
Philosophy and Religion

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[Print Version of Catalog](#) ■

Department of Philosophy and Religion

Mission Statement

The department offers a combined major in philosophy and religion. Students may choose one of four concentrations: either philosophy (B.A. or B.S.), religion (B.A. only), interdisciplinary philosophy (B.A. or B.S.) or interdisciplinary religion (B.A. only). 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, metaphysics, epistemology, aesthetics, philosophy and law, philosophy of science and philosophy of religion.

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:

- Mastery of the key concepts of global religious traditions (e.g., Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam), and the historical and contemporary expressions of these religions in their social, political and cultural contexts.
- Specialized knowledge in at least one religious tradition or specialized area of comparative and issues-oriented study, and a broad competence in at least two others.
- Use of this knowledge to reflect upon problems in interpreting religious texts.
- Skill in the comparative and multi-disciplinary analytical methods used in the academic study of religion.
- Ability to articulate research and arguments effectively orally and in writing.
- Skill in evaluating different cultural perspectives on particular questions and issues, formulating sound arguments and examining claims for strengths and weaknesses.

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 that 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 most work environments. Many students of philosophy and religion find careers in business or industry, in government or public service and 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

Coordinator: [Dr. William Hawk, hawkwj@jmu.edu](mailto:hawkwj@jmu.edu)

Phone: (540) 568-4088

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.

Preparation for Seminary

Coordinator: [Dr. Iain Maclean, macleaix@jmu.edu](mailto:macleaix@jmu.edu)

Phone: (540) 568-7059

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 and 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 field work 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 an independent study and write an honors thesis in their junior and senior years.

Co-curricular Activities and Organizations

A student-led Society of Philosophy and Religion, a philosophy honor society ([Phi Sigma Tau](#)), a religion honor society ([Theta Alpha Kappa](#)) and the Religion Majors Club 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
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	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
Choose one History of Philosophy courses ¹	3

[PHIL 342](#). Medieval
 Philosophy
[PHIL 344](#). Existentialism
[PHIL 370](#). American
 Philosophy
[PHIL/REL](#)
[375](#). Nineteenth Century
 Philosophy and Theology
[PHIL/REL](#)
[377](#). Hermeneutics
[PHIL 430](#). Analytic
 Philosophy
[PHIL 466](#). Kant
[PHIL](#)
[468](#). Phenomenology
 Choose one 3
 Metaphysics/
 Epistemology courses²
[PHIL/REL](#)
[218](#). Philosophy of
 Religion
[PHIL 300](#). Knowledge
 and Belief
[PHIL 311](#). Metaphysics
[PHIL 392](#). Philosophy of
 Mind
[PHIL 394](#). Self and
 Identity
[PHIL 396](#). Philosophy of
 Physics
[PHIL 397](#). Philosophy of
 Space and Time
[PHIL 398](#). Philosophy of
 Quantum Theory
[PHIL 410](#). Philosophy of
 Science
[PHIL 420](#). Philosophy of
 Language
 Philosophy electives 15
 (nine credits at the 300
 level or above)³

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1 Depending on the manner in which they are taught, the following topics classes may be counted toward the history requirement if they are approved by petition to the academic unit head: [PHIL 390](#), [PHIL 391](#), [PHIL 460](#), [PHIL 465](#), [PHIL 470](#) and [PHIL 475](#).

2 Depending on the manner in which they are taught, the following topics classes may be counted toward the metaphysics/epistemology requirement if they are approved by petition to the academic unit head: [PHIL 390](#), [PHIL 391](#) and [PHIL 475](#).

3 If the student takes [PHIL 101](#) as part of Cluster Two in the [General Education](#) program it can double count as one course of this elective section. Neither [PHIL 120](#) nor [PHIL 150](#) can 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 nine 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
Choose one of the following Metaphysics/Epistemology courses ¹ : REL/PHIL 218 . Philosophy of Religion	3
PHIL 300 . Knowledge and Belief	
PHIL 311 . Metaphysics	
PHIL 392 . Philosophy of Mind	
PHIL 394 . Self and Identity	
PHIL 396 . Philosophy of Physics	
PHIL 397 . Philosophy of Space and Time	
PHIL 398 . Philosophy of Quantum Theory	
PHIL 410 . Philosophy of Science	
PHIL 420 . Philosophy of Language	
Philosophy electives (nine credits at the 300 level or above) ²	12
Cognate of three courses from one or more disciplinary areas outside of philosophy	9
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1 Depending on the manner in which they are taught, the following topics classes may be counted toward the metaphysics/epistemology requirement if they are approved by petition to the academic unit head: [PHIL 390](#), [PHIL 391](#) and [PHIL 475](#).

2 If the student takes [PHIL 101](#) as part of Cluster Two in the General Education program it can double count as one course of this elective section. Neither [PHIL 120](#) nor [PHIL 150](#) can be used as an elective.

Religion Concentration

Core Requirements Credit Hours

[REL 101](#). Religions of the World 3

[REL 200](#). Exploring Religion 3

Capstone (choose one of 3 the following):

[REL 410](#). Dharma/Adharma: Hindu Ethical Reasoning

[REL 440](#). Topics in Religion in America

[REL 460](#). Topics in Ancient Jewish and Early Christian Literature

[REL 475](#). Inter-Religious Dialogue

Track Requirements 12
Choose 4 courses from one track. This will be your home track.

Breadth Requirements 12
Choose 4 additional courses: one from each of the other tracks and one more from any of the three other tracks. None of these can be cross-listed in your home track.

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Courses

Track 1: Eastern Traditions

[HUM 252](#). Cross Cultural Perspectives (when topic is Gandhi, Non-violence and Global Transformation)

[REL 308](#). Islam in South Asia

[REL 310](#). Hindu Traditions

[REL 312](#). Religions of East Asia

[REL 314](#). Gandhi

[REL 316](#). Topics in Hinduism
[REL 317](#). Introduction to Daoism
[REL 319](#). Introduction to Confucianism
[REL/PHIL 385](#). Buddhist Thought
[REL 386](#). Topics in Buddhist Studies
[REL 410](#). Dharma/Adharma: Hindu Ethical Reasoning

Track 2: Western Traditions

[HUM 252](#). Global Cultures (when topic is Islamic Civilization)
[REL 201](#). Introduction to Hebrew Bible/Old Testament
[REL 202](#). Jesus and the Beginnings of Christianity
[REL 210](#). Religion in America
[REL 240](#). Jesus and the Moral Life
[REL 270](#). Western Religious Ethics
[REL 305](#). Islamic Religious Traditions
[REL 306](#). Women and Gender in Islam
[REL 308](#). Islam in South Asia
[REL 309](#). Jihad in Islamic Tradition
[REL 320](#). Judaism
[REL 325](#). Catholicism in the Modern World
[REL 330](#). Religions of Africa and the African Diaspora
[REL 332](#). Born Again Religion
[REL 336](#). African-American Religion
[REL 340](#). Introduction to Christianity
[REL 342](#). The Historical Jesus Quest
[REL 343](#). Paul and the Origins of Christianity
[REL 348](#). Christianity in Global Context
[REL 350](#). Islamic Law and Society
[REL 360](#). History of Christian Thought
[REL/HIST 362](#). Introduction to U.S. Religious History
[REL/PHIL 375](#). The 19th Century: Age of Ideology
[REL 380](#). Contemporary Theologies
[REL 440](#). Topics in Religion in America
[REL 460](#). Topics in Ancient Jewish and Early Christian Literature

Track 3: Biblical Studies and Theology

[REL 102](#). God, Meaning and Morality
[REL 201](#). Introduction to Hebrew Bible/Old Testament
[REL 202](#). Jesus and the Beginnings of Christianity
[REL/PHIL 218](#). Philosophy of Religion
[REL 270](#). Western Religious Ethics
[REL 325](#). Catholicism in the Modern World
[REL 340](#). Introduction to Christianity
[REL 341](#). Early Christian Gospels: Origins, History, and Conflict
[REL 342](#). The Historical Jesus Quest

[REL 343](#). Paul and the Origins of Christianity
[REL 360](#). History of Christian Thought
[REL/PHIL 375](#). The 19th Century: Age of Ideology
[REL/PHIL 377](#). Hermeneutics
[REL 380](#). Contemporary Theologies
[REL 460](#). Topics in Ancient Jewish and Early
 Christian Literature
[REL 475](#). Inter-Religious Dialogue

Track 4: Religion and Society

[HUM 252](#). Gandhi, Non-violence and Global
 Transformation
[REL 210](#). Religion in America
[REL 280](#). Religion and Science
[REL 303](#). Lived Religion: Ritual Practice and
 Ethnographic Method
[REL 306](#). Women and Gender in Islam
[REL 315](#). Women and Religion
[REL/SOCI 322](#). Sociology of Religion
[REL 330](#). Religions of Africa and the African
 Diaspora
[REL 332](#). Born Again Religion
[REL 334](#). New Religious Movements
[REL 336](#). African-American Religion
[REL 348](#). Christianity in Global Context
[REL/IA 363](#). Apocalypticism, Religious Terrorism
 and Peace
[REL 370](#). Mysticism
[REL 450](#). Religion and Society
[REL 475](#). Inter-Religious Dialogue

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
REL 101 . Religions of the World	3
REL 200 . Exploring Religion	3
Capstone (choose one of the following courses):	3

REL 410 . Dharma/ Adharma: Hindu Ethical Reasoning	
REL 440 . Topics in Religion in America	
REL 460 . Topics in Ancient Jewish and Early Christian Literature	
REL 475 . Inter-Religious Dialogue	
Track Requirements Choose 4 courses from one track. This will be your home track.	12
Breadth Requirements Choose two additional courses outside of your home track. These two courses cannot be from the same track and neither can they be cross-listed with a course in your home track.	6
Interdisciplinary Requirements Choose three courses from other disciplines (in consultation with your adviser).	9
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Bachelor of Science in Philosophy

Degree Requirements

Required Courses	Credit Hours
General Education ¹	41
Quantitative requirement (in addition to General Education courses)	3
Scientific literacy requirement (in addition to General Education courses)	3-4
Major in Philosophy concentration	33
Electives	40-41
<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.

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
Choose one History of Philosophy courses ¹	3
PHIL 342 . Medieval Philosophy	
PHIL 344 . Existentialism	
PHIL 370 . American Philosophy	
PHIL/REL 375 . Nineteenth Century Philosophy and Theology	
PHIL/REL 377 . Hermeneutics	
PHIL 430 . Analytic Philosophy	
PHIL 466 . Kant	
PHIL 468 . Phenomenology	
Choose one Metaphysics/Epistemology courses ²	3
PHIL/REL 218 . Philosophy of Religion	
PHIL 300 . Knowledge and Belief	
PHIL 311 . Metaphysics	
PHIL 392 . Philosophy of Mind	
PHIL 394 . Self and Identity	
PHIL 396 . Philosophy of Physics	
PHIL 397 . Philosophy of Space and Time	
PHIL 398 . Philosophy of Quantum Theory	

PHIL 410 . Philosophy of Science	
PHIL 420 . Philosophy of Language	
Philosophy electives (nine credits must be at the 300 level or above) ³	15
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	33

1 Depending on the manner in which they are taught, the following topics classes may be counted toward the history requirement if they are approved by petition to the academic unit head: [PHIL 390](#), [PHIL 391](#), [PHIL 460](#), [PHIL 465](#), [PHIL 470](#) and [PHIL 475](#).

2 Depending on the manner in which they are taught, the following topics classes may be counted toward the metaphysics/epistemology requirement if they are approved by petition to the academic unit head: [PHIL 390](#), [PHIL 391](#) and [PHIL 475](#).

3 If the student takes [PHIL 101](#) as part of Cluster Two in the [General Education](#) program it can double count as one course of this elective section. Neither [PHIL 120](#) nor [PHIL 150](#) can 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 nine 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
Choose one Metaphysics/ Epistemology courses: ¹	3
REL/PHIL 218 . Philosophy of Religion	
PHIL 300 . Knowledge and Belief	
PHIL 311 . Metaphysics	
PHIL 392 . Philosophy of Mind	
PHIL 394 . Self and Identity	
PHIL 396 . Philosophy of Physics	

PHIL 397 . Philosophy of Space and Time	
PHIL 398 . Philosophy of Quantum Theory	
PHIL 410 . Philosophy of Science	
PHIL 420 . Philosophy of Language	
Philosophy electives (nine credits must be at the 300 level or above) ²	12
Cognate of three courses from one or more disciplinary areas outside of philosophy	9
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1 Depending on the manner in which they are taught, the following topics classes may be counted toward the metaphysics/epistemology requirement if they are approved by petition to the academic unit head: [PHIL 390](#), [PHIL 391](#) and [PHIL 475](#).

2 If the student takes [PHIL 101](#) as part of Cluster Two in the [General Education](#) program it can double count as one course of this elective section. Neither [PHIL 120](#) nor [PHIL 150](#) can be used as an elective.

Recommended Schedule for Majors

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

First Year	Credit Hours
Introductory courses in major	6
B.A. or B.S. Requirements	6-8
General Education courses ¹	6-18
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Second Year	Credit Hours
Required courses in major	6
B.A. or B.S. Requirements or Electives	6
General Education courses	18
<hr/>	30

Third Year	Credit Hours
Requirements and electives in philosophy or religion	12
Electives (may be outside of major)	12
General Education courses	6
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1 Students should adjust [General Education](#) and foreign language load to achieve 30 hours total.

Minor Requirements

Christian Studies

This minor is designed to provide students with a systematic and comprehensive understanding of the nature and history of Christianity as a religion of global significance. Students begin their studies by exploring the history, beliefs and practices of diverse Christian traditions, from the ancient to the modern. Additional courses address the complex relationship between Christianity and various facets of the contemporary world, such as politics, culture, religious pluralism, terrorism and race.

Required Courses	Credit Hours
REL 202 . Jesus and the Beginnings of Christianity	3
REL 340 . Introduction to Christianity	3
REL 348 . Christianity in Global Context	3
Choose three courses from the following, at least two of which must be at the 300- or 400- level.	9
REL 201 . Introduction to Hebrew Bible/Old Testament	
REL 218 . Philosophy of Religion	
REL 240 . Jesus and the Moral Life	
REL 270 . Religious Ethics	
REL 280 . Religion and Science	
REL 325 . Catholicism in the Modern World	

[REL 332](#). Born Again
Religion
[REL 336](#). African-
American Religion
[REL 360](#). History of
Christian Thought
[REL](#)
[363](#). Apocalypticism,
Religious Terrorism and
Peace
[REL 380](#). Contemporary
Theologies
[REL 450](#). Religion and
Society
[REL 460](#). Topics in
Ancient Jewish and Early
Christian Literature

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Ethics

The 18 hour minor in ethics offers students an opportunity for deeper study into respected ethical thinkers and how ethical theory from philosophy and religion can be used to understand our individual and social lives. Students are to choose six courses total from either of the lists below. At least one of the six must be from the philosophy list, and at least one of the six must be from the religion list. Philosophy or religion majors may double count two courses (6 credits) from their major toward the minor.

Philosophy

[PHIL 262](#): Problems in Applied Ethics
[PHIL 330](#). Moral Theory
[PHIL 335](#). The Individual, the State, and Justice
[PHIL/WGS 350](#). The Philosophy of Feminism
[PHIL 367](#). Topics in Philosophy of Law
[PHIL 440](#). Advanced Moral Philosophy

Religion

[REL 240](#). Jesus and the Moral Life
[REL 270](#). Religious Ethics
[REL 306](#). Women and Gender in Islam
[REL 309](#). Jihad
[REL 315](#). Women and Religion
[REL 350](#). Islamic Law and Society
[REL/IA 363](#). Apocalypticism, Religious Terrorism
and Peace
[REL 410](#). Dharma/ Adharma: Hindu Ethical
Reasoning
[REL 450](#). Religion and Society

Other courses with a sufficiently ethical focus from philosophy, religion, or another department may be able to count towards the minor with the approval of the ethics minor coordinator.

Global Religion and Global Issues

The minor is intended for students who want to better understand the role played by religion in contemporary global events: from religious terrorism to nonviolence, from the suppression of women to the advocacy of civil rights. In this minor, students will study major global religions and their impact on real-world social and political issues. The minor may be of particular interest to students in the social sciences but all students with an interest in the subject are welcome.

Required Courses	Credit Hours
REL 101 . Religions of the World	3
One Global Religious Traditions course	3
One Religion and Social/Political Engagement course	3
Three electives chosen from either group	9
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Global Religious Traditions

Global Religious Traditions

- [REL 305](#). Islamic Religious Traditions
- [REL 308](#). Islam in South Asia
- [REL 310](#). Hindu Traditions
- [REL 312](#). Religions of East Asia
- [REL 320](#). Judaism
- [REL 330](#). Religions of Africa and the African Diaspora
- [REL 348](#). Global Christianity
- [REL 385](#). Buddhist Thought

Religion and Social/Political Engagement

Religion and Social/Political Engagement

- [REL 306](#). Women and Gender in Islam
- [REL 314](#). Gandhi
- [REL 315](#). Women and Religion
- [REL 350](#). Islamic Law and Society
- [REL/IA 363](#). Apocalypticism, Religious Terrorism and Peace
- [REL 380](#). Contemporary Theologies
- [REL 450](#). Religion and Society
- [REL 475](#). Inter-Religious Dialogue

Philosophy

Required Courses	Credit Hours
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
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	18

1 Neither [PHIL 120](#) nor [PHIL 150](#) can be used as electives.

Religious Studies

Foundational Courses	Credit Hours
REL 101 . Religions of the World	3
Choose one course in each track (At least one of these must be 300 or 400 level)	12
Choose one elective	3
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	18