

Philosophy

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Philosophy courses provide the opportunity for the development of a critical and unified understanding of experience and nature. This is accomplished through their concern — from both historical and contemporary perspectives — with the ethical, social and political, aesthetic, religious, metaphysical, epistemological, and scientific dimensions of existence.

The Philosophy major: A minimum of 36 credits in philosophy including: Four courses in the history of philosophy: 201, 202, 303, and 304; two 300 and above courses other than 303 and 304; and three other courses (which can include the Senior Paper).

The Philosophy minor: A minimum of 20 credits in philosophy, including at least two of the following courses: Philosophy 201, 202, 303, and 304.

The Senior Paper, the Senior Portfolio, the Honors Senior Thesis and Oral Examination:

1. By the end of their junior years, students who plan to take a senior paper in the following fall (including all students who plan to pursue honors) will submit a proposal for a senior paper to be approved by the department as a whole. This proposal should outline the intended project, which can be based on an outstanding course paper, and include an annotated bibliography as well as the student's choice of the professor under whose direction the student wants to write the senior paper.

2. The department will review the senior paper proposals, offer criticisms and suggestions and agree on which professor will work with which student. The senior paper will be due on the Friday before Thanksgiving break. There will be no oral examination of senior papers.

3. All students must complete a Senior Portfolio in the spring of their Senior Year. For all students, this portfolio must include a one

to three page narrative explaining the progress, insights, and impact of their philosophy major at Whitman, including how they plan to continue the practice of philosophy after they graduate. For honors candidates, this portfolio must also include the student's honors thesis. For nonhonors students, this portfolio must include the paper or pair of papers from the students' philosophy courses that best reflects their pursuit of philosophy at Whitman. These portfolios are due by the end of the first week of Spring Break (or a corresponding date for seniors completing their degree in the fall semester). For nonhonors candidates, these portfolios will be graded on a pass/fail basis. Students who fail must resubmit the portfolios and get a pass in order to be eligible to graduate. Honors candidates who fail to submit their portfolios by the required due date cannot be considered for honors.

4. During the weeks immediately following Spring Break, each student will have an hour-long oral examination. For nonhonors candidates, the examination will be conducted by two members of the department and will focus on the material in the student's portfolio, but may range to include any topics with which the student should be familiar based on their study of philosophy. For honors candidates, the oral exam will take the form of a public defense of the student's honors thesis, in which the student will very briefly explain the central claims of their thesis and then respond to questions from the philosophy faculty, other students, and the general public.

The Comprehensive Examinations:

1. Comprehensive examinations in philosophy will consist of two written and one oral examination. A list of topics for the written exams will be distributed to students in advance. Two topics from that list will appear on the first exam. Students will choose one and write an essay that discusses a variety of issues related to that topic from the perspective of at least two periods in the department's history sequence: Ancient Philosophy, Medieval Philosophy, Early Modern Philosophy, and Kant and 19th Century. The second exam will have the same form as the first except students will use at least two historical periods not considered in the first exam. In this way all four historical periods will

be covered. The third exam will be a roughly hour-long oral beginning with, but not restricted to, questions inspired by the students' senior paper.

2. The written examinations will be offered the last Friday in February. The oral examination will be scheduled at a mutually agreeable time during the same semester. The written examinations can be taken upon completion of the history of philosophy sequence through Kant, and can be retaken, if necessary, until the final semester of a major's senior year.

Distribution Credit: All four-credit courses in philosophy meet the equivalent of three periods per week. Courses will apply to the humanities distribution area, except for Philosophy 109, which will apply to the quantitative distribution area, and Philosophy 225 *Critical Race Theory*; and Philosophy 235 *Philosophy of Feminism*, that can apply for either humanities or alternative voices.

107 Critical Reasoning **4; not offered 2008-09**

Focuses on principles and standards applicable to thinking critically on any topic. Arguments and their analyses, the nature and use of evidence, fallacies both formal and informal, are included in the matters addressed in the course. Intended for first-year students and sophomores; open to juniors and seniors by consent only.

109 Symbolic Logic **4; not offered 2008-09**

An introduction to the methods of symbolic logic, including the propositional calculus, quantification theory, the logic of relations, and elementary modal logic. This course is quantitative and relies on reasoning similar to that in mathematics. *Prerequisite:* Philosophy 107 or Mathematics 125 or consent of instructor. Distribution area: quantitative analysis.

117 Problems in Philosophy **4, x**

Hanrahan

An introductory study of some of the major problems of philosophy. Among those general problems considered will be the nature of philosophy, problems of knowledge (epistemological questions concerning the origin, nature, and limits of knowledge), and the problem of a world view (metaphysical questions concerning materialism, idealism, and naturalism). Other problems will be considered as time permits. Requirements will include written assignments, a midterm, and a final. This course is intended for first-year students and sophomores; open to juniors and seniors by consent only.

119 The Examined Life

4; not offered 2008-09

Socrates famously asserted, "The unexamined life is not worth living." Do we really believe this? If so, what does it mean to practice, day-by-day, an examined life? Beyond the ancient Greeks, Montaigne took up these questions at the beginning of Modernity through writing a new kind of philosophical essay. This new kind of philosophically self-reflexive writing was extended by Emerson in his day-by-day journal; and the demands of the examined life were then further developed in the writings of such thinkers as Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Foucault. Using exemplary selections from these thinkers, we will work out the necessary and sufficient conditions of the practice of the examined life, and then experiment with different essay forms in order to work out the kind of writing that today is a necessary, if not sufficient, condition for living an examined life.

127 Ethics **4, x**

Carey, Clearfield

Consists of the careful reading and discussion of several classical texts of moral philosophy. For first-year students and sophomores; juniors by consent only; not open to seniors.

128 Social and Political Philosophy **4; not offered 2008-09**

An introductory examination of social and political questions from a philosophical perspective. For first-year students and sophomores; juniors by consent only; not open to seniors.

148 Philosophy of Religion **4; not offered 2008-09**

An introduction to some of the central arguments in the philosophy of religion, focusing on proofs for and against the existence of God and discussions of the nature of religious belief. For first-year students and sophomores. This course is open to juniors and seniors by consent only.

177 Special Topics: Contemporary Problems for Thought **4**

How is philosophy a necessary resource for responding to the most complex personal and social problems facing us today? The temptation, most especially for "pragmatic" Americans, is to see philosophy as a mildly interesting but ultimately abstract self-indulgence, and certainly not to see it as a necessary resource for, first, understanding, and then adequately addressing the most important problems we face. This course will explore the philosophical response to one such problem.

177 ST: Punishment and Responsibility **x, 4**

Clearfield

Nationwide, over two million people are now in prison, including over 2,000 at the Washington State Penitentiary here in Walla Walla, and those numbers continue to grow rapidly. Yet as a society, there is no

clear consensus regarding the goal(s) or purpose(s) of sending someone to prison. How can it be right to cause someone suffering? What kind of suffering can be justified, and under what circumstances? And what is the connection between having done wrong and being made to suffer? In this course we will critically examine some of the ultimate philosophical justifications of punishment, such as retribution, deterrence, incapacitation, and rehabilitation. We will also examine importantly related questions about personal responsibility and the conditions necessary for punishment to be appropriate. Finally, we will consider the relevance and impact of excuses and mitigating factors like age, socioeconomic status, abuse, addiction, and mental illness. Open to first- and second-year students; juniors by consent; not open to seniors. Distribution area: humanities.

201 Ancient Philosophy
4, 4 Fall: T. Davis, Spring: Carey

A close reading of selected texts from Plato and Aristotle. May be elected as Classics 201.

202 Medieval Philosophy
4, 4 Carey

A careful reading and discussion of several primary texts of major medieval philosophers. Intended primarily for (but not limited to) philosophy majors.

210 Epistemology
x, 4 Hanrahan

This course focuses critically on theories of knowledge, truth, and justification, and the issues and problems they severally raise.

220 Special Topics: Philosophy and Literature
4

We will use texts from philosophy and literature to explore specific problems.

220 ST: Philosophy and Literature: Shakespeare, Descartes, Skepticism
4, x T. Davis

An examination of the origin of modern skepticism in Shakespeare's *Othello*, *King Lear*, and *The Winter's Tale*, and Descartes' *Meditations* by way of Stanley Cavell's *Disowning Knowledge*. Distribution area: humanities.

221 Phenomenology of Religious Experience
4; not offered 2008-09

We will examine the experiential dynamics of specific religious phenomena, for example, the actions of forgiveness, of surrender in "conversion," and of "turning the other cheek." Readings will be taken from: Luke, Paul's letters, Augustine's *Confessions*, Kant's *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, William James' *Varieties of Religious Experience*, Heidegger's *The Phenomenology of Religious Life*, and essays by Levinas.

222 Education and Autonomy
4; not offered 2008-09

This course focuses on a particular issue in the philosophy of education: how to both respect and cultivate the autonomy of one's students. Drawing primarily on Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Immanuel Kant, and Maria Montessori, we will explore autonomy-based approaches to education, from raising infants through developing mature adults.

225 Critical Race Theory
4; not offered 2008-09

This course is a philosophical consideration of race and recognition, focusing specifically on the African-American experience. It seeks to guide students toward the creation of what bell hooks terms a "critical consciousness" as itself a form of critical thinking. Distribution area: humanities or alternative voices.

230 History and Philosophy of Science
4; not offered 2008-09

An historical look at the philosophical development of method and at philosophical issues in conflicts (theoretical, evidentiary, and social) in science.

235 Philosophy of Feminism
4; not offered 2008-09

This course will introduce students to some of the questions explored within the philosophy of feminism, question such as: What is it to be a woman? Are women oppressed? How do institutions of motherhood, marriage, and sex shape the lives of women? To answer these questions, we will read works by Marilyn Frye, bell hooks, Andrea Dworkin, Susan Bordo and Christina Hoff-Summers. Distribution area: humanities or alternative voices.

239 Aesthetics
4; not offered 2008-09

After developing a critical vocabulary through an examination of Hume's notion of taste, Kant's "reflective judgment," and Heidegger's reconceptualization of the work of art in "Building Dwelling Thinking," we apply this vocabulary to architecture using Karsten Harries, *The Ethical Function of Architecture*, to help us critically assess the "aesthetic" governing Whitman's Penrose Library renovation project. Then moving from the "public" to the "private," we consider the sense of "aesthetics" at work in building your own home, using as a guide Witold Rybczynski's *The Most Beautiful House in the World*. May be elected as Art History 249.

241 Environmental Aesthetics
4; not offered 2008-09

Beginning with an examination of the claim of the beautiful in Elaine Scarry's *On Beauty and Being Just*, we will turn to experiment with the perception of sculpture in space working with reflections by Kant and Heidegger and public artworks on campus. This will lead to an examination of architecture in Karsten Harries' *The Ethical Function of Architecture*, and the Japanese garden in Marc Keane's *The Art of Setting*

Stones. Beyond the opening exercises in the aesthetic perception, you will design your own home with a garden. May be elected as Art History 241.

250 Environmental Thinking

x, 4

T. Davis

This course will explore the differences between instrumental rationality and “poetic dwelling” as ways of thinking about nature. After reviewing the depiction of nature in first-year Core texts, we turn to Thoreau’s *Walden* as a carefully staged confrontation with nature experienced from out of the intersection between dwelling and writing. To further explore this relationship, we consider several late essays by Martin Heidegger in which he develops the notion of “poetic dwelling.” With this conceptual framework, we next turn to essays by such figures as Wendell Berry, Annie Dillard, and Barry Lopez, whose nature writings address the challenge of dwelling in a contemporary American context. Themes of place, identity, and technology will be emphasized in our examination of these essays. *Prerequisite*: completion of General Studies 145 and 146.

255 Environmental Ethics

x, 4

Hanrahan

Does the nonhuman world have any intrinsic value or is it valuable only because of its relation to human interests? That is, does anything besides humanity have “moral standing”? If so, what is its basis? Should we, for instance accord rights to all those creatures that are sentient? If we do, will we have gone far enough, morally speaking? What about those creatures that lack sentience? What about the environment in which all creatures, human and nonhuman, live? Does it have moral standing? In answering these questions, we will consider the works of Aldo Leopold, Peter Singer, Karen Warren, Arne Naess, and Julian Simon, among others.

270 Metaphysics

x, 4

Clearfield

In this course we will study the nature of reality. Possible topics will include existence, causation, personal identity, determinism, and the mind/body relationship.

303 Early Modern Philosophy

4, x

Hanrahan

A study of the development of western philosophy in the 17th and 18th centuries. Emphasis will be on the development of the British Empiricists and the Continental Rationalists.

304 Kant and the Nineteenth Century

x, 4

J. Davis

A study of the development of western philosophy from Kant through the beginning of the 20th century, with special emphasis on Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche, Frege, and Husserl. *Prerequisite*: Philosophy 303 or consent of instructor.

309 Heidegger

4, x

J. Davis

A close reading of Martin Heidegger’s *Being and Time*. *Prerequisite*: consent of instructor.

310 Plato’s Republic

4, x

Carey

An exploration of the entire text of the *Republic*.

322 Kant’s Moral Philosophy

4; not offered 2008-09

This course explores Kant’s moral theory and recent appropriations of that moral theory in contemporary neo-Kantian ethics. *Prerequisite*: Philosophy 127 or Philosophy 304 or consent of instructor.

330 Analytic and Linguistic Philosophy

4; not offered 2008-09

An analysis of contemporary movements in Anglo-American philosophy as it derives from the foundational work of Russell, G.E. Moore, and Wittgenstein. Also considered will be the development and demise of logical positivism as a movement, and some major problems regarding meaning, and the relation between language and world.

332 Reproduction

4, x

Hanrahan

In this class, we will be exploring the ethical and metaphysical questions associated with reproduction. So, for example, do we have a right to have a child? If we do, is there ever a situation when we should forego acting on that right? What obligations do we have to our offspring? Do those obligations change as our offspring grows? What relationship should heterosexual sex have to reproduction? Does this relationship shape when and whether two people engage in this activity? Finally, how does reproduction impact our understanding of our genders? Distribution area: humanities or alternative voices.

337 Philosophy of Mind

x, 4

Hanrahan

A study of the nature and function of mind and consciousness and their place in the world of physical stuff. Readings will include classical as well as recent and contemporary work. *Prerequisite*: consent of instructor.

338 Special Topics: Philosophers and Philosophical Movements

4

An examination of a philosopher or philosophical movement.

338 ST: Philosophy and Psychology of Language

4, x

Clearfield and Clearfield

In this course we will work toward an integrated understanding of the nature of language through an examination of both empirical research and theoretical discussions. Specific topics will include: language

acquisition, the relation between language and nonlinguistic communicative behavior, the relation between language and thought, the nature of meaning, and the relation between language and the world. *Prerequisites*: at least six credits of philosophy or six credits of psychology or consent of the instructors. Distribution area: social science or humanities. May be elected as Psychology 347.

340 Special Topics: Philosophical Problems 4

An examination of a philosophical problem.

345 Animals and Philosophy

x, 4

Hanrahan

Many people's lives are intertwined with animals. But while animals are clearly very important, few wonder about what kinds of creatures they are. Are they merely organic machines or are they conscious in some way? Do they think? Do they feel pain? Can they have beliefs? Moreover, do animals have rights that oblige us to protect them from harm? These are the questions we will be addressing in this class. *Prerequisite*: At least one other course in a related field.

400 Values

x, 4

Carey

A substantive consideration of one or more values (such as justice, happiness, or charity), based on primary sources from Western philosophy. *Prerequisite*: Philosophy 127 or 128 or consent of instructor.

408 Special Topics: Studies in American Philosophy

4

A close reading of a text from the classic American philosophical tradition.

408A ST: Emerson

x, 4

T. Davis

We will closely read several of Emerson's essays along with selections from Stanley Cavell's *Emerson's Transcendental Etudes*. *Prerequisite*: three courses in philosophy or consent of instructor.

408B ST: Thoreau

4; not offered 2008-09

We will closely read most of *Walden* along with *Civil Disobedience*, *Walking*, and Stanley Cavell's *The Senses of Walden*. *Prerequisite*: Philosophy 408A *Emerson* or consent of instructor.

410 Special Topics in Continental Philosophy

4

An examination of a text or problem from the Continental philosophical tradition.

483, 484 Independent Study

1-4, 1-4

Staff

Study of selected philosophies or philosophic problems. *Prerequisite*: consent of and arrangement

with instructor.

492 Senior Paper

4, 4

Staff

This paper is to be completed by the 11th week in the first term of the student's senior year, based on a written proposal, containing an outline and annotated bibliography, to be approved by the department of philosophy by the end of the second term of the junior year. Required of, and reserved for, senior philosophy majors.

498 Honors Thesis

4, 4

Staff

A course designed to further independent research or projects resulting in the preparation of an undergraduate honors thesis and including an oral defense of the central issues of the thesis to be taken during the second term of the student's senior year. Required of and limited to senior honors candidates in philosophy. *Prerequisites*: admission to honors candidacy; Philosophy 492.