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Philosophy

Program Advisors: Dr. Chitta R. Unni, Dr. Lilia Castle, and Dr. Peter Steiger

Mission: The minor in Philosophy engages students in the arts of thinking and writing clearly, applying critical thought to contemporary issues, and developing an understanding of the traditional philosophical themes in light of the Catholic Intellectual Tradition.

The minor in Philosophy introduces the student to a variety of philosophical traditions and the art of thinking and writing clearly about complex ideas. Although there is an emphasis on the traditions of western philosophy, eastern thought is also introduced. Every effort is made to relate philosophy to other academic disciplines as well as to the practical questions of contemporary life. Specifically, courses in philosophy are designed to help students evaluate arguments, deliberate moral choices, make value judgments, and to adopt rigorous methods to investigate physical and social realities. The program encourages students to form serious religious, metaphysical and political orientations within which to make important decisions in their lives.

Students may use the Philosophy minor as their area of concentration within the Humanities major. See the structure of that program under “Humanities.”

Program Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this program, the student will demonstrate:

1. an understanding of the perennial problems that form Western philosophical thinking.
2. an understanding of the question, “why is there something rather than nothing?”
3. an understanding of the theories of meaning and use of language in creating meaning in personal and social contexts.
4. an understanding of the major similarities and differences in approaches and content of classical and contemporary ethical theories.
5. an understanding of justice, its relationship to peace and its context in Catholic Social Teaching and how this tradition compares with other theories of justice and peace.
6. an understanding of various concepts of meaning that challenge the nihilism suggested by the limits of human life, including the Catholic response that we do something because we have been loved into existence.

Pre-minor requirements: any 100-level Philosophy course.

Minor requirements: 15 semester hours of 300 or above level courses in philosophy to be selected in consultation with the program advisor. This includes the required capstone course, PH 490.

Program student learning outcomes are assessed individually in specific coursework (course student learning outcomes) and cumulatively in the capstone course, PH 490.

Course Descriptions

Philosophy (PH)

PH 100 Introduction to Philosophy (3)

A study of the nature of philosophical thought and methods by examining actual examples from a selection of classical Greek, medieval Christian, and modern European philosophers. Students will develop an understanding of the ways in which western culture functions. Offered every semester.

PH 103 Critical Thinking (3)

Designed to be more than a study of non-formal reasoning methods, the course includes but is not limited to the study of logical fallacies. Assembling approaches from analytic philosophy, literary theory and cultural studies, the course models the rhetorical dimension of language and discourse. The course is useful for those who want to think, write and talk in a clear and straight forward manner. Offered annually.

PH 105 Ethics (3)

The study of the concepts of good and bad, right and wrong, has a long history. This course will study the origins and legitimacy of our standards of conduct and character and will discuss modern studies which consider the compelling and unconditional overtones of ethical demands. The course will also discuss the ways in which we talk to children and young people about what is right and wrong. Offered every semester.

PH 200 History of Philosophy (3)

An examination of the passage of time in intellectual history and its ruling concepts. The course attempts to probe reflectively the existence of continuities in the development of central notions that have provided the intellectual horizons within which the organization of the life world is carried on. Offered alternate years.

PH 250 Introduction to Asian Thought (3)

Are there fundamental differences between Western and Asian assumptions about life and reality? How do Confucian ideas manifest themselves in China, Taiwan, and Japan after modernization? What secular forms do Hinduism and Buddhism take in modern times? The course is useful for those who wish to understand Asia and how its people think and do business. It will introduce Asian ideas at an elementary level. Offered alternate years.

English 102 and COM 101 are prerequisites for all upper division courses**PH 300 Philosophical Psychology (3)**

What concepts or metaphors help us frame the notions of mind, consciousness, and self? Often called the philosophy of the mind in contemporary analytic culture, the subject examines the presuppositions of empirical studies of mental notions and explores the possibility of grounding them in language, culture, or social practices. The course studies the ways in which we can be clear about mind and other ideas dependent on it. Offered alternate years.

Prerequisite: any 100-level Philosophy course or consent of instructor.

PH 305 Sociology and Philosophy of Religion (3)

Going beyond examining the validity of the proofs for the existence of God, the course studies religion as providing continuity between mythological ways of experiencing the world and its later rational investigations. As a source of powerful passions responsible for many of the moving forces of history, religion is an unavoidable subject for our study and reflection. The course especially studies the possibility of a Christian life in modern times. Fulfills interdisciplinary course requirement. Cross-listed as RE/SO 305. Offered annually. *Prerequisite: any 100-level Philosophy course and SO 200 or consent of instructor.*

PH 310 Philosophy of Communications (3)

Moving beyond just using tools for enhancing our lives, we have first attempted to make technology become the extensions of our limbs and then have in recent times begun to reconstitute our own selves in accordance with the demands of technology. The course examines the relationship between the medium and the message in the context of this emergent technology which demands that we be more like machines. The course examines the consequences of the technological revolution. Offered alternate years. *Prerequisite: any 100-level Philosophy course or consent of instructor.*

PH 315 Social Philosophy (3)

Poets, philosophers, novelists, and in our own times, film makers and musicians, have provided an immense variety of drama and narration responsible for making our lives meaningful and enjoyable. From Durkheim and Weber to sitcom artists and pop musicians, social philosophy examines life's ongoing narratives and attempts to determine whether there is a master narrative of life. Offered alternate years. *Prerequisite: any 100-level Philosophy course or consent of instructor.*

PH 325 Philosophy of Law (3)

What is law, what does it do, and what can it do? Enjoying a historically venerable status, legal institutions are privileged in western civilization as the locus of ultimate social decision-making. Central to the philosophies that inform their structures is the controversy between the concepts of justice and order. The course examines whether laws maintain or attempt to change the status quo. The course also studies mediation as an alternative to litigation. Offered alternate years. *Prerequisite: any 100-level Philosophy course or consent of instructor.*

PH 338 Religion, Philosophy and Social Ethics (3)

Designed to give students an interdisciplinary experience in the study of social ethics from the perspectives of theology, religion and philosophy, and sociology. Students will explore the theory and practice of social ethics and develop the knowledge and skills for philosophical, sociological, and theological critique of ethical systems and social policy. Offered annually. Cross-listed as RE/SO 338. Fulfills interdisciplinary course requirement. *Prerequisite: RE 103 or RE 205, or any 100-level Philosophy course or consent of instructor.*

PH 360 Sociology and Philosophy of Gender (3)

An interdisciplinary course on gender from the perspective of the social sciences, philosophy, and the humanities. Students will evaluate arguments which view gender as a cultural construct or as corresponding to an essential reality. The nature of masculinity and femininity will be explored as will major issues of public policy. Cross-listed as SO 360. Offered alternate years. Fulfills interdisciplinary course requirement. *Prerequisite: any 100-level Philosophy course or SO 200 or consent of instructor.*

PH 405 Theory of Knowledge (3)

Beginning with a discussion of the kind of questions that brought theory of knowledge into central focus as a philosophical discipline at the beginning of the Enlightenment, the course will examine a variety of modern approaches which study the intimate relationship between the quest for knowledge and the quest for power. The course explores what knowledge is and why we value it. Offered alternate years. *Prerequisite: any 100-level Philosophy course or consent of instructor.*

PH 410 Aesthetics (3)

Appreciating the fact that ideas of truth, goodness and beauty mark norms or standards of perfection, the course assembles a diversity of views on the constitution and consequences of the ideal of perfection. Of special significance is the impact of the distinction between the beautiful and the sublime for contemporary intellectual culture. The course studies art not as a decoration of life, but as the very constitution of it. Offered alternate years. *Prerequisite: any 100-level Philosophy course or consent of instructor.*

PH 415 Philosophy of Language (3)

Assuming that reality is accessible to us only through the mediation of a symbolic system, the course will discuss various theories about the relationship between language and reality. Discussion of the ways in which we establish objectivity and other points of reference will be emphasized. The course studies language and culture as implicated in the very ways in which we think of the real and the valuable. Offered alternate years *Prerequisite: any 100-level Philosophy course or consent of instructor.*

PH 425 Religion, Science and the Modern Prospect (3)

Can a person meaningfully believe in God in a world of quantum indeterminacy? Can the many discourses of the world's religions help us to find hope in a world that the sciences tell us started with a big bang and is evolving towards a heated death? This course brings the method of the philosophy of science and that of the philosophy of religion to focus on what the sciences and religions actually do and what their respective perspectives tell us about our realities. It will be argued that contrary to the customary image of sciences and religions locked in conflict, these inquiries actually share a domain of mutual interest. Offered in alternate years. Cross listed as RE 425. Fulfills the interdisciplinary requirement. *Prerequisite: RE 103 or RE 205, or any 100-level Philosophy course or consent of instructor.*

PH 463 The Psychology of Death and Dying (3)

This course is a psychological, philosophical, theological, ethical, biological, and social inquiry into the nature of death. It examines issues including life after death, assisted suicide, right to die, relationship of the medical system and right to life, bereavement, death system, and Eastern approaches to death. Fulfills interdisciplinary course requirement. Cross-listed as PSY/RE 463. Offered alternate years. *Prerequisite: PSY 101 or RE 103.*

PH 471 Existential Psychology (3)

A philosophical and psychological inquiry into the core of human existence. This course will examine the relationship between psychology and philosophy exploring such topics as anxiety, death, meaninglessness, freedom, isolation, free choice, and responsibility. Fulfills interdisciplinary course requirement. Cross-listed as PSY 471. Offered annually. *Prerequisite: PSY 101 or any 100-level Philosophy course or consent of instructor.*

PH 473 Holocaust (3)

Students will examine the history of anti-Semitism which led to the tragic destruction of most of European Jewry in the Holocaust. It involves a critical reflection on the relationship between Christianity and Judaism and the sources of the anti-Jewish polemic and modern anti-Semitism. From Elie Wiesel's autobiographical accounts to numerous stories and experiences of the Holocaust, students will confront their own doubts and fears, hopes and dreams about the meaning of humanity after the Holocaust. Cross listed as RE 473. Offered annually. Fulfills the interdisciplinary course requirement. *Prerequisite: Any lower division Religion course; any 100-level Philosophy course, or consent of instructor.*

PH 475 Transpersonal Psychology (3)

A phenomenological exploration of spiritual experience and self-transformation; focus on eastern and western traditions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, mystic Judaism, Christian mysticism, and Sufism. The approach is interdisciplinary, integrating psychology, philosophy and religion. Meditation exercises will be taught as part of the class. Fulfills interdisciplinary course requirement. Cross-listed as RE/PSY 475. Offered alternate years. *Prerequisite: PSY 100; and RE 103 or any 100-level Philosophy course or consent of instructor.*

PH 480 Special Topics (3)

Selected topics in philosophy to be announced. Past offerings include Political Philosophy, Philosophy of Education, and Metaphysics. *Prerequisite: any 100-level Philosophy course or consent of instructor.*

PH 490 Senior Seminar (3)

This is the capstone seminar for the Philosophy minor. Students will select a topic from their area of study, develop a research plan, and implement that plan to produce a final work that will be presented at an open forum at the conclusion of the semester. Students will participate in a series of program related assessment projects based on the program learning outcomes. Seminar sessions will be held throughout the semester to cover topics of interest to the participants and the enhancement of their understanding of the field. Offered annually *Prerequisite: any 100-level Philosophy course or consent of instructor.*

PH 499 Directed Study (3)

Individualized study on a topic arranged with the program advisor. *Prerequisites: Consent of the program advisor.*