

Philosophy & Religion Course Descriptions

G-PR 101 God and People in Ancient Israel: Hebrew Bible Foundations

3 hours

An exploration of the history, literature, and religion of ancient Israel using selected portions of the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) as primary sources. The course focuses on major themes that have shaped the life and faith of both Jewish and Christian religious communities to this day, and will provide students opportunities to consider how these themes might inform their thinking about their own lives. (Fall, even years)

G-PR 102 Jesus: New Testament Foundations

3 hours

An introduction to the New Testament that focuses on understanding the life and teachings of Jesus in his first-century context. The course will also explore how these foundational texts continue to inform Christian life and faith, and will provide students opportunities to ponder the potential impact of these reflections on their own lives. (Spring, odd years)

G-PR 104 or *G-PR 104L Ethics

3 hours (not Language Intensive) or 4 hours (Language Intensive)

This course enables students to think critically about moral values and the process of ethical decision-making. Students will be challenged, both to understand how and why others think about the moral life as they do, and to evaluate critically their own moral values and the ways they resolve ethical problems. (Fall and Spring)

***G-PR 106L Spiritual Pathways**

3 hours (Language Intensive)

An introduction to religion that considers (1) how different religious traditions understand life as a journey in search of spiritual awakening and transformation and (2) how these different traditions in turn see compassion for others and devotion to service as two keys to living an authentic human life. In view of the preceding, the course culminates with a reflection on the meaning of personal vocation and offers students an opportunity to consider their own individual life callings. (Fall, odd years)

G-PR 107 Critical Thinking

3 hours

This course will help students understand how we draw conclusions about what is true in any and all aspects of life. The goal of the course is for students to develop their skill at evaluating the quality of their thinking, especially by becoming aware of common ways in which our reasoning goes wrong. The course will encourage students to consider both how critical thinking can become a way of life, and the positive impact that critical thinking can have on our world. (Spring, even years)

G-PR 201 Introduction to Philosophy

3 hours

This course will introduce students to the activity of philosophy. In dialogue with the Western philosophical tradition, students will practice systematic, critical, and deep reflection on some of the most fundamental questions that can be asked, for example, What can we know, and how? What does it mean to be human? Does life have ultimate meaning, and what might that meaning be? Students will be introduced to the concept of a "life philosophy" and provided the opportunity to develop their own personal philosophies of life. (Fall, even years)

G-PR 202 Christian Traditions

3 hours

An exploration of different, contemporary traditions of Christian faith and practice that will help students grasp some of the diverse ways that Christians today understand the meaning of following Jesus. The course will consider important texts from these diverse traditions, as well as biographies of some of their key representatives, and then ponder their significance for Christians and non-Christians alike who seek to live lives of meaning and purpose. (Fall, odd years)

G-PR 203 Science and Religion

3 hours

Especially in the United States, science and religion are typically presupposed to be in conflict with each other. This course starts from a different presupposition. It begins by exploring in some detail the story of the universe told by contemporary cosmology and evolutionary biology, and in the process invites students to consider how a dialogue between science and faith might lead to a rich, coherent, and personally meaningful understanding of humanity and of humanity's place in the universe. (Spring, even years)

G-PR 204 Peacemaking: Religious Perspectives

3 hours

This course critically engages diverse religious perspectives on peacemaking. It begins by exploring the various positions on non-resistance, non-violence,

and humanitarian service taken by the historic peace churches: Mennonite, Quaker, and Brethren. It then seeks precedents for these positions in Christianity's past, and finally moves forward into the present, with special attention to conversations within and between different world religions about the religious roots of violence, and about the vital contribution that religious believers and communities can make to world peace. (Spring, odd years)

G-PR 215 History of Philosophy

3 hours

A survey of Western philosophy from its origins in ancient Greece to the present. Key figures include the Pre-Socratics, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Anselm, Maimonides, Thomas Aquinas, William of Ockham, Descartes, Locke, Hume, Kant, Hegel, Kierkegaard, Mill, Nietzsche, Wittgenstein, and Heidegger. (Fall, odd years)

G-PR 302 Religion and Politics

3 hours

This course considers how religion and politics have influenced each other in the United States, as well as the ways that Americans have understood those influences. Topics include the interplay between church and state, the politics of sexuality, gender, and race, and the relation between religion and democracy. (Spring, even years)

G-PR 306 World Religions

3 hours

An introduction to major world religions, including but not limited to Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Daoism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The goal is for students to understand key teachings and practices of each, and thereby to develop an understanding of and empathy for how adherents of these traditions experience life and the world around them. Finally, students will consider how their study of these traditions might contribute to their own life and thought. (Fall, even years)

G-PR 310 Religion and Law

3 hours

An exploration of the proper relationship between religion and government. The Supreme Court has dealt with church-state matters since the 1940s. Issues concerning religion and law dominate many contemporary debates, including abortion, LGBTQ+ rights, race, contraception, prayer in public schools, and evolution and intelligent design in public schools. This course examines the aforementioned topics from theological and constitutional perspectives. (Spring, odd years)

G-PR 350 Philosophy of Religion

3 hours

An investigation of religion from the perspective of analytic philosophy, in which students are exposed to the best of cutting-edge work on key topics. Such topics include religious epistemology, the existence of God, the coherence of theism, the problem of evil, the soul and immortality, and theological issues. (Spring, even years)

G-PR 360 Modern Logic

3 hours

An introduction to symbolic logic. Key topics include symbolizing English arguments, truth tables, logically significant categories and relationships, statement logic, constructing proofs, predicate logic, the logic of relations, and probabilistic reasoning. (Spring, odd years)

PR 375A Junior Seminar: Philosophy and Religion

1 hour

Philosophy and Religion majors during their junior year learn the essential methods and theories in the academic study of philosophy and religion. These methods and theories are the fundamental "tools" majors need in their proverbial toolbox to successfully undertake original research in philosophy and religion. (Fall, as needed)

PR 375B Junior Seminar: LSAT Prep

3 hours

This course prepares pre-law students to perform well on the LSAT. It teaches students formal logic, logic games, logical reasoning, and reading comprehension. It uses timed sample LSAT sections to test each skill and a times complete sample LSAT as the final exam. (Spring, as needed)

PR 411 Travel

3-4 hours (Can be repeated)

Students from all majors have the unique opportunity to experience firsthand the religions and philosophies of different cultures and environments through international or domestic travel.

PR 431 Islamic Traditions

3 hours

A historical and theological overview of Islam in its diverse forms from the seventh century CE to the present. Special attention is given to the Prophet Muhammad, the Qur'an, the Sunna, the development of the Muslim community, Islamic schools of thought, and Islamic law. (Fall, even years)

PR 432 Philosophy of Law

3 hours

This course explores a number of philosophical themes bearing on the nature of the law and its relationship to morality: e.g., What is the law—is it a necessarily moral phenomenon or merely a social phenomenon? Do we have an obligation to obey the law? What are the moral limits of legal punishment? This course also acquaints students with fundamental concepts, structures, and functions of the American legal system. It examines the “evolving” nature of law as it relates to our society, especially how the law affects each of our lives on a daily basis. The course looks at the legal system as a framework for the avoidance of problems in the future and for resolving problems that inevitably arise in a complex society. In addition to engaging these and other substantive issues, the course attempts to sharpen students’ skills in practical reasoning through the analysis of logical argument. (Fall, odd years)

PR 475 Senior Seminar/Thesis

2 hours

Senior Philosophy and Religion majors are required to do a senior thesis with the topic approved by their departmental advisor no later than midterm of the fall semester. Students may enroll for the course fall or spring during their senior year, but are expected to work on their project throughout the year in consultation with their departmental advisor, and to meet periodically with other Philosophy and Religion seniors as they do so.

Special Course Options

PR 295/495 Field Experience (1-4 hours)

PR 297 Study Abroad (12-16 hours)

PR 299/499 Independent Study (1-4 hours)

PR 388 Career Connections (3-10 hours)

PR 445 Readings and Research (1-4 hours)