
Philosophy (major and minor)

Department of Philosophy: W. Christopher Stewart, chair and Associate Dean

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Major: (32 hours)

History of Philosophy	12
At least three of the following:	
PHIL 243 Ancient Philosophy	4
PHIL 244 Medieval Philosophy	4
PHIL 245 Early Modern Philosophy	4
PHIL 246 Late Modern & Contemporary Philosophy	4
PHIL 222 Logic & Critical Thinking	4
Philosophy Electives (above 220) Eight hours must be at the 400-level	14
Senior Capstone: Philosophy Colloquium	2
Total:	32

General Information:

Houghton philosophy majors are free to explore a wide range of questions the answers to which strengthen the foundation of a person's worldview and assist him or her to think through the relationships of all branches of knowledge and practice to the Christian faith. Work within other disciplines rests on philosophical commitments regarding the ways we know, the nature of reality, and basic human values (which is one reason all Houghton students are required to take at least one course in philosophy). Philosophy courses at Houghton connect directly or indirectly with many other areas, such as law, medicine, the arts, theology, business, and even the sciences. This, together with the fact that the study of philosophy significantly enhances basic intellectual skills (such as critical thinking, conceptual analysis, reading comprehension, and writing), makes the study of philosophy excellent pre-professional training, whether you're thinking of a pursuing work in church-related ministry (pre-seminary), law, education (elementary, secondary, or college), missions, linguistics/translation, medicine, business, finance, counseling, government service, public administration, journalism, library science, relief work, or just about any other field of work. The philosophy major at Houghton is compact and flexible, making it a good choice as a standalone or a second major. The philosophy minor is also a great complement to work in other fields. In addition to courses on the history of ideas (from Plato to Postmodernism), logic and critical thinking, Houghton offers "bridge courses" that directly link the study of philosophy to other disciplines, such as Philosophy of Law, Introduction to Political Thought, Medical Ethics, History and Philosophy of Science, Aesthetics, and Reason and Religious Belief. A little additional coursework in areas outside philosophy, such as business, psychology or sociology, opens up the possibility of internships in a wide variety of settings.

Integrative Philosophy Major: (24 hours in philosophy combined with 16 hours in allied field) *Pending*

Philosophy requirements:	
History of Philosophy	8
At least two of the following:	
PHIL 243 Ancient Philosophy	4
PHIL 244 Medieval Philosophy	4
PHIL 245 Early Modern Philosophy	4
PHIL 246 Late Modern & Contemporary Philosophy	4
Philosophy Electives	14
Senior Capstone: Philosophy Colloquium	2
Total:	24

Allied Discipline requirements: 16 hours in allied field. Pre-approved fields are: Business Administration, Communication, Biblical Studies, Theology, Art, politics, Psychology, Literature, Writing, and Science (Pre-Med emphasis). Check with any philosophy faculty on specific requirements (if any) for each area. Other allied fields are possible, with approval from the department chair.

Double major in philosophy and another discipline: (24 hours)

Philosophy requirements:	
History of Philosophy	8
At least two of the following:	
PHIL 243 Ancient Philosophy	4

PHIL 244	Medieval Philosophy	4
PHIL 245	Early Modern Philosophy	4
PHIL 246	Late Modern & Contemporary Philosophy	4
Philosophy Electives	14
Senior Capstone: Philosophy Colloquium	2
Total:	24

Minor: The minor consists of 12 hours of course work in philosophy beyond PHIL 202, INTS 152 or INTS 203, and must include at least 1 semester of history of philosophy (PHIL 243, 244, 245 or 246).

COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

PHIL 202 Metaphysics, Morality, and Mind (4, F&S)
 Critical analysis of the contours of a world and life view coupled with more detailed critical analysis of perennial and foundational issues in epistemology (the nature of truth and knowledge), metaphysics (the nature of reality: persons, the world, and God), and ethics (the nature of goodness and the process of ethical decision making, with close attention to character—virtue and vice—and the foundations of morality). Culture: Philosophy.

PHIL 203 Theism, Naturalism and the Sciences (4, F)
 Detailed critical analysis of foundational issues in epistemology (how we know), metaphysics (the nature of reality), and ethics (character and values), with particular attention to methodological issues pertaining to the sciences, the nature and contours of a worldview, and the relationship between worldviews and the sciences. Reserved for second-year Science Honors students. Culture: Philosophy.

PHIL 222 Logic and Critical Thinking (4, S12)
 Introduction to basic argument analysis and informal fallacies, inductive and deductive argument forms, including the formal languages of modern philosophical logic, such as truth functional propositional logic, predicate logic, and some modal logic.

PHIL 230 Philosophy in Film (3 or 4, M)
 Introduction through texts and film to philosophical reflection on foundational questions in metaphysics (the nature of reality), morality, and epistemology (the nature of knowledge, or the link between the mind and realities outside the mind, otherwise known as “the external world”). This course introduces philosophical reflection through a close examination of several films that illustrate the challenges of issues such as skepticism and relativism, the nature of personal identity, the possibility of moral responsibility, the problem of evil, and the meaning of life. Culture: Philosophy.

PHIL 243 Ancient Philosophy (4, F11)
 Survey of history of ideas from the ancient Greeks through the end of the classical period. Primary and secondary source readings by (or about) major figures such as the Pre-Socratics, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Hellenistic thinkers (Epicureanism, Stoics, and Skeptics), the Church Fathers & Neo-Platonists. Considers major trends in metaphysics, epistemology & ethics. Culture: Philosophy.

PHIL 244 Medieval Philosophy (4, S12)
 Survey of history of ideas from the end of Classical period through the early Renaissance. Includes primary sources by major figures such as Augustine, Anselm, Islamic Philosophers (Alfarabi, Avicenna, Averroes), Bonaventure, Aquinas, Scotus and Ockham. Consideration of major trends such as faith and reason, realism and nominalism, creation, & religious language. Culture: Philosophy.

PHIL 245 Early Modern Philosophy (4, F12)
 Survey of the history of ideas from the Late Renaissance through the Eighteenth Century. Includes primary and secondary sources by (or about) major (and some minor) figures, such as Machiavelli, Montaigne, Descartes, Leibniz, Locke, Spinoza, Berkeley, Hume, Reid and Kant. Considers major movements such as continental rationalism, British empiricism, and natural law and moral sense traditions in ethics and politics. Culture: Philosophy.

PHIL 246 Late Modern and Contemporary Philosophy (4, S13)
 Survey of the history of ideas from the Late Modern Period (post-Kantian European philosophy) through the present. Includes primary and secondary sources by (or about) major figures such as Hegel, Mill, Marx, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Husserl, Peirce, James, Dewey, Russell, Moore, Wittgenstein, Sartre, Quine, Rawls, Foucault, Derrida, Rorty, Pragmatism, Positivism and Postmodernism. Culture: Philosophy.

PHIL 250 Aesthetics (2, F12)

A philosophical study of art and aesthetic experience focusing on the value of art for human life, rather than the more narrow (and less useful) question of the definition of art. Explores the relative importance to a normative theory of art of such values as pleasure, beauty, expression of emotion, and understanding, and examines how these values can be embodied by various art forms, such as visual art, music, literature, the performing arts (dance and theater), and architecture.

PHIL/POLS 260 Introduction to Political Thought (4, F11)

Introduces students to Western political thought from the ancient to the modern world through a close reading of important thinkers. By considering problems of community, obligation, order, justice, liberty, and freedom, the course equips students for careful normative reflection on public life.

PHIL/THEL 300 Christianity and Postmodernism (4, F11)

Explores relationship between Christian faith and practice and postmodern culture. Primary & secondary readings drawn from a variety of disciplines and sources explore the implications of postmodernism for church, individuals, the media & popular culture.

PHIL/HUM 306 Varieties of Postmodernism (3, M OD)

Interdisciplinary analysis of the many faceted cultural phenomenon known as “postmodernism.” Moves from an initial starting point considering postmodernism as a reaction to various philosophical claims associated with modernity to the meaning and significance of postmodern ideas as they have been transposed into a variety of other contexts in the analytic humanities, literature, arts and sciences.

PHIL/POLS 322 Philosophy of Law (2, F12)

Introduction to fundamental issues surrounding the concept of law, such as the debate between natural law theorists (who maintain that there is a law above human law) and legal positivists (who deny this), as well as issues such as punishment and the legitimacy of legislative authority.

PHIL 330 Medical Ethics (2, F12)

Introduction to contemporary medical ethics, analyzing case studies and philosophical essays on a variety of dilemmas in contemporary medical practice, such as truth-telling and confidentiality, research ethics, reproductive technologies, abortion and embryonic stem-cell research, euthanasia, and physician-assisted suicide. Service in a local health-care setting also possible as a supplement to the course (for additional credit).

PHIL/THEL 340 The Nature of God (2, F)

Introductory course in philosophical theology, focusing on the concept of God. Philosophical analysis of divine attributes (such as God’s power, knowledge, goodness, and relation to time).

PHIL/THEL 350 Reason and Religious Belief (2, F)

Introductory course in religious epistemology, focusing on the sources of religious knowledge and the rationality of religious belief. Philosophical analysis of arguments for God’s existence, the problem of evil, and the roles of faith and reason in religious belief.

PHIL 360 History and Philosophy of Science (4, OD)

Survey of the rise of western science from its origins in antiquity to the present, addressing both the content and methods of science in each major period. Major figures considered include Aristotle, Galen, Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo, Descartes, Boyle, Newton, Lavoisier, Darwin, and Einstein. A wide range of science fields will be surveyed and specific attention is given throughout to the interrelationships between science and other disciplines, the relationship between science and culture, and the interaction of science and religion.

PHIL 414 Major Figures (2 or 4, OD)

In-depth study of the thought of one or more figures with an emphasis on critical analysis and evaluation of primary source material.

PHIL 435 Ethical Theory (4, F11)

Analysis of traditional normative theories (formalism, consequentialism, and virtue ethics) through the reading of primary sources. Also explores developments in contemporary moral theory.

PHIL 445 Religious Epistemology (4, S13)

Seminar examining the epistemology of religious belief via close reading and discussion of historical and contemporary works. Touches on topics such as the rationality of religious belief, theistic arguments (for God’s existence), the problem of evil (and atheistic arguments generally), and faith and reason. The specific issue(s) to be considered will be identified each time the course is scheduled. Repeatable when the topics are diverse.

PHIL/THEL 455 Aquinas (4, F12)

Seminar on the thought of Thomas Aquinas involving a close reading of Aquinas’ most important work, the *Summa Theologiae*, with occasional supplementation from other relevant primary and secondary literature.

PHIL 465 Nietzsche (2 or 4, F12)
Seminar on the thought of Friedrich Nietzsche involving a close reading of several of his major works and discussion of his continuing influence on Western thought and culture. (When offered for 4 hours may include consideration of works by other influential atheistic philosophers, such as David Hume, Bertrand Russell, or Jean Paul Sartre.)

PHIL/THEL 475 Kierkegaard: A Man for All Disciplines (4, S12)
Reading seminar on some key works of the “melancholy Dane,” including (for example) *Either/Or*, *Fear and Trembling*, *The Sickness Unto Death*, the *Philosophical Fragments* and *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. A “man for all disciplines,” Kierkegaard’s writings continue to attract interest for their philosophical and theological insights, as well as their literary sophistication.

PHIL/THEL 485 Issues in Philosophical Theology (4, S12)
Seminar in which selected topics in Christian theology are examined via close reading and discussion of historical and contemporary works of philosophical theology. Examples of topics considered: Divine Attributes, Divine Providence (and Human Freedom), God and Ethics, Faith. The specific issue(s) to be considered will be identified each time the course is scheduled. Repeatable when topics are diverse.

PHIL 290, 390, 490 Special Topics (2 or 4, OD)
Examination of specific movements or particular problems in philosophy, or themes in the history of ideas.

PHIL 191, 291, 391, 491 Independent Study (2 or 4, OD)

PHIL 495 Senior Capstone: Philosophy Colloquium (2, F&S)
A required capstone seminar for philosophy majors normally completed in one of the final two semesters of the student’s college experience. Prerequisite: A minimum of 18 hours in philosophy. May only be taken once for credit.

PHIL 496 Honors in Philosophy (4, S)

