PHILOSOPHY & WORLD RELIGIONS COURSE LOOK BOOK

Spring 2024

There's a class for that.
December/January Courses

REL 1020: RELIGIONS OF THE WORLD
asynchronous online on eLearning w/ Prof. Burnidge
Living religions with emphasis on texts, beliefs, tradition, values, and practices.
UNIFI Human Condition: Global Category

PHIL 1560: SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ETHICS
asynchronous online on eLearning with Prof. Earle
Interdisciplinary survey of ethical issues raised by recent developments in science and technology. Sample topics may include, but are not limited to, artificial intelligence, genetic engineering, big data, privacy, energy, medicine, and science itself.
UNIFI Responsibility Category
Medieval philosophy began with the people of the Abrahamic faiths turning to Greek pagan philosophy to understand and defend their religious beliefs. An early figure was Philo, a Hellenized Jew writing in the early decades of the Christian era, who drew on Plato to interpret and defend the Hebrew Bible. Another important thinker, Anselm, in the 11th century, assigned an expansive role to philosophical reasoning in his project of "faith seeking understanding." A century later Averroes wrote the Decisive Treatise to argue that the Quran urges those who can to study philosophy in order to understand God's creation. The medieval philosophers would all have been bewildered by the idea, widespread in our culture, that faith and reason are fundamentally at odds.

In this course, we will study how the medieval conversation between religious faith and philosophical reasoning was transformed over the centuries. We will begin the semester with Augustine's On Free Choice of the Will and end it with Hayy Ibn Yaqzan (Alive, Son of Awake), a philosophical tale by the Andulusian philosopher, Ibn Tufayl.

**What is the relationship between faith and reason?**

**There's a class for that.**
RELIGIONS OF THE WORLD

Living religions with emphasis on texts, beliefs, tradition, values, and practices.

There's a class for that.
Come explore the idea of the hero and the trickster by reading myths from many different cultures and looking at heroes and tricksters in today’s culture, especially in film. We’ll consider what these figures tell us about the world around us, what they reveal about the sacred and about humanity. And, we’ll consider the meaning and importance of myth, how scholars understand its role in culture and in religion, and become mythmakers ourselves, as we imagine our own stories of heroes and tricksters.

Heroes and tricksters? There’s a class for that.
Over 60% of Americans identify as Christian. What do you know about the other 40%? American Religious Diversity explores religious ideas, figures, practices, and communities beyond mainstream Christianity in the United States. As a UNIFI course, this class contributes to the United States Studies and DEI certificates.

There's a class for that.
How did a first-century Jewish peasant, executed by the Romans as a criminal in his early 30s, come to be viewed by his followers -- and by over ¼ of the world’s population today -- as the literal Son of God, savior of the world?

There's a class for that.
GREAT LIVING RELIGIONS: CHRISTIANITY

This course introduces students to a global, cultural history of Christianity. A focus of the course is understanding how Christianity has developed as a cross-cultural religion over time through Christians’ lived, religious experience.

How has Christianity changed from place to place and among different people and cultures?

There’s a class for that.
When you enter this class’s title into AI image generators, here’s what you might get. What’s going on here, and what does it have to do with being a religiously literate professional?

This course is a study of religious literacy and its associated methods and skills. Students will develop and apply religiously literate solutions to a range of professional challenges, including case studies in law, healthcare, national security, education, business, and politics. New technologies and tools accelerate changes in religious ideas and institutions, even as they increase the potential for misunderstanding and conflict. This course prepares students to address these challenges by becoming astute interpreters of religion’s impact on society, enhancing their capacity to engage thoughtfully with diverse religious dynamics in the professional world.

How can I become a religiously literate professional?

There's a class for that.
Sharpen your critical thinking skills! In this course, we use formal and informal methods to detect and avoid common errors in reasoning.

Need Logic?
There's a class for that.
JUSTICE & THE GOOD LIFE

What makes a society just or unjust?

What does it mean to lead a happy and satisfying life?

What principles and virtues should guide how to do good in our communities and lead meaningful lives?

There's a class for that.
Marta (they/them) has just learned that their Aunt Beth has passed away unexpectedly. Marta, a sophomore at the University of Northern Iowa, is in a car with their Uncle Denny near Wrigley Field following a Chicago Cubs game when they get the news.

Denny, who is driving, has a heart condition and has been counseled to avoid becoming alarmed. Marta’s family members are advising them not to tell Denny the news during their drive back to Denny and Beth’s home, where Denny’s soothing sister, Jenna, can break the news in the best possible way.

Would it be morally appropriate for Marta to withhold the truth from Denny as their family suggests?

This semester, students will draw from competing ethical theories (e.g. deontology, utilitarianism, virtue ethics, care ethics) to address this scenario.

What should you do?
There's a class for that.
POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Who should be in charge?

What should we do if we disagree with our leader?

Are magic swords a legitimate source of executive power?

Join Dr. Preston on his quest to round up all of the interesting answers to the question, "Who should be in charge, and why?" and explore, analyze, and critique the works of Plato, Aristotle, Hobbes, Locke, Rawls, and more!

There's a class for that.
What is it for our words to mean something?
Must we understand a language in order to think?
Do the languages we speak shape our view of the world?
Could there be a language that’s completely private
- as many philosophers have believed?
Are there some things that can’t be expressed in language?

There’s a class for that.

"Ludwig Wittgenstein was one of the most important and influential philosophers in the past 100 years, and whose thought is very much alive today."
We will explore ethical issues raised by developments in science and technology (both recent and historical). Prof. Hesse’s class emphasizes the science behind climate change, recent developments in information technology, and the question of whether the modern industrial way of life is sustainable. Readings to include Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* and George Orwell’s *1984*, with a case study in the mass surveillance and detention of Uyghur Muslims in China.

*There's a class for that.*
What makes a being a “person?”
Is it ever ok to “pull the plug?”

Is it ever ok to lie to a patient?

How much do we “defer” to parent’s religious beliefs, particularly if it means that their child may die?

Is it ethical for a provider (doctor, pharmacist...) to refuse an otherwise legal treatment on the basis of that provider’s moral beliefs?

There's a class for that.
Where is the line between loyalty to one’s company and obligations to report wrongdoing? Can corporations have goals beyond profit maximization? Do we have obligations to be charitable with our money and time? Is capitalism compatible with environmental sustainability? Do we “vote with our wallets” when we make purchases? What principles justify various rights: collective bargaining, intellectual property, equal opportunity?

These are among the most pressing questions of our time, affect each of our lives, and will be the focus of our course.

How do ethical considerations factor into your prospective profession?

There’s a class for that.