Philosophy & Religion Program

Purpose Statement

The Philosophy and Religion department offers courses designed to help students critically reflect upon religious and philosophical traditions that for millennia have deeply shaped how human beings have understood their lives as a whole in relationship to all that exists. In so doing, students will critically consider their own worldview, while at the same time understanding more deeply and with greater empathy the worldviews of others. Travel courses offered through the program superbly complement the rest of the curriculum for this purpose. The practical benefits of the major are many. It provides excellent background for professions such as business, education, social work, and humanitarian assistance – to name just a few – that require understanding and empathy across widely diverse cultures. The major develops critical thinking skills essential to success in these and other professions, especially law. The major is one of the two recommended at McPherson College for the pre-law student. In addition, given the possibility the major offers for focusing specifically on the Christian tradition, it can assist students who seek to understand their chosen profession, whatever it may be, as Christian ministry, or who want preparation for entering seminary upon graduation. Whatever their career path, students will find their study of philosophy and religion empowering them to live with a deeper sense of purpose, a surer sense of their vocation, and greater appreciation for values such as peacemaking, stewardship, and service that contribute to the well-being of the world.

The Department of Philosophy and Religion achieves its purpose when its graduates:

- demonstrate an understanding of the world's major religious traditions and the diverse ways each is interpreted, with a special emphasis on how these traditions help shape both the human experience of the world around us and our response to it;
- demonstrate the ability to critically engage the western philosophical tradition as it addresses fundamental questions about the nature of reality, the meaning of our experience, and the purpose of life;
- demonstrate the ability to critically evaluate and improve their own thinking;
- demonstrate the ability to bring the study of religion and philosophy to bear on their quest to understand the meaning and purpose of their own lives.

Philosophy/Religion Major

Requirements (All courses are 3 hours unless otherwise specified)

Core Courses (18 hours):

G-PR 106L Spiritual Pathways: Transformation, Compassion, and Vocation
G-PR 107 Critical Thinking
G-PR 201 Introduction to Philosophy
G-PR 306 World Religions
PR 375 Junior Seminar (1 hour)
PR 431 Topics in Religious or Theological Studies OR
PR 432 Topics in Philosophy
PR 475 Senior Seminar/Thesis (2 hours)

Electives (12 hours from the following):

G-PR 101 Old Testament-Hebrew Bible: God and People in Ancient Israel
G-PR 102 Jesus: New Testament Foundations
G-PR 104 or G-PR 104L Ethics (3 hours if G-PR 104; 4 hours if G-PR 104L)
G-PR 202 Christian Traditions
G-PR 203 Science and Religion
G-PR 204 Peacemaking: Religious Perspectives
G-PR 206 Religion and Environmental Stewardship
PR 303 Readings in Theology/Philosophy (2 or 3 hours, depending on the semester)
G-PR 304 The Church of the Brethren and Beyond: The Christian Church Serves Our World
PR411 Travel (3 or 4 hours, depending on the semester)

Supporting Courses (12 hours from the following)*:

G-ET 201 Social Entrepreneurship
EN 230 Linguistics (2 hours)
G-CM 130 Interpersonal Communication
G-CM 221 Intercultural Communication
CM 240 Gender Communication
CM 325 Conflict Communication
BI 404 Biomedical Ethics (2 hours)
NS 404 Environmental Ethics (2 hours)

G-HI/PS 101 Historical Introduction to Politics
G-PS 215 Global Peace Studies
HI 313 Medieval Europe
PY/SO 210 Human Sexuality
PY/SO 308 Counseling
PY 405 Personality Theories

*Note: alternative courses will be considered and can be approved by the department chair on a case-by-case basis.

Philosophy/Religion Minor

Requirements (all courses are 3 hours)

G-PR 106L Spiritual Pathways: Transformation, Compassion, and Vocation
G-PR 201 Introduction to Philosophy
plus a minimum of 12 more hours of any courses with a PR prefix.

Peace Studies Minor

The Department also coordinates and provides oversight for a minor in Peace Studies. Peace Studies is an interdisciplinary field of study that seeks understanding of the causes of human conflict and violence. It then strives to develop methods for resolving conflicts nonviolently and for promoting peace through justice at all levels of human society and in human relationships with the natural environment. The minor can complement any number of majors, for example, Political Science, History, or Environmental Stewardship, especially for those students seeking to couple their major field and professional training to values of social justice and peacemaking.

Students who complete a minor in Peace Studies will be able to:

- demonstrate that they understand some of the most important causes and consequences of interpersonal, societal, and international conflict and violence; and
- demonstrate that they understand a variety of methods for conflict resolution and peacemaking that address these causes and promote the well-being of human communities and of the planet on which we live.

Requirements (all courses are 3 hours unless otherwise specified)

Core Courses (12 hours)

G-PS 125 International Relations
G-PR 204 Peacemaking: Religious Perspectives
G-PS 215 Global Peace Studies
CM 325 Conflict Communication

Electives (at least 6 hours from the following)

G-PR 104 Ethics
G-NS 141 Environmental Science (4 hours)
G-ET 201 Social Entrepreneurship
G-SO 202 Minorities in the US (3-4 hours)
G-PR 206 Religion and Environmental Stewardship
SO 206 Social Problems (3-4 hours)
G-CM 221 Intercultural Communication
CM 240 Gender Communication
NS 404 Environmental Ethics (2 hours)