

Philosophy & Religious Studies

Course Listings
Spring 2017



The Department of Philosophy & Interdisciplinary Studies offers B.A. programs in Philosophy and in Interdisciplinary Studies, as well as Philosophy and Religious Studies minors.

In addition to the standard B.A. in Philosophy, we also offer the Early Admittance Law Program in conjunction with Bowen Law School – an accelerated Philosophy major that allows students to count their first year in law school as their final year at UALR.

For more information about any and all of our programs, visit ualr.edu/philosophy

To speak with one of our faculty members – or to set up an advising appointment – contact Brandy Cochran
Phone: 569-3312
Email: bccochran@ualr.edu

Introductory Courses

Introduction to Philosophy — PHIL 1310

Prof. Thomas — TR 9:25-10:40 (CRN: 11581)

WEB: Prof. McAuliffe (CRN: 11420 | UALR Online: 14632)

This course is a survey of basic themes in philosophy, addressing such fundamental concerns as the nature of morality and beauty, the relation of mind and body, and the existence of free will, through discussion and analysis of readings.

Introduction to Critical Thinking — PHIL 1330

Prof. Jones — WEB (CRN: 11421 | UALR Online: 14634)

An introduction to reasoning skills. This course focuses on the recognition of informal fallacies and the nature, use, and evaluation of arguments, as well as the basic characteristics of inductive and deductive arguments.

Ethics and Society — PHIL 2320

**multiple sections on campus and online,
see Schedule of Classes**

This course features a study of selected texts reflecting a variety of ethical systems—with at least one major text from each of four historical periods (antiquity, medieval, early modern, and contemporary). Ethical theories examined will include: deontology, utilitarianism, and virtue theory.

Fulfills Core Curriculum requirement: Humanities

Ethics and Society: Professional Applications — PHIL 2321

Prof. Spino — MWF 11:00-11:50 (CRN: 14674)

This course is similar to PHIL 2320, featuring a study of selected texts reflecting a variety of ethical systems such as deontology, utilitarianism, and virtue theory. These ethical theories will be brought to bear on specific ethical issues arising in the workplace and in the context of professional life.

Fulfills Core Curriculum requirement: Humanities

Introduction to Logic — PHIL 2350

Prof. John — MWF 11:00-11:50 (CRN: 11588)

An introduction to deductive logic, including translation of sentences into formal systems, immediate inferences, syllogisms, formal fallacies, proofs of validity, and quantification.

World Religions — RELS 2305

Prof. Hale — TR 10:50-12:05 (CRN: 11591)

This course examines the global patterns of contemporary world religions as symbol systems and expressions of discrete, coherent world views. It focuses on the particular histories, practices, and beliefs of the major world religions.

Fulfills Core Curriculum requirement: Humanities

Upper Level Courses

Theories of Knowledge — PHIL 3310

Prof. Thomas — TR 12:15-1:30 (CRN: 14677)

How do we answer the skeptic's claim that we do not, really, know anything? Does it matter? How should we define knowledge? When is it appropriate to claim that we know something? Is knowledge valuable in and of itself, or are our knowledge claims simply a means of maintaining and asserting our beliefs? Is the scientific method our best (and perhaps only) means of gaining knowledge? In this course, we will look at four dominant accounts of knowledge (coherence, foundationalist, naturalized, and reliabilist theories) as well as some alternative views. We will also assess various attempts to redefine the nature and limits of knowledge and rational choice, and what turns on the difference between natural and artificial intelligence.

3000- and 4000-level PHIL courses generally have PHIL 1310, PHIL 2320, or instructor consent as their prerequisite. Students enrolling in 1000- or 2000-level PHIL or RELS courses are advised to have completed (or be concurrently enrolled in) RHET 1311.

Kant & 19th Century Philosophy – PHIL 3321
Prof. Norton – MW 1:40-2:55 (CRN: 12282)

Philosophy in the nineteenth century can be characterized—albeit too broadly—as having to do with freedom: the freedom to act and, perhaps more importantly, the freedom to know. Immanuel Kant wrote of awaking from a “dogmatic slumber” and challenged his contemporaries to emerge from a self-imposed immaturity into the autonomy of reason. This course will examine some influential selections from Kant and later advocates of the Enlightenment philosophical project, as well as some of its most outspoken critics. Exploring work by Kant, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard, Marx, Nietzsche, and others, we will ask questions about the foundations and limits of reason, the nature of human beings and our relationship to the world, the material conditions of knowledge, and the role of faith. We will also examine works by women and people of color, asking critical questions about the ways that certain philosophers’ views about race and gender might complicate their otherwise emancipatory positions.

Madness, Power, & Sexuality – PHIL 4380-01
Prof. Robinson – MW 3:05-4:20 (CRN: 11590)

Michel Foucault (1926-1984) is one of the most important thinkers of our time, opening up new directions in thought that have influenced and shaped work in a range of disciplines across the humanities and social sciences. Many of his books forge a new relation between philosophy and history to challenge conventional ideas of the self, language, truth, reason, freedom, power and sexuality. This course will be a general introduction to Foucault’s thought and some of the scholarly literature on his work, as well as a critical assessment of its philosophical value. We will read across the range of his work in order to follow and understand the new methodologies he develops for understanding human beings with a focus on the themes of madness, power and sexuality.

Philosophy of Race – PHIL 4373
Prof. McAuliffe – TR 10:50-12:05 (CRN: 12283)

The meaning of race seems to change daily as national conversations confront which economic disparities, incidences of violence, and social marginalizations are impacted by the legacy of racial injustice in the U.S. This course will help us understand how we got here, by exploring the conceptual history of racial categorization in the U.S. To some it may seem that one’s race is obvious, “there” for any and all to see. In this course, however, we will consider the ways that the significance of social identity is continually altered by a combination of self-understanding, social location, and the ways gender, race, class, sexuality, ethnicity and nationality affect each other. Critical philosophers of race have inaugurated a rethinking of the history of Western social and political thought that deepens one’s ability to understand social realities. This work has confronted the logic of imperialism by decolonizing thought, has resisted carceral logics through abolitionist ones, and has vivified the ethics of diversity through a critique of the terms of inclusion. Engaging with the philosophy of race will thus help us anticipate how up to the minute changes in the social world will affect the future of social justice in the U.S.

Business Ethics – PHIL 4387
Prof. Spino – MWF 12:00-12:50 (CRN: 14678)

Business ethics concerns the ways in which businesses and organizations actually behave, and the ways in which they ought to behave. In this course, we will analyze how ethical and moral considerations can define best practices, and also if businesses have any responsibilities beyond maximizing profits and stakeholder value. We will consider ethics as it applies to businesses as a whole, as well as to the individuals within the business itself. This course will investigate business ethics from both a general, theoretical standpoint, as well as through careful consideration of specific and often real-life case studies.

Religion, Society, & Culture — RELS 4321
Prof. Hale — TR 12:15-1:30 (CRN: 11592)

This course deals with the anthropology of religion, so we will read and discuss material dealing with religion from an anthropological perspective. The articles we read will focus on religion as it is practiced, rather than abstract or idealized ideas about religion. Topics will include myth, ritual, shamanism, altered states of consciousness, healing, witchcraft, and sorcery. The class will be conducted mainly through discussions. Insights from various backgrounds and fields of study are encouraged.

[Cross-listed as ANTH 4321 and SOCI 4321]

Christianity and Ecology — RELS 4385
Prof. Alexander — TR 9:25-10:40 (CRN: 14686)

This course will consist of an in-depth examination of how a religious tradition can both contribute to environmental degradation and inspire an ethical response. Topics covered will include ecological works, nature in the Christian tradition, biblical analysis, the religious roots of environmentalism, and faith-based responses.

Religion, Gender, & Affect — RELS 4380
Prof. Taylor — WEB (CRN: 14684 | UALR Online: 14685)

This course investigates the embodied emotional experience of religious traditions and practices. The emerging subfield of affect theory in Gender Studies, Philosophy and Religious Studies provides a foundation for theorizing an embodied prelinguistic or pretextual conception of religion that is part of a broader materialist shift in the social and human sciences. Topics include: exploring notions of intransigence, compulsion, and accident in broadening religion to include practices of non-human animals and exploring notions of queerness and an affective history of diasporic trauma in early Christian identities.

[Cross-listed as PHIL 4380-991]

Why Should I Study Philosophy?

“Philosophy classes taught me something applicable to any and every job: clarity of thought. Name me one aspect of your life that doesn’t benefit from being able to think something through clearly.

Because it delivers real skills, philosophy doesn’t go out of fashion the way the trendy subjects do.”

(“Be Employable, Study Philosophy,” *Salon.com*)

“In the US, where the number of philosophy graduates increased by 5% a year during the 1990s, only a very few go on to become philosophers. Their employability is impressive by any standard. ...

Philosophy is the ultimate transferable work skill.”

(“Philosophy: A Quintessential Modern Discipline,” *London Times*)

“Philosophy is to be studied, not for the sake of any definite answers to its questions since no definite answers can, as a rule, be known to be true, but rather for the sake of the questions themselves; because these questions enlarge our conception of what is possible, enrich our intellectual imagination and diminish the dogmatic assurance which closes the mind against speculation; but above all because, **through the greatness of the universe which philosophy contemplates, the mind also is rendered great, and becomes capable of that union with the universe which constitutes its highest good.**”

(“The Problems of Philosophy,” Bertrand Russell)