary problems of religious faith. *Prerequisites: junior or senior standing and PHL 120 or REL 221.*

**450, 451, 452. Senior Seminar****Smith**

Four credits (450), or two credits per semester (451, 452).

Preparation of a research paper by religion majors on a theme or author(s) that synthesizes what the student has learned over the two or three years of concentration in religion.

**541, 542. Independent Study****Staff**

Variable credit course, 2-4 credits.

Supervised reading course with regular meetings with the professor that normally results in one substantial research paper or several short essays. No more than twelve credit hours of independent study or internship may be taken, and no more than eight credit hours may be in one department. A registration form is required. *Prerequisites: junior or senior standing, consent of the department chair and a department project director, and 12 credits toward the major.*

**551, 552. Independent Study: Internship****Smith**

Variable credit course, 2-4 credits.

Supervised field work, normally involving part-time employment or volunteering in local church organizations (for those interested in some form of ministry), or in local professional establishments or meetings, e.g., law, business, medicine, government (for those interested in contemporary ethical challenges in these professions). No more than twelve credit hours of independent study or internship may be taken, and no more than eight credit hours may be in one department. A registration form is required. *Prerequisites: junior or senior standing, consent of the department chair and a department project director, and 12 credits toward the major.*