

Philosophy

School

College of Art, Humanities and Social Sciences (<http://www.stmarytx.edu/humanities/>)

School Dean

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Department

Philosophy (<https://www.stmarytx.edu/academics/department/philosophy/>)

Department Chair

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Mission Statement

The St. Mary's University Department of Philosophy teaches and guides students in philosophical inquiry, helping them to integrate the study of philosophy as an academic discipline with the practice of philosophy as a way of life.

As integral to our mission, we as a faculty attempt to embody the meaning of philosophy through the pursuit of critical inquiry in the classroom, and in our professional and social lives. Through teaching courses in the Core Curriculum, we also bring philosophical inquiry as a way of life to all students at St. Mary's, where philosophy sits alongside theology at the authentic core of a Marianist education.

The Programs

The philosophy department invites students who are majoring in any other area to consider a second major in philosophy. A major in philosophy can deepen a student's appreciation of any subject and will prepare the student for graduate work in either field. Furthermore, while many students who major only in philosophy will go on to graduate school in philosophy, the department nevertheless encourages its majors to pursue a second major or a minor in a different field. Even those students who plan to apply to philosophy graduate school would benefit from exposure to other disciplines which could provide grist for reflection, analysis, and an exploration of conceptual foundations. It is not uncommon for students to pursue graduate studies in philosophy "of something," such as philosophy of science, philosophy of art, philosophy of mathematics, political philosophy, and so forth.

Major in Philosophy

- B.A. in Philosophy (<https://catalog.stmarytx.edu/undergraduate/majors-programs/humanities-social-sciences/philosophy/philosophy-ba/>)

Minor in Philosophy (<https://catalog.stmarytx.edu/undergraduate/majors-programs/humanities-social-sciences/philosophy/philosophy-minor/>)

PL 1301. Intro to Philosophy. 3 Semester Hours.

This course explores philosophical questions about human existence and a human being's relationship to reality, knowledge, and value. The goal of this analysis is the student's critical self-appropriation of their own natures as knowers and doers. The course introduces the students to perennial questions about human existence that were asked by ancient Greek philosophers like Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle as well as others from different times and places. These questions include: Who am I? What is real? What is true, good, and beautiful? Does God exist? Does history have a meaning? What is justice? Thus the course examines how critical self-reflection illuminates dimensions of personhood that can include relations with self, others, nature, and God. This course is writing intensive.

PL 2301. Foundations of Ethics. 3 Semester Hours.

This course develops a set of concepts and skills that form the foundation of objective moral reasoning. Included among those concepts are character, virtue, and vice; intentions, actions, and consequences; as well as freedom, responsibility, and the good. It elucidates those moral structures and precepts that are not only implicit in the nature of human consciousness but also necessary for discerning values, the common good, and human flourishing. Thus, it builds upon the central ideas from PL 1301. PL 1301 is a pre-requisite for PL 2301.

PL 2310. Symbolic Logic. 3 Semester Hours.

This course is required of all philosophy majors and minors. It introduces the student to modern symbolic logic, and generally includes truth tables, the propositional calculus, and the predicate calculus, as well as translating between natural language and logic. It is a prerequisite for all advanced logic courses, and covers some topics tested by the LSAT.

PL 3314. Applied Ethics. 3 Semester Hours.

This course covers recent philosophical discussions within one or more broad areas of ethics. Possible topics include but are not limited to medical ethics, business ethics, professional ethics, research ethics, environmental ethics, international issues, media ethics, computer ethics, educational ethics, and human and animal rights. Emphasis will be on the application of theories to cases. Prerequisite is any one of the following: SMC 2301, PL 2332, or PL 2336.

PL 3320. Environmental Philosophy. 3 Semester Hours.

This course examines the relationship between human beings and the rest of the natural world. It explores the implications of affirming and of denying that relationship. Possible implications include but are not limited to the physical, emotional, intellectual, social, moral, professional, and spiritual development of the person, as well as the progress of society and culture.

PL 3322. Philosophy of Human Nature. 3 Semester Hours.

This course focuses on questions in philosophical anthropology. Authors from different historical periods are studied. Interpersonal, moral, and social issues take precedence. Emphasis falls on the tension between theories of self-interest and psychological egoism on the one hand, and theories espousing the natural social orientation of human existence on the other. Other topics include friendship, love, and the meaning of self-sacrifice, as well as methods of discerning authenticity and inauthenticity in human relationships.

PL 3332. Social & Political Philosophy. 3 Semester Hours.

This course examines some of the main problems of social and political philosophy through an analysis, comparison, and critical examination of various views concerning the natures of individuality and society and the relations between them. It will include study of some of the main works by several major philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, Hobbes, Machiavelli, Locke, Rousseau, Mill, Marx, Rawls, and Voegelin.

PL 3336. Feminist Philosophy. 3 Semester Hours.

The course explores the philosophical contributions of feminism through careful study and evaluation of both traditional and feminist insights into philosophical questions. Areas of inquiry include the metaphysical, epistemological, moral, and political aspects of philosophical approaches to sex and gender.

PL 3344. Philosophy of Religion. 3 Semester Hours.

Introduction to a critical study of religions; appropriate methods for the study of religious phenomena; variety of manifestations of the sacred in religions, ancient and modern; religious language; ritual; religious communities; the problem of evil; the relation of religion and morality; the question of salvation.

PL 3358. Eastern Philosophy. 3 Semester Hours.

An introduction to Eastern/Asian philosophy. Topics vary from a study of orthodox Indian thought and its development, classical Chinese thought and its development, and Buddhist philosophy. Specific themes may include the nature of existence, the nature of human being, enlightenment, the individual and society, stages of human development, yoga, nature, and the sage.

PL 3360. Ancient Philosophy. 3 Semester Hours.

This course covers the writings and the cultural and historical context of various Western philosophers who lived before 300 C.E. The selection of figures and texts explored will vary from one semester to the next, but Plato and Aristotle will always be covered. Other possible figures could include the Pre-Socratics, the Stoics, the Cynics, and the Epicureans.

PL 3361. Medieval Philosophy. 3 Semester Hours.

This course covers the writings of various Mediterranean philosophers from the time of early Christianity (300 C.E.) through late scholasticism (1500 C.E.). The figures and texts will vary from one semester to another, Saint Augustine and Saint Thomas Aquinas will always be covered. Other possible subjects include but are not limited to Boethius, St. Anselm, Peter Abelard, Hildegard von Bingen, William of Occam, Duns Scotus, Francis Suarez, as well as Jewish and Arabic philosophers from the period.

PL 3362. Early Modern Philosophy. 3 Semester Hours.

This course introduces students to early Modern (17th and 18th century) philosophy as it arose out of Renaissance Humanism and early Modern Science and developed in the Continental Rationalism of Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibniz and the British Empiricism of Hobbes, Locke, and Hume. Emphasis will be placed on the characteristic problems, questions, and methods of the period and on the continuity of concerns, problems and unresolved issues.

PL 3363. Late Modern Philosophy. 3 Semester Hours.

This course examines the development of philosophical inquiry in late modernity from the late 18th century to the early 20th century. It emphasizes an historical understanding of the philosophical questions of this era and a critical appraisal of the responses offered by late modern thinkers such as Kant, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Mill, Nietzsche, and Kierkegaard.

PL 3364. Contemporary Philosophy. 3 Semester Hours.

This course explores the multifaceted development of philosophical thought in the contemporary world. It does so through an examination of representative philosophers and philosophical movements from the mid-20th century to the present day, particularly those arising in Western Europe. The course emphasizes historical and critical understanding of the philosophical questions and modes of thinking that emerge in the contemporary philosophical conversation. Areas of study may include, but are not limited to: existentialism, phenomenology, critical theory, post-structuralism, feminism, pragmatism, and Anglo-analytic philosophy.

PL 3366. Hist Critical Inquiry in American Culture. 3 Semester Hours.

The course traces the development of philosophy in the United States with an eye to uncovering the philosophical underpinnings of contemporary American culture. Through the use of primary texts, the course will investigate the major questions and approaches that emerged in the United States and explore the uniquely American ways of reckoning with the perennial philosophical questions.

PL 3368. Philosophy in Latin America. 3 Semester Hours.

This course introduces students to philosophical reflection in the Latin American tradition, touching on the Pre-Columbian, colonial, 19th, and 20th century periods. Some relevant European authors are also studied. Topics range widely. However, all topics are studied within their Latin American historical and social context. Questions about culture and cultural identity surface. The course explores the conditions of the possibility of sustaining cultural identity and to what extent philosophical reflection can contribute to this. Students gain a better understanding of both the unique history of Latin America and of the universal philosophical questions that the Latin American experience brings to life.

PL 3370. Special Topics. 3 Semester Hours.

Specific topics may vary from semester to semester. May be repeated.

PL 3372. Philosophy of Film. 3 Semester Hours.

This course covers various philosophical questions in film theory. Possible topics include the nature of film, film aesthetics, the language of film, the psychology of film, biases in films (gender, economic, racial, and so forth), and the ethics of censorship. A basic familiarity on the part of the student with the history of film from early silent films through CGI is presumed. Viewing of certain films may be assigned as homework.

PL 3375. Advanced Logic. 3 Semester Hours.

This course covers standard topics in metalogic, including syntax, semantics, proof theory, completeness, decidability, consistency, and the Skolem-Lowenheim theorem. Prerequisite: PL 2310 Symbolic Logic.

PL 3378. Philosophy of Literature. 3 Semester Hours.

This course examines the literary expression of philosophical concerns, such as authenticity, freedom and choice, good vs. evil, and justice vs. injustice. This typically involves the study of one or two philosophical works that investigate a philosophical issue (e.g., the ideal society; the tragic hero) to supplement the focus on various novels, plays, or poems exploring the issue in literature. Texts may include literary criticism, used to assist in explicating the themes and concepts involved in the philosophical issue under consideration. The course usually includes multicultural expressions and concerns.

PL 3380. Directed Study. 3 Semester Hours.

Directed studies are an opportunity for students to pursue critical inquiries of their own choosing in consultation with a member of the department who knows the subject area and is sympathetic to working with the project. A Directed Study program must be arranged according to University policy and include permission of the chair and major adviser.

PL 4310. Philosophy of Law. 3 Semester Hours.

Examination of various foundations of human legal order concentrating on a search for what can unite a people effectively under a rule of law; perspectives of natural law and legal positivism; the relation between law and justice; legal and moral obligations; the power of law to bind effectively and the use of sanctions; and problems arising from various theories of law.

PL 4312. Epistemology. 3 Semester Hours.

This course considers the cognitive relationship between humans and the world, knowers, knowledge, and the known. It will examine a variety of problems and theories concerning human knowing, including, for example: innate ideas, rationalism, empiricism, constructivism, the pragmatic notion of truth, and the problem of intentionality.

PL 4318. Professional Ethics. 3 Semester Hours.

This course explores the ethical obligations of professionals, how these obligations arise, and how (or whether) they differ significantly from the ethical obligations of non-professionals. Possible topics include but are not limited to medicine, law, engineering, journalism, business, teaching, and politics.

PL 4320. Criti Inqu in Human&Nature. 3 Semester Hours.

A critical examination of the moral significance of creation, ecology, technology, and human vocation as related to environmental issues and relationships. Representative views on the relationship of humans and the natural world will be critically examined in relation to their social and moral implications.

PL 4322. Philosophy of Economics. 3 Semester Hours.

A critical study of the meaning of economy and economic relations within social living. Themes covered include the meaning of economy, work, labor, human vocation, justice, and poverty. This course begins with a survey of views of what constitutes an economy and the meaning of just economic relations. It includes a study of contemporary theories of justice, including Catholic Social Teaching, with specific application to selected issues of economic justice.

PL 4324. Philosophy of Science. 3 Semester Hours.

This course investigates the basic concepts and methods of the natural, social, and formal sciences. Possible topics include but are not limited to quantification, pseudoscience, realism versus anti-realism, probabilistic versus classical science, the ethics of research and technology, determinism versus freedom, and scientific revolutions. Prerequisite: SMC 1312.

PL 4334. Philosophy of Culture. 3 Semester Hours.

This course explores the most serious challenges facing the individual and societies in the 21st century: the presence and force of culture and its historical relationship to religion, civilization, and social order. It employs and relates perspectives from critical realist philosophy, world history, and culture studies.

PL 4340. Philosophy of Art & Aesthetics. 3 Semester Hours.

A critical examination of art as a realm of meaning. Aesthetics is a critically important part of every human life and culture. As a unique realm of The Beautiful, as encountered in music, dance, literature, architecture, fashion landscape architecture, all the fine and performing as well as culinary and practical arts both transmit and inculcate cultural, social and moral values as well as fulfilling natural human desires for sensually intellectual enrichment.

PL 4342. Metaphysics. 3 Semester Hours.

Metaphysics examines the most fundamental questions, inquiring into the origins or first principles of the ground of existence. The course will confront the need or impulse for metaphysical contemplation, the fundamental insights and structures of metaphysics, and the question of the legitimacy of metaphysics.

PL 4343. Philosophy of Mind. 3 Semester Hours.

This course introduces the student to contemporary philosophy of mind. Topics may include, but are not limited to: the nature of mind, mind's relationship to the physical world, mental causation, consciousness, self-consciousness, qualia, animal minds, artificial intelligence, perception, embodiment, subjectivity, and agency. The course may draw on the Analytic tradition, the Phenomenological tradition, or both.

PL 4350. Philosophy of History. 3 Semester Hours.

This course inquires into history, i.e., that which is written and that which is written about. It surveys the efforts to make the course of human history intelligible. Emphasis is placed on the 19th and 20th century questions concerning the conditions for the possibility of historical knowledge and truth.

PL 4395. Senior Seminar. 3 Semester Hours.

A capstone seminar for philosophy majors. This course focuses on developing a student's consciousness of the understandings and skills acquired through careful study of the history, methods, and specializations of philosophy. Presentations will be made by members of the department on a variety of current topics and issues in philosophy. Emphasis will be placed on the student integrating the various areas of study and the variety of contemporary schools of philosophical activity. Each student will be required to complete a major paper in an area of the student's interest. (Prerequisite: philosophy major or permission of the chair).