

PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION

Division of Humanities and Fine Arts

Philosophy—traditionally at the center of the liberal arts—asks some of the most difficult and searching questions about human existence, the nature of the universe, right and wrong in human conduct, and the basis of our social and political arrangements. In so doing, it gives the mind the greatest possible leeway to doubt, probe, and criticize.

The courses of the Department of Philosophy and Religion have four main purposes:

1. to acquaint the student with some of the great philosophical questions of the past and present and with leading attempts to answer them;
2. to exhibit the connections between philosophy and such related areas as art, business, law, literature, medicine, science, religion, and the environment;
3. to develop the students' capacities for clear thinking and critical analysis; and
4. to provide the basis for reflecting on right versus wrong and good versus evil in the present-day world.

These aims are pursued in the atmosphere of diverse philosophical interests and approaches found among the staff of the department. Typically, students also bring varied concerns to their own explorations in philosophy and move on to careers in many diverse fields.

Distribution credit for the Humanities Requirement will be given for any two courses taken in the Department with the exception of PHL 108 Introduction to Logic. Distribution credit for the Quantitative Requirement will be given for PHL 108 Introduction to Logic to those students choosing only one course in the Quantitative area. An FYS course taught by a member of the philosophy department may, in some cases, be used instead of PHL 100 Introduction to Philosophy anywhere in the program, except in a departmental distribution sequence

- Philosophy Major (<https://catalog.washcoll.edu/catalog/departments-programs/philosophy-religion/philosophy-major/>)
- Philosophy Minor (<https://catalog.washcoll.edu/catalog/departments-programs/philosophy-religion/philosophy-minor/>)
- Religion Minor (<https://catalog.washcoll.edu/catalog/departments-programs/philosophy-religion/religion-minor/>)

Matthew McCabe, Chair
 Peter Weigel
 Jennifer Benson
 Bin Song

Philosophy

PHL SCE Senior Capstone Experience 2 Credits

All philosophy majors must complete the Senior Capstone Experience. This will take the form of a senior thesis. Students will be given four credits for successful completion of their Senior Capstone Experience. Each senior philosophy major will work in close association with a faculty mentor from the Department of Philosophy and Religion. The association between student and mentor will be an intensive one spanning the whole course of development of the thesis—from the initial formulation of a thesis proposal in the spring of the student's junior year to the final completion of the thesis by the conclusion of the senior year.

Term(s) Offered: All Terms, All Years

PHL 100 Introduction to Philosophy 4 Credits

A study of selected systems of thought designed to acquaint the student who has no training in philosophy with basic philosophical concepts and with the techniques and advantages of a thoughtful and reflective approach to problems. Topics taken up vary with the individual instructor. Offered every semester.

Term(s) Offered: All Terms, All Years

PHL 102 Contemporary Moral Issues 4 Credits

This course introduces students to the basic ideas behind the major ethical theories in Western Philosophy by studying their application to numerous moral issues, problems, and controversies in our time. Possible topics for discussion and writing assignments include but are not limited to: moral consideration of animals and the environment, respect for biodiversity, population and consumption, pollution, climate change, responsibilities to future generations, corporate social responsibility, workplace ethics, advertising ethics, whistleblowing, engineering ethics, cyber ethics, the ethics of globalization, the ethics of war, euthanasia, medical experimentation on human subjects, the physician-patient relationship, health care and social justice, reproductive assistance technology, and eugenics.

Term(s) Offered: All Terms, All Years

PHL 108 Introduction to Logic 4 Credits

A systematic overview of the rules and methods of argument. The course has three parts. The first part examines the features of arguments one finds in everyday speech and writing. The second part covers Classical Aristotelian methods of syllogistic reasoning. The third part teaches the modern use of abstract symbols to represent and assess the formal structure of proofs. This last part involves the skills of formal and quantitative reasoning. Please note that this course can only combine with two natural science courses to fulfill the Natural Science and Quantitative Distribution. It may not combine with a second quantitative course.

Term(s) Offered: Fall, All Years

PHL 111 Intro Comparative Religion: Western 4 Credits

This course offers an introductory study of the central ideas in living western religions. The course concentrates on Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The readings focus on the primary religious texts of each religion. Consideration is also given to philosophical issues common to western religions.

Term(s) Offered: All Terms, All Years

PHL 112 Intro Comparative Religion: Eastern 4 Credits

With a view toward developing better intercultural understanding, this course introduces students to the spiritual perspectives of Eastern cultures, and to the philosophical issues at play in them. Our readings are mostly selected from primary classical texts dealing with Hinduism, Buddhism, Zen Buddhism, and Taoism. This course is reading, speaking, and writing intensive - and the course format is interactive class discussion. Prerequisite: Eagerness to engage texts.

Term(s) Offered: All Terms, All Years

PHL 190 Philosophy Internship 4 Credits

A learning contract is developed prior to enrollment in an internship. Evaluation of student performance is completed by the faculty mentor based on the fulfillment of the contract terms and written evaluation by the internship site supervisor. Students must work at least 45 hours for each internship credit and be enrolled in the course prior to beginning work. Graded A-F or Pass/Fail.

Term(s) Offered: All Terms, All Years

PHL 194 Special Topics 4 Credits

Topics not regularly offered in a department's normal course offerings, chosen based on current student interest and faculty expertise. Special topic courses can only be offered 3 times; after this, the course must be approved as a regular course. Graded A-F or Pass/Fail.

Term(s) Offered: All Terms, All Years

PHL 195 On Campus Research 4 Credits

An agreement between a sponsoring faculty member and a student researching a topic of interest that is relevant to a student's major or minor. Research is conducted on campus. Students must be enrolled before the research can begin. Graded A-F or Pass/Fail. 45 hours are required per credit.

Term(s) Offered: All Terms, All Years

PHL 197 Independent Study 4 Credits

An agreement between a sponsoring faculty and a student letting the student study a topic of interest not offered at WC. 45 hours are required per credit.

Term(s) Offered: All Terms, All Years

PHL 210 Introduction to Political Philosophy 4 Credits

Political philosophy applies the tools of philosophical analysis to the challenges of politics and social life. Most fundamentally, political philosophy seeks to answer the question, how should we organize our society? The course content may focus on such themes as rights, justice, equality, freedom, power, oppression, exploitation, multiculturalism, obligations of the State, and duties of citizenship.

Term(s) Offered: Fall, Even Years

PHL 213 History of Ancient Philosophy 4 Credits

A study of the historical development of Western philosophical thought in ancient times. The main emphasis of this course is on the Pre-Socratics, and on works of Plato and Aristotle.

Term(s) Offered: Fall, All Years

PHL 214 History of Modern Philosophy 4 Credits

A study of the development of Western philosophic thought from the early Modern period through Kant. Emphasis is placed on the work of such major figures as Descartes, Hume, Leibniz, Spinoza, Locke, Berkeley, and Kant.

Term(s) Offered: Spring, All Years

PHL 215 Medieval Philosophy 4 Credits

This course examines medieval philosophical thought and argumentation from its origins in the Greco-Roman world through the early 15th century. Major figures from Judaism, Christianity, and Islam usually include Philo, Augustine, Anselm, Avicenna, Averroes, Maimonides, Aquinas, Scotus, Ockham, and others. Topics include the problem of universals, faith and reason, God, ethics, political theory, and the rise of science.

Term(s) Offered: Other, Non Conforming

PHL 225 Ethical Theory 4 Credits

An examination of some of the major ethical theories in Western philosophy. Applications of these theories to concrete ethical problems are considered. Special attention is given to Consequentialist, Deontological, and Virtue theories. Readings are drawn from classical and contemporary authors.

Term(s) Offered: Fall, All Years

PHL 235 Foundations of Morality 4 Credits

An examination of the moral theories of some major philosophical positions from traditions East and West: for example, Aristotle and Kant from the Western philosophical tradition, as well as Buddha and Confucius from the Eastern tradition. The aim is to systematically explore the understanding of what these positions interpret the best or most moral life to be, and of what varying views of human nature are correlated with them. Moreover, this exploration faces the question of how one decides what the best or most moral life is, and also other central questions concerning the relationship of ethics to religion and science.

Term(s) Offered: Spring, All Years

PHL 237 Global Wisdom and Literature 4 Credits

An interdisciplinary, team-taught course with the Department of English and the Department of Philosophy and Religion that delves into the world's wisdom traditions through the lenses of literature, philosophy, and religion. Students examine renowned works such as the Epic of Gilgamesh, Socratic dialogues, Stoic spiritual diaries, Christian and Islamic mystical texts, Hindu epics, Japanese Buddhist poetry, and more. Participants transcend the boundaries of history, geography, ideology, genre, and academic disciplines. The course aims to foster intercultural competence in students seen as crucial for a liberal arts education and meaningful contribution to real world settings.

Cross-listed as: ENG 217/PHL 237

Term(s) Offered: Spring, Odd Years

PHL 240 Philosophy of Humor 4 Credits

This course explores the questions: What is meant by claiming that something is humorous or funny and why? What is the relationship between humor, reason, and the emotions? How might one understand the ethics of laughter and humor? Insights from scholars including Plato, Aristotle, Hobbes, Kant, Schopenhauer, Spencer, Freud, Bergson and contemporary authors are discussed in a seminar-style class setting. The application of theory to everyday life is examined and discussed through the presentation of non-philosophical examples of humor and jokes in both print and audio-visual mediums.

Term(s) Offered: Fall, Even Years

PHL 245 Metaphysics & Epistemology 4 Credits

This course examines classic debates in metaphysics and the nature of knowledge. Close attention is given the study of philosophical argumentation and methods. Topics usually include knowledge, mind, reality, universals, identity, time, God, and freedom.

Term(s) Offered: Other, Non Conforming

PHL 250 Ru and Confucianism 4 Credits

This course introduces the philosophical concepts, sociological foundation, political implementation, and spiritual/religious practices of the Asian Ru (Confucian) tradition. It presents Ruism's development across Asian countries such as Korea, Japan, and Indonesia, and studies its historical interaction with Western cultures. Classical Chinese philosophies, such as Daoism, Mohism, and Legalism, are introduced as well to contextualize the origin and evolution of Ru thought. Students acquire special skills of meditation in motion to practice Ru wisdom in the everyday and secular world.

Cross-listed as: PHL 250/REL 250

Term(s) Offered: Fall, All Years

PHL 290 Philosophy Internship 4 Credits

A learning contract is developed prior to enrollment in an internship. Evaluation of student performance is completed by the faculty mentor based on the fulfillment of the contract terms and written evaluation by the internship site supervisor. Students must work at least 45 hours for each internship credit and be enrolled in the course prior to beginning work. Graded A-F or Pass/Fail.

Term(s) Offered: All Terms, All Years

PHL 294 Special Topics 4 Credits

Topics not regularly offered in a department's normal course offerings, chosen based on current student interest and faculty expertise. Special topic courses can only be offered 3 times; after this, the course must be approved as a regular course. Graded A-F or Pass/Fail.

Term(s) Offered: All Terms, All Years

PHL 295 On Campus Research 4 Credits

An agreement between a sponsoring faculty member and a student researching a topic of interest that is relevant to a student's major or minor. Research is conducted on campus. Students must be enrolled before the research can begin. Graded A-F or Pass/Fail. 45 hours are required per credit.

Term(s) Offered: All Terms, All Years

PHL 297 Independent Study 4 Credits

An agreement between a sponsoring faculty and a student letting the student study a topic of interest not offered at WC. 45 hours are required per credit.

PHL 300 Business Ethics 4 Credits

A seminar focusing on major ethical theories and principles as they apply to individuals, companies, corporations, and consumers in the business world. Typical issues treated are: corporate social responsibility, government versus self-regulation, employee and consumer safety, whistle-blowing, deceptive advertising, conflicts in accounting, the environment, insider trading, issues in international business, etc.

Term(s) Offered: Spring, Odd Years

PHL 303 Environmental Ethics 4 Credits

A study of the nature and history of the environmental movement and our ethical responsibilities with regard to such current issues as the preservation of species, animal rights, the value of ecosystems, ozone depletion, and deep or radical ecology.

Cross-listed as: PHL 303/ENV 303

Term(s) Offered: Other, Non Conforming

PHL 305 Philosophy of Religion 4 Credits

An examination of major philosophical discussions in the Western religious tradition. Among the topics dealt with are: the existence of God, faith and reason, religious language and experience, evil and suffering, science and religion, the afterlife, and the challenges of modernity to religious belief.

Term(s) Offered: Fall, Even Years

PHL 310 Philosophy of Science 4 Credits

This course begins with an exploration of the nature of scientific revolutions, along with an examination of some case studies of such revolutions from the history of science. We go on to examine some current theories concerning the evolution of microbial life, as well as issues associated with the Darwinian understanding of biological evolution. Our primary concern is the philosophical presuppositions and implications of such theories. On the methodological side, we treat such issues as induction, falsification, the hypothetical-deductive method, scientific facts, experimentation, etc.

Term(s) Offered: Other, Non Conforming

PHL 325 Biomedical Ethics 4 Credits

Biomedical ethics explores the ethical problems that arise in the context of modern medical care and biomedical research. As such, biomedical ethics involves the lives and decisions of patients, family members, doctors, nurses, and medical researchers. The course content focuses on the application of ethical theories to problems such as the rights of patients, duties of physicians, the distribution of resources, conflicts of interest in the managed care system, assisted suicide, euthanasia, end of life decisions, abortion, nature of disease, the use of human subjects in research, and the use of genetic and reproductive technologies.

Term(s) Offered: Other, Non Conforming

PHL 327 Music, Ritual and Early Christianity 4 Credits

Using music, ritual, and liturgical analyses, this course investigates the historical, social, political, and intellectual circumstances that led to the eventual success of Christianity as a major religion of the world. Examples are drawn from Eastern Orthodoxy and Catholicism.

Cross-listed as: PHL 327/MUS 327

Term(s) Offered: Spring, Non Conforming

PHL 335 Philosophy of Law 4 Credits

The course explores the philosophical issues surrounding a number of areas of the law including, the nature of law, constitutional interpretation, legal responsibility, punishment, capital punishment, and legal limits to personal liberty. Readings are drawn from classical and contemporary authors.

Term(s) Offered: Spring, Even Years

PHL 390 Philosophy Internship 4 Credits

A learning contract is developed prior to enrollment in an internship. Evaluation of student performance is completed by the faculty mentor based on the fulfillment of the contract terms and written evaluation by the internship site supervisor. Students must work at least 45 hours for each internship credit and be enrolled in the course prior to beginning work. Graded A-F or Pass/Fail.

PHL 394 Special Topics 4 Credits

Topics not regularly offered in a department's normal course offerings, chosen based on current student interest and faculty expertise. Special topic courses can only be offered 3 times; after this, the course must be approved as a regular course. Graded A-F or Pass/Fail.

Term(s) Offered: All Terms, All Years

PHL 395 On Campus Research 4 Credits

An agreement between a sponsoring faculty member and a student researching a topic of interest that is relevant to a student's major or minor. Research is conducted on campus. Students must be enrolled before the research can begin. Graded A-F or Pass/Fail. 45 hours are required per credit.

Term(s) Offered: All Terms, All Years

PHL 397 Independent Study 4 Credits

An agreement between a sponsoring faculty and a student letting the student study a topic of interest not offered at WC. 45 hours are required per credit.

Term(s) Offered: All Terms, All Years

PHL 425 Seminar in Ethics 4 Credits

A seminar in one major moral philosopher, movement, or issue in ethics, such as Kant, Rawls, Utilitarianism, Natural Law, the Nature of Rights, etc.

Term(s) Offered: Other, Non Conforming

PHL 430 Oxford Sem on Religion, Pol, & Culture 4 Credits

This distinctive study abroad course involves intensive study at the University of Oxford. Students conduct individual research projects and attend seminars under the direction of Oxford University faculty. The topic of the Seminar engages issues at the intersection of religion, politics, and culture. The course begins with instructional meetings in the spring and concludes with an oral defense of a substantial research paper in the fall. The course involves 49 hours of direct instructional contact and additional experiential learning in the form of structured trips and attendance of a Shakespeare play in Stratford upon Avon.

Cross-listed as: PHL 430/POL 430

Term(s) Offered: Summer, All Years

PHL 435 Philosophical Methods 4 Credits

The course studies the nature, aims, and methods of philosophical inquiry. Readings explore questions in meta-philosophy, what philosophy is and how it is done. Study of the technical practices of philosophizing and philosophical writing prepares students for advanced work in the major.

Term(s) Offered: Fall, All Years

PHL 490 Philosophy Internship 4 Credits

A learning contract is developed prior to enrollment in an internship. Evaluation of student performance is completed by the faculty mentor based on the fulfillment of the contract terms and written evaluation by the internship site supervisor. Students must work at least 45 hours for each internship credit and be enrolled in the course prior to beginning work. Graded A-F or Pass/Fail.

PHL 494 Special Topics 4 Credits

Topics not regularly offered in a department's normal course offerings, chosen based on current student interest and faculty expertise. Special topic courses can only be offered 3 times; after this, the course must be approved as a regular course. Graded A-F or Pass/Fail.

Term(s) Offered: All Terms, All Years

PHL 495 On Campus Research 4 Credits

An agreement between a sponsoring faculty member and a student researching a topic of interest that is relevant to a student's major or minor.

Research is conducted on campus. Students must be enrolled before the research can begin. Graded A-F or Pass/Fail. 45 hours are required per credit.

Term(s) Offered: All Terms, All Years

PHL 497 Independent Study 4 Credits

An agreement between a sponsoring faculty and a student letting the student study a topic of interest not offered at WC. 45 hours are required per credit.

Term(s) Offered: All Terms, All Years

Religion

REL 250 Ru and Confucianism 4 Credits

This course introduces the philosophical concepts, sociological foundation, political implementation, and spiritual/religious practices of the Asian Ru (Confucian) tradition. It presents Ruism's development across Asian countries such as Korea, Japan, and Indonesia, and studies its historical interaction with Western cultures. Classical Chinese philosophies, such as Daoism, Mohism, and Legalism, will be introduced as well to contextualize the origin and evolution of Ru thought. Students acquire special skills of meditation in motion to practice Ru wisdom in the everyday and secular world.

Cross-listed as: PHL 250/REL 250

Term(s) Offered: Fall, All Years