

Philosophy

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Program Coordinator: Dr. Timothy Menta

Philosophers study everything. Philosophy is a critical approach to all subjects, a comprehensive vision within which all other subjects are contained. To be critical means to examine carefully and cautiously, willing to change one's own beliefs. "Philosophy," from the Greek "philein" and "sophia," is the "love of wisdom."

Philosophers examine critically the most important questions in life: Does God exist? What is the meaning of life? What is truth? What is just? What should I think about the "tough" moral questions of abortion, euthanasia, capital punishment and animal welfare, (to name a few)?

Because we honor Saint Francis of Assisi, these studies emphasize simplicity, not technicalities. We respect faith while probing for understanding. We celebrate reasoning while keeping an honest, humble, and humorous attitude toward the limitations of our minds. We maintain a positive vision of human nature, a profound respect for the background and destiny of each person, and the respect for all living things which Saint Francis of Assisi taught us.

Study of philosophy is valuable in its own right. It is also an excellent preparation for law and theology, as well as for many other graduate school specialties. In fact, philosophy majors score consistently higher than all other humanities majors on GRE, LSAT, and GMAT graduate school entrance tests.

Students who major in philosophy often combine their study with another major in religious studies, psychology, history, political science, or some other field. You can expect philosophy to be a natural second-major, or minor that easily interlocks with any other discipline.

Increasingly, business and industry are seeking thoughtful generalists who can analyze and reason. Philosophy graduates often go on to various graduate programs or enter administrative or management training programs for careers in government or industry. The philosophy program offers credits for career-oriented study in connection with carefully selected internship programs, such as The Washington Center.

BACHELOR OF ARTS IN PHILOSOPHY

MAJOR REQUIREMENTS

Philosophy majors determine their sequence of courses together with an advisor from the philosophy program.

Required are: Philosophy 205, 300, 301, 302, 309, 320 and at least one of 307, 308, 312, 313 or 317. Also required is at least one 400 level course, and two additional philosophy electives. A student must elect to enroll in Philosophy 460 Seminar (3 credits) or sit for a comprehensive examination (0 credits).

SELF-DESIGNED MAJOR REQUIREMENTS

We encourage self-designed programs of study, which combine some of the philosophy major requirements with requirements of another major. These programs lead to a degree such as Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy and Religious Studies, Economics and Philosophy, Philosophy and Political Science.

Minor in Philosophy Requirements: Four Philosophy courses besides those required by the core program (Philosophy 205 and an elective in Philosophy). We recommend Philosophy 300, 301, 302, and 405 or 406 or 407.

Ethics Minor

The Ethics minor prepares students to evaluate their own personal value systems and the methods they use to address critical ethical and moral decisions. The Ethics program is designed to provide a comprehensive introduction to ethical methods and the application of moral decision-making to the complex ethical problems facing humanity.

1. Introductory experiences (Philosophy 205 and Religious Studies 205) are designed to assist students in answering critical ethical issues of life.
2. Foundation experiences (Philosophy 309 and Religious Studies 311) provide students with a relevant body of ethical knowledge including understanding of the principles and methodologies used in ethical and moral decision-making.
3. Advanced and applied ethics courses (Philosophy/Religious Studies 308, Philosophy 307, 312, 313, and 317) offer students the opportunity to integrate their general education courses with their professional experience by focusing on the ethical and moral values across both core and professional curricula.
4. Senior-level capstone experiences (Philosophy 460, 501) provide students with a range of opportunities to explore ethical issues raised by diverse academic disciplines and professional situations.

Minor in Ethics Requirements: Philosophy 205 or Religious Studies 205, Philosophy 309, Religious Studies 311, and three additional Ethics courses (Ethics courses are noted below).

PHILOSOPHY — COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

205. Discovering Philosophy - Reasoning and Responsibility (3 credits)

An introduction to the basic philosophical issues of ethics, engaging students in the excitement and the discipline of examining their most intimately held beliefs and values. Investigations of the foundations of ethical principles in theories of human nature, knowledge, religion, and reality. Discussions of both the cultural and the personal development of such principles. Counts toward Ethics minor. *Fall, Spring, Summer.*

300. History of Philosophy: Ancient (3 credits)

The foundations of philosophical (especially ethical and political) discussion in Pre-Socratic fragments, Plato's Republic, and Aristotle's Nichomachean Ethics. *Fall.*

301. History of Philosophy: Medieval (3 credits)

This course examines questions of human nature, the existence and nature of God, and metaphysics from the viewpoint of thinkers in the Middle Ages, including St. Augustine, St. Bonaventure, St. Thomas Aquinas and John Duns Scotus. *Spring.*

302. History of Philosophy: Modern (3 credits)

An examination of the modern period of philosophy (roughly 1600-1900) featuring the Rationalists (Descartes, Spinoza, Leibnitz), Empiricists (Locke, Berkeley, Hume), and subsequent thinkers (Kant, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Marx, Nietzsche). *Fall.*

**305. Philosophy of Knowledge
(3 credits)**

Human knowledge and the quest for certitude, meaning and value. Special emphasis placed upon classical, modern, and contemporary conceptions of truth, the probable limits of human knowledge, and humankind's continual search for meaning in life. *Prerequisite: Philosophy 205. Fall.*

**307. Environmental Ethics
(3 credits)**

Why care about the planet or its non-human residents? What is our place in the cosmos? Do we have duties to non-human animals and ecosystems? This course will address and rethink the relations between God, humans, and nature. Counts toward Ethics minor. *Prerequisite: Philosophy 205. As needed.*

**308. Peace, Justice and Human Relations
(same as Religious Studies 308)
(3 credits)**

Examines the ethical implications of contemporary economic, political, social, and environmental policies. The human impact of public policies is evaluated in light of Catholic Social Teaching and modern theories of justice. Issues to be examined include: social justice, economic justice, public policies, racial justice, poverty, the workplace, war & peace, violence & nonviolence, foreign policy, justice in the Third World, and personal & social responsibility. Counts toward Ethics minor. *Prerequisite: Philosophy 205. Fall.*

**309. Moral Philosophy
(3 credits)**

Moral philosophy is the attempt to achieve a systematic understanding of the nature of morality and what it requires of us – in Socrates' words, of "how we ought to live," and why. Examination of thinkers such as Plato, Aristotle, Kant, Mill, contemporary feminist thinkers and the application of rival moral theories to professional and social ethical issues. Counts toward Ethics minor. *Prerequisite: Philosophy 205. Fall.*

**311. Logic
(3 credits)**

Introduction to classical deductive and modern symbolic reasoning. Practice with systematic thinking. *Spring.*

**312. Health Care Ethics
(3 credits)**

A study of ethical theory and the practical issues of an ethical nature in contemporary health care. Issues include life and death questions, questions surrounding advanced technology as applied in health care settings, ethical requirements for health care professionals, and macro-ethical issues such as allocation and rationing of health care resources. Counts toward Ethics minor. *Prerequisite: Philosophy 205. Fall and spring.*

**313. Business Ethics
(3 credits)**

An examination of principle ethical paradigms and the application of such theory to concrete problems in the business world. Selected topics include: corporate responsibility, government regulation, consumer protection, environmental concerns, drug testing, affirmative action, sexual harassment, business bluffing. Counts toward Ethics minor. *Prerequisite: Philosophy 205. Fall.*

**315. Philosophy of God
(3 credits)**

An investigation of God's existence and essence, with special emphasis on the relations between God, humans, and nature. The course entails both a rational and a mystical approach to God. *As needed.*

**317. Morality and Law
(3 credits)**

An in-depth examination of the complex interplay between morality and the law within the context of contemporary ethical concerns: abortion, suicide, euthanasia, capital punishment, etc. Counts toward Ethics minor. *Prerequisite: Philosophy 205. As needed.*

**320. Philosophy of Human Nature
(3 credits)**

Study of major theories of human nature as rooted in theories of reality and implying theories of ethics. Topics include: Spirituality, Intelligence, Freedom, Immortality, Love and Sexuality. *Every other spring.*

330. Death, Dying, and the Near-Death Experience
(same as Religious Studies 330)
(3 credits)

This course examines philosophical and religious aspects of death and dying. The course begins with a discussion of the “meaning” of death and the significance of death as the final terminus of life. Further topics include: the stages of dying and bereavement; legal issues in death and dying; how the major world religions treat death and dying, and the significance and possible meaning of recent scientific inquiry into the near-death experience. *As needed.*

350. Sports and Ethics
(3 credits)

Sports and Ethics examines the ethical implications and impact of contemporary moral issues in the world of sports. The course focuses on defining, understanding, and working on solutions to crucial ethical questions facing the human community by examining the moral dimensions of sports and athletics. *As needed.*

399. Philosophy Internship
(2-15 credits)

For students of philosophy, an internship is an opportunity to experience the practical application of those great ideas discussed and mastered in the classroom. It is a chance to examine how theories of reality, knowledge, ethics, and politics are put into action, as well as to envision and propose alternate courses of action, based upon alternative philosophical argumentation.

Students are individually assigned to a cooperating government agency, political party, interest group, or attorney’s office (for pre-law students) for a semester or a summer, full-time or part-time, with or without pay. No more than six credits are applicable to the minimum requirement for major; no more than three to minimum requirement for minor; additional credits counted as free electives. Counts toward Ethics minor. *Prerequisite: Twelve credits in philosophy courses, and consent of the chair of the department and the Provost. Fall, Spring, Summer.*

402. Political Philosophy
(3 credits)

A historical and critical investigation of various political ideologies and their ethical foundations including various thinkers from Plato to John Dewey. Evaluation of movements in the twentieth century such as Democracy, Communism, Socialism, Fascism, and non-violent resistance. *Prerequisite: Philosophy 205. As needed.*

405. Existentialism
(same as Psychology 405)
(3 credits)

The existential approach to the development of human consciousness: perception, emotion, and commitment in the works of Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Sartre (and others). Theories of phenomenological research and counseling in psychology. *Prerequisite: Philosophy 205. Spring.*

406. American Philosophy
(3 credits)

Study of the American pragmatist movement which focuses on the value and importance of philosophy for ordinary life; theories and ideas must be practical and be embodied in concrete human experience. Investigation of some basic writings of Charles Peirce, William James, and John Dewey. *Prerequisite: Philosophy 205. As needed.*

407. Reality, Nature, and Freedom
(3 credits)

This course studies the concepts of being, truth, personal identity, causality, space and time, nature and God.

410. Philosophy of Law
(3 credits)

A philosophical investigation of the nature, purpose and aim of the Law. Special emphasis on legal reasoning, judicial decision-making, natural law theory, legal positivism, individual rights and responsibility, privacy, theories of punishment and civil disobedience. *Prerequisite: Philosophy 205. As needed.*

460. Seminar in Philosophy
(3 credits)

Special topics. Counts toward Ethics minor. *Prerequisite: Philosophy 205. As needed.*

501. Independent Study in Philosophy
(1-8 credits)

Counts toward Ethics minor. *Prerequisite: Philosophy 205. As needed.*