

# Philosophy

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## School

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

## School Interim Dean

Betsy Smith, Ph.D. ([nlagreca@stmarytx.edu](mailto:nlagreca@stmarytx.edu))

## Department

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

## Department Chair

J. Colin McQuillan, Ph.D. ([jmcquillan@stmarytx.edu](mailto:jmcquillan@stmarytx.edu))

## 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. Introduction 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 3301. Ancient Greek and Roman Philosophy. 3 Semester Hours.

Explores philosophical concepts and practices from Ancient Greece and Rome. Topics may include Presocratic natural philosophy; the Socratic method; Platonic dialectic and the theory of the forms; Aristotelian logic, physics, metaphysics, and ethics; and the philosophies of Hellenistic schools like the Cynics, Epicureans, Stoics, and Skeptics.

**PL 3302. Medieval Philosophy. 3 Semester Hours.**

Provides an introduction to key philosophical thinkers, writings, and themes from the medieval period. Figures include St. Augustine, Boethius, Abelard, St. Anselm, and St. Thomas Aquinas, as well as philosophers from the Jewish and Arabic traditions. Topics may include the transmission and reception of ancient philosophy, including Neoplatonism and Aristotelianism, during the Middle Ages; medieval logic, metaphysics, philosophical theology, ethics, and political philosophy; and mysticism.

**PL 3303. Modern European Philosophy. 3 Semester Hours.**

Introduces students to the history of modern European philosophy during the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. Figures may include Bacon, Descartes, Hobbes, Spinoza, Locke, Leibniz, Hume, Kant, Hegel, Marx, Mill, and Nietzsche. Topics may include the philosophical development of modern natural and social science, rationalist and empiricist accounts of the origins of knowledge, debates between idealists and materialists, as well as philosophical perspectives on politics, morality, religion, culture, and history.

**PL 3304. Contemporary Philosophy. 3 Semester Hours.**

Introduces students to developments within philosophy during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. May address debates about metaphysics, epistemology, philosophy of science, philosophy of language, political philosophy, ethics, and aesthetics within the analytic and continental philosophical traditions as well as movements within those traditions, such as existentialism, phenomenology, critical theory, post-structuralism, feminism, pragmatism, etc.

**PL 3305. Africana Philosophy. 3 Semester Hours.**

Explores the philosophy produced by African philosophers and philosophers of African descent throughout the African Diaspora—including the work of those living and working in the Americas as well as throughout Europe and the other places that Africans have migrated or been involuntarily moved to during the modern and pre-modern period. Examines different perspectives on questions of freedom, justice, equality, personhood, truth, knowledge, religion, race, gender, sexuality, slavery, colonialism, and cultural hegemony. Considers the philosophical contributions of and connections between modern Africanist social-political and intellectual movements, such as Pan-Africanism, the New Negro Renaissance, Négritude, and Negritude.

**PL 3306. Asian Philosophy. 3 Semester Hours.**

Provides an introduction to major philosophical traditions of Asia. Examines central concerns, historical contexts, and foundational themes of the diverse philosophical traditions of South and East Asia, including Confucianism, Daoism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism. Examines different accounts of our obligations to society and others, virtue, human nature and the dao in Chinese schools; liberation, ethics and metaphysics in Indian schools; or developments in the history of Buddhism across Asia. Typically includes works by Confucius, Mencius, Laozi, Zhuangzi, Gotama, Patanjali, Nagarjuna, Buddhist sutras, as well as works in the commentary traditions.

**PL 3307. Philosophy in Latin America. 3 Semester Hours.**

Provides a survey of Latin American and Latinx philosophical thought from the pre-Columbian period to the contemporary period. Emphasizes the unique history of Latin America as well as the universal philosophical questions that the Latin American experience brings to life. Considers perspectives from marginalized communities in Latin America, including indigenous, decolonial, feminist/mujerista, and/or liberationist literature. Explores the possibilities and perils of sustaining cultural identity, and to what extent philosophical reflection can contribute to this.

**PL 3308. American Philosophy. 3 Semester Hours.**

Addresses the history of philosophy in North America from the colonial period to the present. May focus on indigenous philosophical traditions as well as the reception of European philosophy in North America; debates about democracy, equality, and freedom in relation to slavery and racism; the development of American pragmatism; as well as the impact of the Cold War on philosophy in the United States.

**PL 3309. Philosophy in the Catholic Intellectual Tradition. 3 Semester Hours.**

Explores the integration of philosophy and Christian revelation. Considers texts from the early church fathers as well as later figures such as St. Augustine, St. Anselm, and St. Thomas Aquinas. Both cataphatic and apophatic traditions are explored throughout the medieval period and the later development. Key papal encyclicals on social and political issues feature, as well as contemporary philosophical thought in the Catholic tradition.

**PL 3310. Existentialism & Phenomenology. 3 Semester Hours.**

Develops an understanding of phenomenological and existential philosophy and their implications. Examines questions about the nature of lived-experience, consciousness, intentionality, meaning, embodiment, temporality, and intersubjectivity. Introduces students to each movement through primary authors, texts, and topics.

**PL 3311. Feminist Philosophy. 3 Semester Hours.**

Provides a survey of feminist philosophical approaches to questions of sex, gender, and sexist oppression. Introduces major theoretical and practical concerns in the struggle for gender justice. Examines the varied, criss-crossing histories of feminist movements across the globe. Explores similarities and differences between feminist, womanist, and mujerista perspectives. Emphasizes the importance of intersectionality and heterogeneity in the interpretation of feminist philosophy. Engages with feminist theorists on their own terms as well as in conversation with figures of other traditions.

**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 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 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 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 3370. Special Topics. 3 Semester Hours.**

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

**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 4301. Advanced Logic. 3 Semester Hours.**

Engages standard topics in advanced predicate logics or metalogic. May include advanced topics on syntax, semantics, proof theory, completeness, decidability, consistency, or the Skolem-Lowenheim theorem. Prerequisite: PL 2310 Symbolic Logic.

**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 4311. Aesthetics & Philosophy of Art. 3 Semester Hours.****PL 4313. Philosophy of Film. 3 Semester Hours.**

Addresses philosophical reflections about film and/or philosophical themes within film from a variety of philosophical perspectives. Topics may include the nature of film, the difference between film and other artforms, the aesthetic and moral evaluation of movies, and cinema's contributions to philosophical debates about metaphysics, epistemology, political philosophy, ethics, and aesthetics. Requires Research.

**PL 4315. Philosophy & Literature. 3 Semester Hours.**

Addresses philosophical reflections about literature and/or philosophical themes within literature from antiquity to the present in a variety of philosophical traditions. Topics may include the nature of literature as well as the function of literary forms and genres; the aesthetic and moral evaluation of literary works; the standards and practice of literary criticism; and literary contributions to debates about philosophical problems. Requires Research.

**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 4321. Applied Ethics. 3 Semester Hours.**

Covers recent philosophical discussions within one or more broad areas of ethics. Possible topics include but are not limited to medical ethics, animal ethics, business ethics, professional ethics, environmental ethics, media ethics, cyber ethics, and food ethics. Emphasis will be placed on various ways of assessing moral issues in light of moral theory. Requires Research.

**PL 4323. Business Ethics. 3 Semester Hours.**

Explores the fundamental principles of ethical decision making in business. Topics may include ethical theory, corporate social responsibility, stakeholder perspectives, and the practical application of ethics in various business contexts. Students will analyze real-world case studies and complex ethical dilemmas concerning the relationship between profitability and ethical conduct, and how ethical behavior aligns with long-term business success. Requires Research.

**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 4325. Cybersecurity Ethics. 3 Semester Hours.**

Examines the ethical considerations relating to cybersecurity. Addresses issues such as privacy, data protection, and the societal implications of cyber actions. A blend of case studies and moral theory helps students develop a clear awareness of the ethical challenges faced by cybersecurity professionals. Emphasizing responsible decision-making, this course empowers students to integrate moral principles into their roles as guardians of digital landscapes. Requires Research.

**PL 4326. Bioethics. 3 Semester Hours.**

Focuses on issues that arise in medicine, broadly understood, and the ways in which various moral theories, principles, and codes are brought to bear on these issues. Possible topics of discussion include health care rationing, patient autonomy, the ethics of experimentation, individual vs. public good, and the responsibilities of drug companies. Requires Research.

**PL 4331. Environmental Philosophy. 3 Semester Hours.**

Examines the relationship between human beings and the rest of the natural world. We will attend to a variety of views regarding our place within (and our obligations to) the natural environment. Possible topics of discussion include rewilding conservation, the value of endangered species, environmental aesthetics, wildness vs. wilderness, sustainable development, and forms of environmental activism. Requires Research.

**PL 4333. Philosophy of Sex & Gender. 3 Semester Hours.**

Introduces the breadth and depth of philosophical thought about sex and gender. Promotes skills for recognizing and questioning taken-for-granted positions and arguments on these themes. Surveys philosophical approaches to a variety of related issues, which may include: the relationship between sex, gender, and sexuality; the nature of gender identity and sexual orientation; theories of gender injustice; and/or gendered and sexual violence. Requires Research.

**PL 4334. Philosophy of Race. 3 Semester Hours.**

Examines classical and contemporary philosophical writings on race, racism, and racial hierarchy. Explores issues relating to race and its intersections with other axes of identity, such as class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and disability. Considers different perspectives on race and ethnic difference across geographic contexts and academic disciplines. Tracks the connections between these themes across texts and events throughout history. Requires Research.

**PL 4335. Political Philosophy. 3 Semester Hours.**

Introduces students to the fundamental questions and themes in political philosophy. Figures, works and topics may include Plato and Aristotle on the nature of the good society; medieval contributions to political principles such as rights and limited government; classical liberal thinkers such as Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Mill, as well as twentieth century thinkers like Rawls, Nozick, Hayek, and Nussbaum; and critiques by Marx, Gramsci, and Marcuse. Thematic components may include concentrations on liberty, justice, liberal education, rights and responsibilities, etc. Requires Research.

**PL 4337. Philosophy of Law. 3 Semester Hours.**

Introduces students to the philosophy of law. Topics may include the development of legal thought from antiquity to the present; the relation between justice and law; the relation between morality and the law; the relation between common law and political liberty; the rule of law and its limits. Considers contemporary approaches to law in natural law theory, legal positivism, legal realism, and critical legal studies. Explores contemporary court decisions that raise philosophical questions about topics that include life, liberty, culpability, criminal intent, punishment, etc. Requires Research.

**PL 4341. Epistemology. 3 Semester Hours.**

Examines the nature and differences between opinion, belief, and knowledge in classical and contemporary philosophy. Topics may include rationalist and empiricist accounts of the origins of knowledge; intentionality; internalist and externalist approaches to epistemic justification; epistemic skepticism and certainty; naturalized epistemology; virtue epistemology; feminist epistemology; epistemic justice and injustice; and more. Requires Research.

**PL 4342. Metaphysics. 3 Semester Hours.**

Explores classical and contemporary accounts of the nature of reality as well as the significance of metaphysics in relation to other parts of philosophy and the sciences. Topics may include the difference between necessary and contingent beings; material substances and abstract objects like numbers, forms, and universals; properties, modes, and relations; causation; objects, events, and actions; and related topics. Requires Research.

**PL 4343. Philosophy of Language. 3 Semester Hours.**

Explores philosophical approaches to language in a variety of social and political contexts. Introduces classical topics in the philosophy of language, such as meaning, truth, reference, naming, speech acts, and/or language games. Examines language use and linguistic identity in philosophical approaches to race, class, gender, nationality, and disability. Considers the political uses of language and political dimensions of linguistic difference, which may include issues of silencing, hate speech, linguistic terrorism, and/or linguistic resistance. Requires Research.

**PL 4344. Philosophy of History. 3 Semester Hours.**

Explores the nature and conditions of historical knowledge. May address questions about temporality, change, memory, narrative, meaning, explanation, and progress in history. Draws on a variety of philosophical traditions. Requires Research.

**PL 4345. Philosophy of Religion. 3 Semester Hours.**

Introduces students to the philosophical dimensions of religion. Explores questions about God, sacredness and sacramentality, communion and belonging, faith, hope, and love. Explores development of religion from compact cosmological consciousness and practice to differentiated experiences and symbolization in philosophy and revelation. Occasional themes include political religions, mysticism, and the existential significance of religion, among others. Requires Research.

**PL 4346. Philosophy of Science. 3 Semester Hours.**

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. Requires Research.

**PL 4347. Philosophy of Mind. 3 Semester Hours.**

Explores issues in the 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. Requires Research.

**PL 4391. Special Topics. 3 Semester Hours.**

Addresses topics of special interest to students, supplementing regular course offerings. Topics vary by semester and instructor. Requires Research.

**PL 4392. Senior Thesis. 3 Semester Hours.**

Allows a major or minor to pursue an individual research project, supervised by faculty in the Philosophy Department, culminating in a thesis paper and/or presentation. Taught as an Independent Study. Requires Research. Prerequisites: PL Major/Minor; Permission from PL faculty, PL chair, and CAHSS.