HISTORY, PHILOSOPHY, and RELIGIOUS STUDIES

The History, Philosophy, and Religious Studies curriculum has several objectives: 1) to develop an appreciation of the past through multiple perspectives; 2) to increase knowledge of our interdependent and complex world; 3) to teach the value of engaging in open-minded dialogue and discussion; and 4) to foster an understanding of foundational terms and ideas defining history, philosophy, and religion so that our students are prepared to do substantive work presently, in college, and beyond. With these objectives in mind, the department offers a variety of courses that recognize the importance of content, while teaching skills necessary to effectively process the vast amount of information in these disciplines. These include the ability to analyze text and nuance drawn from a variety of sources; to construct a logical argument in both oral and written form; to practice the skills of comparison, criticism, interpretation, imagination, and synthesis; to collaborate in small groups; and to make effective use of the internet and other digital resources while still appreciating a study of classic texts and primary sources.

One of the most important goals of the History, Philosophy, and Religious Studies Department is the development of actively engaged learners in the classroom, with students themselves often guiding class discussions. The department distinguishes between mere oral “participation” and true intellectual engagement. We encourage students to ask questions, make connections, and challenge assumptions. The department requires one full credit of world history, which is typically fulfilled in the freshman or sophomore year with World History: The Making of Our Modern World, and one full credit of United States history, to be earned in either the junior (strongly recommended) or senior year.

This department offers a number of electives that will meet the Philosophy, Psychology, and Religious Studies diploma requirement; all students must take two term courses in any of these three disciplines, at least one of which must be taken during the junior or senior year. Note: Psychology courses are listed under the Social Science Department courses.

For information on courses designated GESC, please refer to pages 5–6.

History

Required Courses

World History: The Making of Our Modern World (GESC)
year course/freshmen and sophomores
In this traditional world history course, students engage with important questions of modernity and perspective while confronting complex historical phenomena such as, but not limited to, the global expansion and the encounters of diverse peoples, the Age of Revolutions and its legacy, international conflicts and their origins, the emergence and development of new nations, and recent challenges to democracy and human rights. In addition to developing and applying distinct historical skills, students will also be introduced to a variety of research materials, concepts, and proficiencies within the larger field of the humanities and social sciences, including human geography, sociology, civics, and economics. This survey course challenges students to think objectively and globally, evaluate primary documents and secondary sources, and utilize a variety of textual, visual, statistical, physical, and online materials to understand and explain the past and its role in the making of our modern world. The course satisfies the world history diploma requirement and counts toward the Global & Environmental Studies Certificate.

Either of these courses will satisfy the U.S. history requirement. CL United States History is available to students by departmental permission. Both options in U.S. history include writing an original research paper.

United States History
year course/juniors
The course surveys American history chronologically up to the 21st century. Students approach the history of the United States by concentrating on five key themes: identity; immigration and migration; government, civics, and politics; foreign policy; and economics. Throughout the course, students are engaged with the nature of history and employ the tools of analysis used by historians. Students complete an independent, scholarly research and writing project on a topic

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of their choice. Prerequisite: World History

**CL United States History**

*year course/juniors*

The expectations of this course are set at a standard freshman college survey course in American history, with a focus on the craft of history, including sustained analysis of historical sources, frequent writing, and original inquiry and thinking. Students will participate in student-directed discussions, work with a variety of primary and secondary sources, write an independent historical research paper, and display a high level of engagement in all areas of the course. The course chronology is comprised of American history from Colonial America to the present. Prerequisite: World History; permission of the department

**History Electives for Sophomores**

**Classical Civilizations (GESC)**

*term course/sophomores*

This course is designed for sophomores who are interested in continuing their study of history for one term — between their freshman World History course and United States History in the junior year. First exploring what it means for a civilization to be “classical,” students will engage in the exploration of three case studies drawn from the following civilizations: Aztec, Chinese, Greek, Inca, Indian, Mayan, Roman, Viking, and West African. Students will evaluate what made each civilization classical, how it built upon ideas from prior civilizations and then passed those tenets, values, and innovations on to others, thus influencing the world we inhabit in the 21st century. During these case studies, students will analyze documents, images, and objects, and complete guided research, sharing their conclusions in reflective writing, oral and visual presentations, and the initial phases of research writing. Prerequisite: World History

New sophomores who receive credit at admission for World History are strongly encouraged to take this course.

**CL European History (GESC)**

*year course/sophomores*

This course analyzes significant cultural, economic, political, and social movements in Europe from 1450 to the present. By presenting the relationship between major themes and trends in European history, students consider the role each played in shaping the development of contemporary institutions, traditions, and conflict. Topics include Reformation and Enlightenment, absolutism and revolution, industrialization and imperialism, war and diplomacy. In addition to providing a basic narrative of events and movements, the goals of CL European History are to develop an ability to analyze historical evidence and historical interpretation, and to express historical understanding in writing. Prerequisite: World History; permission of the department

**History Electives for Sophomores, Juniors, and Seniors**

**Digital History**

*term course/juniors and seniors; sophomores with permission of the department*

Digital technology has helped to shape new questions and new tools for studying the past, and offered historians new platforms for sharing their work, ultimately increasing and democratizing access to information about the past. This course will look at current examples of this approach, assessing key elements of digital history as students build skills to analyze historical evidence in digital and material contexts and create their own original digital projects for public audiences. Projects will be based on student interest and utilize the Pearse Hub for Innovation (PHI) and the school’s Archives collection of manuscripts, art, objects, and printed materials, dating from the 17th century to today. The collection will serve as a laboratory for creating and exploring new questions and new ways of learning about the past. Students will undertake collaborative and individual projects, applying digital tools, analytical thinking and writing, deep engagement including close observation and reading, creativity, and design thinking to the seemingly endless possibilities of learning from the material and written remains of the past. Student work may be presented in a variety of formats, including on the Archives webpage and preserved in the Archives collection.

**Germany and the Holocaust (GESC)**

*term course/juniors and seniors; sophomores with permission of the department*

This course investigates the rise of Adolf Hitler and the Nazi state, the implementation of the Holocaust and its aftermath. To understand the roots of anti-Semitism, the course begins with a look at Europe’s Jewish population over the past five centuries, and continues with a serious examination of the political, social, and economic factors following World War I that made Hitler’s rise to power possible. The course analyzes Nazi racial and political policies, Germany’s involvement in World War II, and the mass annihilation of Jews and others. Students examine the role of bystanders and rescuers, resistance movements, the aftermath at Nuremberg, and the lasting legacies of the Holocaust today. Prerequisite: World History
The Middle East: A History of Peace and Conflict (GESC)
term course/juniors and seniors; sophomores with permission of the department
The Arab-Israeli conflict is one of the longest and most intractable conflicts in the world. Through frequent discussions of Middle Eastern current events, this course will explore the importance of the region to the three monotheistic faiths, the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, and the emergence of Zionist and Arab nationalist movements. Particular attention will be given to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the U.S. entanglement in the Middle East since the Cold War, and efforts by the international community to resolve this dispute. Students will gain a better understanding of the dynamics and complexity of conflict in a region characterized by instability. Prerequisite: World History

Modern African History: Riot, Rebellion, and Freedom (GESC)
term course/juniors and seniors; sophomores with permission of the department
No single course can cover more than a sliver of the complexity and variety of a continent as diverse as Africa. This course will examine the development of outbreaks of violence in Africa in the movement towards independence and freedom in the post-colonial period (1950s to 1980s). Through learning about some of the economic, social, religious, and political roots of these disturbances, students will in turn garner a better understanding of the continent today. Topics of study may include Hutu extremism and the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, the Suez Canal crisis in Egypt, and apartheid in South Africa. Focusing on these events and others will unravel the complex and challenging, yet vibrant and resilient, history of this continent. Prerequisite: World History

Modern South Asia (GESC)
term course/juniors and seniors; sophomores with permission of the department
South Asia (a region that includes Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Pakistan, the Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka) is inhabited by a fifth of humanity and is the home of both the “world’s largest democracy” and the “most dangerous country.” This course will provide students with the historical and political background needed to understand this religiously and linguistically diverse region filled with social, economic, political, and technological contradictions. Focusing on India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, students will use primary and secondary texts, images, film, and current news sources to debate, role play, and discuss how the region has changed since the advent of the Mughal Empire in the sixteenth century, and how these changes have shaped the region today. Prerequisite: World History

History Electives for Juniors and Seniors

Genocide: Media, Remembrance, and the International Community (GESC)
term course/juniors and seniors
This course seeks to examine genocide from historical, philosophical, and religious contexts, with special significance on the role of the media in shaping the narrative. Students will begin by learning a foundational understanding of the United Nations and the definition of “human rights,” before investigating how genocide has become possible, and even ignored. The course will challenge students to consider the intersection of international law, media, and historical memory in examining selected atrocities, including some lesser-known, from the early twentieth century through the present day. They will explore both primary and secondary sources, such as newspapers, social media, essays, book excerpts, radio transcripts, and films. Ultimately, we hope students will appreciate the complex and nuanced approach to the study of genocide, armed with the tools to ensure that “never again” really means never again. Prerequisite/Co-requisite: United States History or CL United States History

History of Sport in Society (GESC)
term course/seniors
This course will allow students to examine their own perceptions of the role of sport and athletic competition throughout history, as well as in their own lives, through an examination of events from the first Olympic Games of Ancient Greece and the WWI “Silent Night” soccer truce, to the Cold War’s “Miracle on Ice” and the rise of basketball in the former Yugoslavia. Athletic competitions have served as a backdrop for larger global issues, and the inspiration for myriad diverse works of literature; thus, poetry, short stories, personal narratives, and longer works will be read and discussed in this course. Students will also investigate these writings in a manner that encourages them to grapple with the significance that athletics have come to play for both the individual and society through the lenses of race and gender. Each student will also conduct an independent research project.

Jurisprudence: American Legal History
term course/juniors and seniors
Using historical works, case law, and recent articles, this course introduces the legal system in the United States with a particular focus on constitutional and criminal law. Students explore the background of international systems, the constitutional framework for the judicial branch of the government, and the Bill of Rights to learn how legal systems
have evolved from the teachings of Hammurabi to present day cases. Cause exercises will include delivering an oral argument and engaging in the process of jury selection for a hypothetical capital murder case. In addition to historical analysis, students will also investigate the ways in which the legal system affects students in schools, especially in terms of the first amendment and freedom of speech. Prerequisite/Co-requisite: United States History or CL United States History

**The Model T and the American Industrial Revolution**
*term course/seniors*
This course focuses on the Industrial Revolution, from the steam engines of the early 1700s to today’s electric motors. Both the history and actual workings of pumps, mills, steam engines, internal combustion and electric motors, manufacturing and processing techniques, and the Ford Model T are studied. Theory and history are mixed thoroughly with experiential education, including the dis- and re-assembly of a 1926 Ford Model T engine block, Model T driving lessons, and the fabrication of an electric racecar. This course is ideal for students with an interest in hands-on investigation, engineering, and the history of science and technology. This course will regularly utilize the Pearse Hub for Innovation.

**CL History Seminar: The American Civil War**
*term course/juniors and seniors*
The American Civil War was a defining moment in American history. This course examines the causes of the conflict, the war itself, the period of Reconstruction up to 1877, as well as the meaning of the conflict today. Topics discussed in the course include the political developments in both the North and the South, the question of race and slavery, emancipation, the participation of African Americans in the war, and military developments. Students will read a mix of primary and secondary source material. Prerequisites: United States History or CL United States History; permission of the department

**CL History Seminar: Immigration and Ethnicity in the United States**
*term course/juniors and seniors*
What does it mean to be an American? This question has played an intriguing and pivotal role in the shaping of American identity from the nation’s founding to the present day. This course provides a detailed examination of both the immigrant experience and the reception of the immigrant in the United States since the 19th century. It will consider the causes of immigration, the social, cultural, and economic adaptation of various groups, the development of ethnic group identities, and changing American policy and attitudes towards immigrants and ethnic groups. Areas of studies may include, but are not limited to, the journeys of the following groups: Irish, Italians, Jews, Asians, Latinos/as, and Muslims. Class readings and research of micro-history will investigate the personal experiences of these various ethnicities. Prerequisites: United States History or CL United States History; permission of the department

**CL History Seminar: Race in American History**
*term course/ juniors and seniors*
The goals of this course are to examine the origin and function of the concept of race, and to understand how race and racism have influenced the thoughts, actions, identities, and experiences of people living in the United States. Concepts and themes such as institutional racism, whiteness, the myth of the Asian American model minority, and intersectionality with gender and class will be examined thematically. The course will chart the changing nature of race in American society and will empower students to assess the extent to which progress has been made in dismantling racialized institutions. Prerequisites: United States History or CL United States History; permission of the department

**CL Guided Humanities Research Seminar**
*winter term/seniors only*
This course provides students with the structure and flexibility needed to complete an undergraduate-level research project in the humanities. Students will engage in sustained, significant, mentored research that draws on their work in previous academic courses such as United States History as well as their involvement in various on-campus initiatives such as those offered through the Norton Family Center for the Common Good and the Alvord Center for Global & Environmental Studies. Possible topics may include: race and democracy in South Africa; sociology and politics of mass incarceration; history of the American college; food deserts in the United States; and gender in contemporary African American fiction. After an intensive period of independent research and writing, students will conclude the course by collaborating on an in-house interdisciplinary humanities journal. All students will complete archival research of some kind. Though a specific prospectus is not required at the outset, students should have a good sense of the research topics they would like to pursue before the term begins. Prerequisites: United States History or CL United States History; permission of the department based on the submission of a completed junior-year research paper

**CL History Seminar: The U.S. Presidential Election**
*fall term/juniors and seniors (offered in presidential election years only)*
How are our leaders elected? Does the election process produce the best candidates and the most desirable ends? Why do so few eligible voters exercise their right on Election Day? Do the American people really have a voice? What role does money play? How does the news media affect the election process? While addressing these questions and others, this course explores the major domestic and foreign policy issues of the campaign and the candidates’ positions on each. Students engage in extensive campaign research and/or take part in a modified mock election process here on campus. At the end of the term, students will thoroughly analyze the election results, drawing conclusions and making predictions for the coming presidency. Prerequisites: United States History or CL United States History; permission of the department

**Philosophy**

*Any of the following may be taken toward fulfilling the two-course Philosophy, Psychology, and Religious Studies diploma requirement. At least one course must be taken in the junior or senior year.*

**Philosophy Electives for Freshmen and Sophomores**

**Introduction to Ethical Issues**

*term course/freshmen and sophomores*

Students in this course examine a variety of moral issues and dilemmas and, by studying ethical theories and logical thinking, learn to approach and solve these dilemmas rationally. Students will learn by using research and by practicing civil discourse in group discussions to analyze ethical problems arising between diverse worldviews and cultures. Students complete a term paper investigating two sides of a public moral issue before arriving at a reasoned conclusion.

**Introduction to Philosophy**

*term course/freshmen and sophomores*

This course investigates the nature of philosophy by examining traditional philosophical problems: the ultimate nature of reality (metaphysics), the limits of human knowledge (epistemology), and the nature of the True, the Good, and the Beautiful (axiology). The course seeks to develop within students critical and inquisitive minds that understand philosophy not as a purely academic venture but as practical and indeed necessary for the development of meaningful and authentic lives.

**Philosophy Electives for Juniors and Seniors**

**Ancient Philosophy (GESC)**

*term course/juniors and seniors*

Facilitating the revolutionary transition from a mythological to a rational worldview, ancient philosophers were the first to ask important questions about the nature of reality and the way in which human beings experience the world. Many of these questions are still being asked today. After surveying the metaphysical and epistemological musings of the pre-Socratic philosophers, students hear Socrates defend himself before an Athenian court against charges of religious heterodoxy and corrupting the minds of the young, watch while Plato constructs an ideal society based on reason, and consider with Aristotle the most rational approach to the good life. While discussing these primary texts, students also address other topics including the nature of reality; the sources and limitations of human knowledge; the nature of the
True, the Good, and the Beautiful; social contracts; the nature of government; and piety, justice, and virtue.

**Philosophy and Literature**  
*term course/juniors and seniors*  
The writing of literature and the writing of philosophy are usually very different enterprises. This course is unique insofar as it seeks to examine a species of literature, a hybrid, whose purposes are plainly philosophical though its forms are plainly narrative. What are we to make of such a philosophical literature or of such a literary philosophy? What are its strengths? What are its weaknesses? What are we to learn from it both philosophically and literarily? And why is reading it and talking about it such fun? These are just some of the questions we will explore in this course.

**Theory of Knowledge**  
*term course/juniors and seniors*  
This course offers a philosophical investigation of the problems of knowledge and mind: What do we know? What can we know? To what extent is our knowledge determined and/or limited by the constitution of our mind or brain? The course confronts early on (as did modern epistemology) the radical skeptic's challenge that we can never be justified in our claims to know an external world, and then examines possible foundational principles of evidence and reasoning proposed to overcome that challenge. Some of the following topics are considered: the nature of scientific method, the problem of induction, the nature and justification of causal claims, principles of justification assumed in inferences from sense experience to reports about physical objects, philosophical theories of perception, the nature of consciousness, the mind-body problem, and the impact of modern neurological research and the challenge to knowledge posed by the problem of implicit bias. The course uses Noah Lemos' *Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge*. In addition, passages from the following are discussed in some detail: Descartes, Hume, Kant, Russell, Chisholm, Putnam, Dennett, Kornblith, and Eagleman.

**Topics in Ethical Theory (GESC)**  
*term course/juniors and seniors*  
Some of the earliest and most important questions to engage philosophers dealt with the moral nature of human behavior. What is the basis of moral judgment? What makes a right action right and wrong action wrong? Is normativity a matter of consequences or a matter of custom, duty, or rights? Is what's right for me necessarily right for you? Or what's right for us necessarily right for them? Using a collection of readings from both ancient and modern philosophers, as well as various secondary sources, this course familiarizes students with the terms and implications of this discussion as well as introducing them to a number of normative ethical theories ranging from ethical egoism and divine command theory, to utilitarianism and Kantian ethics. Students also seek to understand what light these normative ethical theories can shed on contemporary topics like animal rights, human equality, environmentalism, abortion, euthanasia, and absolute poverty.

**Topics in Logic**  
*term course/juniors and seniors*  
To make explicit our implicit principles of reasoning, this course introduces modern deductive and inductive logic, including propositional and predicate logic and techniques of formal proof. Students examine principles of logic and evidence, the foundations of our systems of knowledge. They come to understand the distinctions between validity and truth; between the actual, the logically possible, and the logically necessary; and between inductive versus deductive logic. Finally, students learn some of the traditional informal fallacies of relevance, ambiguity, and insufficient evidence. The course includes a brief introduction to key issues and readings in the theory of knowledge in order to give the proper philosophical setting and significance to the foundational logical principles.

**Religious Studies**

*Any of the following may be taken toward fulfilling the two-course Philosophy, Psychology, and Religious Studies diploma requirement. At least one course must be taken in the junior or senior year.*

**Religious Studies Elective for Freshmen and Sophomores**

**Religious Diversity in Contemporary America (GESC)**  
*term course/freshmen and sophomores*  
In 1955 the Jewish sociologist Will Herberg published an essay celebrating the triumph of religious diversity in America. He argued that America had become a nation where one could be a Protestant, a Catholic, or a Jew and still be
considered an American citizen. Though Herberg’s essay is regarded as a classic discussion of religion in America, its value has become more historical than descriptive. Today, in addition to large numbers of Americans who are members of the three religious traditions Herberg described, the United States includes rapidly growing populations of Muslims, Buddhists, and Hindus, as well as secular or non-religious groups. Making sense of what Diana Eck of the Harvard Pluralism Project calls “the world’s most religiously diverse nation” and understanding its implications for American social, cultural, and political realities constitute the focus of this course.

Religious Studies Elective for Sophomores, Juniors, and Seniors

Philosophy of Nonviolence (GESC)  
term course/sophomores, juniors, seniors  
Despite a universal desire for peace, it is not often that human beings beat their swords into ploughshares. History appears to be a rather tedious tale of hatred, greed, enmity, and violence between one group of human beings and another. Fortunately, the better angels of our nature prevail on occasion and advocates appear who bear witness to another way of achieving justice and peace in a world of finite resources. This course will explore the development of nonviolence in the philosophy of Mahavira, Buddha, Socrates, and Jesus, and in the courageous social activism of Mohandas Gandhi and Martin Luther King. Among other philosophical ideas, students will consider the implications of ahimsa; the emergence of conscience and the relativization of obedience to the state; nonresistance, pacifism and just war theory; satyagraha or nonviolent resistance, and the imperative to engage in social protest while still honoring the rule of law.

Religious Studies Electives for Juniors and Seniors

Children of Abraham: Moses, Jesus, and Mohammed (GESC)  
term course/juniors and seniors  
One of the extraordinary claims linking Moses, Jesus, and Mohammed is that they are all descendants of the biblical patriarch Abraham. This assumption of a common ancestry anticipates both the profound similarities and the striking differences existing between this family of religious traditions. Using both primary sources and a variety of secondary materials, students will examine the lives and teachings of Moses, Jesus, and Mohammed, asking fundamental questions about their understanding of the universe (cosmology), their experience of the sacred (theology), their understanding of themselves and others (anthropology), and their beliefs about liberation and redemption (soteriology).

Hinduism and Buddhism (GESC)  
term course/juniors and seniors  
With roots reaching back into the ancient civilization of the Indus Valley, and developing through the Brahanical, Sramana, and Classical Periods, Hinduism evolved into an “artful synthesis” of ritual sacrifice, yogic meditation, and devotional piety. This course is an introduction to Hinduism and its key concepts like dharma, karma, and reincarnation; to the gods and goddesses of the Hindu pantheon; and to selections from both its shruti and smriti scriptures, including the Rig Veda, the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita, and the Ramayana). Students will also explore a new philosophy developed and taught by the renunciate kshatriya, Siddhartha Gautama, that focuses on asceticism, mindfulness, and compassion, which spread northeast from the Gangetic plain into the lands and cultures of Central Asia and the Far East and was later to be called Buddhism.

Literature of the Bible  
term course/juniors and seniors  
Mark Twain once humorously characterized a classic as a book everybody talks about, but nobody reads. Twain would undoubtedly be surprised to learn that the Bible has become such a book. As American society has grown more secular and diverse, biblical literacy among Americans has plummeted. When understanding so much of American history, politics, and culture is predicated upon a familiarity with the literature of the Bible, knowing little or nothing about it can be a real liability. The purpose of this course is to address this deficiency. Students will read generous portions of the literature of the Bible, develop an appreciation for its artistry or poetries, and explore the ways it has been used to enrich the narrative world of American rhetoric, poetry, drama, art, and fiction.

Skeptics and Believers: Faith and Religion in a Secular World  
term course/juniors and seniors  
The April 8, 1966 Time magazine cover famously asked, “Is God Dead?” Written by an urban intellectual elite enchanted with science and technology and almost blind to the central role religion was currently playing in the Civil Rights
Movement, the article that followed offered a provisional “yes.” The world, it was thought, was on the cusp of a new secular era. The death of God and the end of religion was just a matter of time. It is not often that bright, educated people read the signs of the times so poorly. Today, religion continues to play an important role in every country and in almost every area of human experience, from economics and politics to culture and morality. This course will explore the reasons for its continuing relevance and the various ways it has been, and continues to be, challenged by philosophy and science.

**Independent Studies in History, Philosophy, and/or Religious Studies**

*term course/seniors*

Students who have fulfilled both their history and philosophy, psychology and religious studies diploma requirements may undertake an Independent Study Project. The student must arrange for a project advisor from within the department, **submit a written proposal**, and obtain approval from the academic advisor, project advisor, department head, and dean of faculty.