

Department of Philosophy and Religion

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Mission Statement

The department offers a combined major in philosophy and religion. Students may choose one of four concentrations: either philosophy, religion, philosophy with an interdisciplinary focus or religion with an interdisciplinary focus. Whether concentrating in philosophy or religion, students in the department acquire the following fundamental skills and knowledge: the ability to think critically and rigorously with increased capabilities for problem solving and analysis of arguments; thorough familiarity with the literature, major figures, issues and phenomena of the discipline and the ability to express themselves clearly, soundly and persuasively in oral and written form. These skill areas are the foundation and substance of a major in philosophy and religion. On the basis of this training, students should be prepared to express their own creative thought in a disciplined and effective manner.

Goals

Philosophy Program

Students completing a major with a concentration in philosophy are expected to know the major movements, problems, writings, concepts and terms in the history of Western philosophy. The program concentrates on major figures such as Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Locke, Berkeley, Hume and Kant; on problems arising in contemporary movements such as analytic philosophy, existentialism and American philosophy and on the major subdivisions of philosophy, including logic, ethics, aesthetics, philosophy and law, philosophy of science and philosophy of religion. All students will take PHIL 475 as a capstone course. In the capstone course, students will give an oral presentation of a term paper, receive criticism from faculty and students and then formally write the paper and submit it for use in assessment of the major.

Religion Program

The study of religion by its nature includes different disciplinary approaches and critical methodologies. Students completing a major with a concentration in religion will gain experience in these approaches and will improve in the following skills and competencies:

- researching and synthesizing complex information
- thinking critically, examining claims for strengths and weakness, assessing different perspectives on particular questions, and formulating persuasive arguments
- presenting research and arguments effectively in writing and public speaking

- competence in the major religious traditions of the world (Hinduism; Buddhism; Judaism; Christianity; Islam) and their expression in cultural and social practices
- specialized competence in particular topic areas in the study of religion (e.g. ethics; biblical studies; religious thought and theology)
- competence in the comparative and multi-disciplinary analytical methods used in the academic study of religion
- ability to make connections between religion and other areas of knowledge, such as literature, politics, history, ethics, and the arts
- ability to assess the role of religion in contemporary social and political contexts, American and global

All students who concentrate in religion take a 400 level capstone seminar during their senior year that will provide them extensive opportunity for research, critical and creative thought, and oral and written expression.

Career Opportunities and Marketable Skills

Many of the department's majors enter graduate school in philosophy or religion, law school or seminary. Alternatively, a departmental major graduating with a concentration in religion might move directly into work connected with religious service, into the human services fields or into teaching. A concentration in philosophy leads most directly into teaching or law school.

A student's opportunities are by no means limited to these more obvious options, however. While there is no direct path from philosophy and religion to many specific jobs, students who have majored in philosophy and religion successfully find satisfying employment. Employers seek many of the capacities which the study of philosophy and religion develops such as:

- problem solving
- effective communication in speaking and writing
- organization and analysis of ideas and issues
- assessment of the pros and cons of arguments and issues
- reduction of complex information to essential points
- persuasion

These capabilities represent transferable skills useful in almost every work environment. Many students of philosophy and religion ultimately find careers in business or industry, in government or public service, in law, human services and communications. Students should work with the office of Career and Academic Planning for help in finding suitable employment.

Preparation for Law School

Students who plan to attend law school should seriously consider philosophy as an undergraduate major. Philosophy majors have historically scored very well on the Law School Admission Test. Philosophy courses emphasize the kinds of skills that prepare students for the LSAT and the law school curriculum: reading, comprehending and analyzing complex texts; organizing and synthesizing information and drawing reasonable inferences from it; analyzing and evaluating the reasoning and arguments of others and researching and writing essays and papers. Law schools recommend that students choose an undergraduate major that challenges them and provides them with an understanding of what shapes human experience. Philosophy does an outstanding job on both counts. The requirements of the major leave students plenty of opportunity to acquire a broad education by exploring other areas. For more information on philosophy as a pre-law major, contact Dr. Thomas Adajian by phone at (540) 568-6546 or by e-mail at adajiatr@jmu.edu.

Preparation for Seminary

The pre-seminary adviser will help majors and minors design undergraduate programs that will prepare them for further study in theological seminaries and university divinity schools. Academic counseling of students takes place within guidelines provided by the American Association of Theological Schools. The department offers rich opportunities for the study of the history, content and interpretation of the Bible; historical and modern theology; particular religious traditions and cross-cultural topics in religious studies. Class assignments require students to think critically about a variety of theological and ethical issues; to read original, classical expressions of religious thought and to become knowledgeable about specialized terms and the major spiritual and intellectual interpreters of the Hebrew and Christian traditions.

Students are encouraged to visit various seminaries and the department welcomes seminary representatives to the campus to discuss the possibilities for further theological education with students. Interested students may receive academic credit for practical supervised fieldwork with social agencies and churches in order to help them find the particular forms of ministry (pastoral, campus, youth, missions, social, counseling) for which they are best suited. Qualified students are also encouraged to undertake independent study and write an honors thesis in their junior and senior years. For more information on pre-seminary study, contact Dr. Iain S. Maclean by phone at (540) 568-7059 or by e-mail at macleaix@jmu.edu.

Co-curricular Activities and Organizations

A student-run Society of Philosophy and Religion, a philosophy honor society (Phi Sigma Tau) and a religion honor society (Theta Alpha Kappa) provide excellent opportunities for fellowship and student participation in the intellectual and social activities of the department.

Degree and Major Requirements

Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy and Religion

Degree Requirements

Required Courses	Credit Hours
General Education ¹	41
Foreign Language classes (intermediate level required) ²	0-14
Philosophy course (in addition to General Education courses)	3
University electives	26-43
Major requirements (listed below)	33-36
	<hr/> 120

¹ The General Education program contains a set of requirements each student must fulfill. The number of credit hours necessary to fulfill these requirements may vary.

² The foreign language requirement may be satisfied by successful completion of the second semester of the intermediate level of the student's chosen language (typically 232) or by placing out of that language through the Department of Foreign Language's placement test.

Major Requirements

Philosophy Concentration

Core Courses	Credit Hours
PHIL 250. Introduction to Symbolic Logic	3
PHIL 330. Moral Theory	3
PHIL 340. Ancient Greek Philosophy	3
PHIL 341. Modern Philosophy	3
PHIL 475. Seminar in Philosophy ¹	3
Any religion course that is not cross listed	3
Electives in philosophy (nine credits must be at the 300 level or above) ²	15
	<hr/> 33

¹ This course fulfills the College of Arts and Letters writing-intensive requirement for the major.

² If the student takes *GP*PHIL 101 as part of Cluster 2 in the General Education program it can double count as one course of this elective section. *GP*PHIL 120 cannot be used as an elective.

Interdisciplinary Philosophy Concentration

This option is designed for students who want to concentrate in philosophy but also apply philosophical ideas to work in other departments. Part of the requirements for this concentration is a cognate of 12 credit hours from a different but related discipline.

Core Courses	Credit Hours
PHIL 250. Introduction to Symbolic Logic	3
PHIL 330. Moral Theory	3
PHIL 340. Ancient Greek Philosophy	3
PHIL 341. Modern Philosophy	3
PHIL 475. Seminar in Philosophy ¹	3
Additional philosophy courses chosen in conference with the adviser (six credits must be at the 300 level or above) ²	9
Cognate of four courses from one or more disciplinary areas outside of philosophy	12
	<hr/> 36

¹ This course fulfills the College of Arts and Letters writing-intensive requirement for the major.

² If the student takes *GP*PHIL 101 as part of Cluster 2 in the General Education program it can double count as one course of this elective section. *GP*PHIL 120 cannot be used as an elective.

Students with an interdisciplinary concentration in philosophy are not required to take a course in religion.

Religion Concentration

Core Requirements	Credit Hours
<i>GREL</i> 101. Religions of the World	3
One philosophy course (<i>GP</i> PHIL 101. Introduction to Philosophy recommended; cross-listed courses do not satisfy this requirement)	3
One course in western religious traditions	3
One course in eastern religious traditions	3

One of the following:	3
REL 218. Philosophy of Religion	
REL 270. Religious Ethics	
REL 313. Hindu Ethics	
REL/SOCI 322. Sociology of Religion	
REL 360. History of Western Religious Thought	
PHIL 330. Moral Theory	
Capstone (choose one of the following):	3
REL 420. Cross-Cultural Philosophy of Religion	
REL 450. Religion and Society	
REL 460. Topics in Ancient Jewish and Early Christian Literature	
REL 475. Inter-Religious Dialogue	
Electives (see description below)	15
	33

Electives

The electives requirement allows students to design a course of studies that develop their special interests beyond the core requirements for the major and that advances their professional goals. The three options of specialization are: Western Traditions, Eastern Traditions and Comparative Studies (electives selected from any course in the religion program). Thus a student may focus upon a particular religious tradition or configuration of traditions (for example, Hinduism and Buddhism; Islam and Judaism) or upon a particular topic area (for example, biblical studies, ethics or religious thought), or a student may maximize breadth by choosing any five courses of interest. Religious studies majors are encouraged to consult their adviser to ensure that their course selections correspond to a coherently designed program of specialization.

Courses

Eastern Traditions

- REL 310. Hindu Traditions
- REL 312. Religions of East Asia
- REL 313. Hindu Ethics
- REL 314. Gandhi, Nonviolent and Global Transformation
- REL 316. Topics in Hinduism
- REL 317. Exploring Gandhian Philosophy of Nonviolence
- REL 318. Exploring Contemporary India
- REL/PHIL 385. Buddhist Thought

Western Traditions

- REL/HEBR 131-132. Elementary Biblical Hebrew
- REL/HEBR 231-232. Intermediate Biblical Hebrew
- REL 201. Introduction to Hebrew Bible/Old Testament
- REL 202. Introduction to New Testament
- REL 240. Jesus and the Moral Life
- REL 305. Islamic Religious Traditions
- REL 320. Judaism
- REL 325. Catholicism in the Modern World
- REL 330. African and African-American Religion
- REL 342. Historical Jesus and the Roman Imperial World
- REL 344. Christianity in the Roman Empire
- REL 346. Religions of Greece and Rome
- REL 360. History of Western Religious Thought
- REL/PHIL 375. The 19th Century: Age of Ideology
- REL 380. Contemporary Theologies
- REL 450. Religion and Society
- REL 460. Topics in Ancient Jewish and Early Christian Literature

Comparative and Issues Oriented Courses

- GHUM 102. God, Meaning and Morality
- REL 200. Exploring Religion
- REL/PHIL 218. Philosophy of Religion

- REL 220. Religion: Conflict and Peace
- REL 270. Religious Ethics
- REL 280. Religion and Science
- REL 315. Women and Religion
- REL/SOCI 322. Sociology of Religion
- REL 370. Mysticism
- REL 420. Cross-Cultural Philosophy of Religion
- REL 475. Inter-Religious Dialogue
- REL 490. Directed Studies in Religion

Interdisciplinary Religion Concentration

This option is designed for students who want to concentrate in religion but also integrate their work in religion with work in another, complementary disciplinary area. A student electing this option will fulfill the requirements for the regular concentration in religion, with one change: nine credits from one or more disciplinary areas outside of religion (must be chosen in consultation with the adviser) will substitute for six of the religion electives credits required for the concentration in religion. Accordingly, the total required elective credits for the interdisciplinary concentration will be 18 (nine religion elective credits, nine interdisciplinary elective credits), giving a total of 36 credit hours to complete the program.

Core Requirements	Credit Hours
GREL 101. Religions of the World	3
One philosophy course (<i>GP</i> PHIL 101. Introduction to Philosophy recommended; cross-listed courses do not satisfy this requirement)	3
One course in western religious traditions	3
One course in eastern religious traditions	3
One of the following:	3
REL 218. Philosophy of Religion	
REL 270. Religious Ethics	
REL 313. Hindu Ethics	
REL/SOCI 322. Sociology of Religion	
REL 360. History of Western Religious Thought	
PHIL 330. Moral Theory	
Capstone (choose one of the following):	3
REL 420. Cross-Cultural Philosophy of Religion	
REL 450. Religion and Society	
REL 460. Topics in Ancient Jewish and Early Christian Literature	
REL 475. Inter-Religious Dialogue	
Electives	18
	36

Electives

These elective requirements allow students to design a course of studies that permits integration of their interdisciplinary interests with additional course selections in religion. The three options for specialization are western traditions, eastern traditions and comparative studies (electives selected from any courses in the religion program). Thus a student may focus upon a particular religious tradition or configuration of traditions (for example, Hinduism and Buddhism; Islam and Judaism) or upon a particular topic area (for example, biblical studies, ethics or religious thought), or a student may maximize breadth by choosing any six courses of interest. Religious studies majors are encouraged to consult with their adviser for approval of the interdisciplinary course selection and to ensure that course selections correspond to a coherently designed program of specialization.

Recommended Schedule for Majors

The following outline is a sample four year program. The actual courses and sequence a student takes may vary.

	Credit Hours
First Year	
Introductory courses in major	6
Foreign language courses ¹	6-8
General Education courses ¹	6-18
	30
Second Year	
Required courses in major	6
Choose from the following:	6
Foreign language courses	
Electives	
General Education courses	18
	30
Third Year	
Requirements and electives in philosophy or religion	12
Electives (may be outside of major)	12
General Education courses	6
	30
Fourth Year	
Requirements and electives in philosophy or religion	12
Electives (may be outside of major)	18
	30

¹ Students are advised to adjust General Education load to foreign language load to achieve 30 hours total.

Minor Requirements

Philosophy Minor

Courses	Credit Hours
<i>GP</i> PHIL 101. Introduction to Philosophy	3
Choose two of the following:	6
PHIL 340. Ancient Greek Philosophy	
PHIL 341. Modern Philosophy	
PHIL 342. Medieval Philosophy	
PHIL 375. 19th Century Philosophy and Theology	
Three electives, at least two of which must be above PHIL 300 ¹	9
	18

¹ The department strongly recommends that students elect at least one 400-level course. *GP*PHIL 120 cannot be used as an elective.

Religion Minor

Foundational Courses	Credit Hours
<i>GREL</i> 101. Religions of the World	3
Choose one course in each of the three subject areas: (eastern, western, comparative and issues)	9
Choose two electives, one of which must be at the 300 or 400 level, from the three subject areas	6
	18