

# PHILOSOPHY (PL)

## PL-210 Search for Meaning (2 credits)

What does it mean to live a life of integrity? What is involved in living a good life? How do we decide what is or should be important to us? By studying a variety of philosophical perspectives and engaging in conversation about them, the student explores ways to address these questions and others. Through the writing of philosophers, stories of novelists, and contemporary films, they have the opportunity to reflect on their own sense of meaning in relation to what others believe and practice. They also develop the ability to think more carefully, consistently, and imaginatively about the ideas they are studying.

*Prerequisite(s):* FA-110 series course or LA 230, HUM-150 series course, CM-125

## PL-250 Thinking & Knowing (4 credits)

In this course students will explore the conditions and contexts that shape our answers to questions about why we know what we (claim to) know. To understand better how human beings acquire and evaluate and act upon knowledge in various times and places, we will explore the relationships between belief and faith, knowledge and opinion, evidence and intuition, nature and nurture. We will use a variety of philosophical, artistic and humanistic texts as vehicles to explore these relationships. Based on our exploration of why we know what we know, we will be led to a re-examination of why we want what we want. In this way, thinking about epistemological issues will lead us to raise ontological, spiritual, ethical and political questions.

*Prerequisite(s):* FA-110 Series or LA 230; HUM-150 Series; CM-125.

Preference given to students req to take this course if enrollment exceeds limit.

## PL-251 Philosophy of Food (4 credits)

In this course students will explore conditions and contexts around eating, cooking, and food that shape our answers to questions about who we are, what we know, and what we think we understand about ourselves and the world around us. The course is designed to explore humans' relationships to food through an examination of eating practices, spiritual and community ideologies in regard to eating and cooking, as well as the sources and implications of individual food preferences. Understanding the origins of our perceptions about food, cooking and eating, and uncovering the misconceptions, misunderstandings, and mythologies regarding food can result in a heightened understanding of ourselves and the world around us. Philosophical approaches to the mind-body relationship, nature versus nurture, concepts of personhood, food and value-theory, gender relationships to food are some of the aspects that will be explored throughout the course. We will use a variety of philosophical, artistic and humanistic texts as vehicles to explore these relationships. Based on our exploration of cooking, eating, and food, we will engage an examination of why we want what we want which will lead us to raise ontological, spiritual, ethical and political questions.

*Prerequisite(s):* FA-110 Series, HUM-150 Series; CM-125. Preference given to students req to take this course if enrollment exceeds limit.

## PL-252 Medical Ethics (4 credits)

Being human includes our biological-physical selves as living organisms, and our rational selves, which includes our thoughts, emotions, spirituality and philosophic outlook on life and its meaning. As individuals and societies we are faced with medical decisions and situations that impact or are impacted by diverse social, cultural, religious, and personal contexts that reflect a variety of different values and ethical points of view. Sometimes people's differing viewpoints conflict when medical decisions must be made, raising important and enduring questions, which might include: When does life begin and end? What does science tell us about these questions? What does one think about end of life care and physician-assisted suicide? What are the diverse perspectives on abortion, the death penalty, and war? How do we address issues surrounding access to medical care, and how do wealth and poverty affect illness? What is the responsibility of government and corporate interests toward health and medical ethics? What values do we associate with life and death? What do the major philosophical and religious traditions say about life, death, and what happens at death? How do our philosophic and religious views impact our decisions with regard to health care? In this course we will take a holistic approach to addressing medical-ethical questions from the perspectives of biology, philosophy, and religious studies. We will address medical ethical issues using key abilities. For example, we will engage the diverse global perspectives that impact medical ethics in varied social, ethnic, and religious contexts; and examine aesthetic expressions of life and death in literature, art and film. We will explore the values that impact medical-ethical decisions. Students will clarify and demonstrate their own ethical perspectives through reading, writing, listening and speaking. The course will be jointly taught by faculty from Biological Sciences and Philosophy, or Biology and Religious Studies.

*Prerequisite(s):* FA-110 Series or LA 230; HUM-150 Series; CM-125

Preference given to students req to take this course if enrollment exceeds limit.

## PL-253 Philosophy & Science of Mindfulness (4 credits)

The Philosophy and Science of Mindfulness will introduce students to scientific research and philosophical frameworks in the history of the Philosophy of Mind and in Buddhist philosophy as a foundation for their understanding of the new field of Mindfulness and its practices. Mindfulness is a fast developing field of integrative studies that can be applied in many professional areas, in society, as well as in one's personal life. This course will help students navigate the field and understand the significance of mindfulness, mindful practices, and the science for their own areas of study, their personal lives and in their social connections. It will also help students explore the implications of mindfulness and mindfulness strategies on society as a whole and the implications for new modes of thinking and visioning in the world today. Some concepts to be explored are mind-body dualism, Buddhist notion of illusion, human consciousness, happiness, insight, loving-kindness practice, as well as neuroplasticity, cortical real estate, competitive plasticity, and discussion of specific areas of the brain. Students will leave this course with both an intellectual understanding of the field of mindfulness as it stands today as well as having identified and articulated a personal practice relevant and valuable to them. There will be a lab component to the course that will have two dimensions: 1) an engagement with a variety of mindfulness practices and 2) presentations by various individuals who participate in mindfulness issues at Alverno and in the community, for instance, presentations on mindful parenting, mindfulness as a form of restorative justice in prisons, mindfulness education, the role of mindfulness in psychotherapy.

*Prerequisite(s):* FA-110 series, HUM-150 series & CM-125. Preference given to students req to take this course if enrollment exceeds limit.

**PL-310 Philosophy of Love and Friendship (2 credits)**

Offered Fall Term only. The student considers ideas of philosophers and artists from a variety of cultures and historical periods on the subjects of romantic love, family relationships, and friendship. They reflect on the implications of these perspectives for their own life and develop their own position on questions of meaning and significance in human relationships through a close analysis of philosophic and artistic texts. They express and expand their perspectives on these issues in written and oral dialogue with their peers.

*Prerequisite(s):* One Communication Level 3 ICM completed; one course in HFA-210 elective completed. Preference given to students required to take this course if enrollment exceeds limit.

**PL-311 Themes in Philosophy: Confronting Evil (2 credits)**

Offered Spring Term only. The student examines circumstances of oppression and destruction and the ways in which different individuals have handled and confronted those circumstances within personal, political, and social frameworks. They examine the interaction between oppressive dimensions of individual cultures and the values expressed in individual responses to that oppression, to find ways to articulate positive actions in their own life in light of the circumstances they encounter.

*Prerequisite(s):* Communication Level 3 ICM ; one HFA-210 elective  
Preference given to students required to take this course if enrollment exceeds limit. Offered in Spring Term only. Additional information: Spring 2019: this section has preference to the AAS students

**PL-375 Humanistic Existentialism (4 credits)**

Offered Fall Term only. The student is introduced to existentialism as a contemporary searchlight on present-day issues. They are expected to analyze and evaluate the themes, methods, and outlook of existentialism and their effects on areas of human concern. Each student independently analyzes a major existentialist work and relates it to other philosophical and artistic works dealing with the same themes.

*Prerequisite(s):* PL-250 or PL-251 or PL-252 or PL-310 or PL-311 or PL 312  
Communication Level 4 ICM completed.

**PL-385 Studies in Ethics: Theory & Practice (4 credits)**

Offered Spring Term only. The student examines a variety of frameworks for ethical decision making and their historical and sociocultural sources. They select and analyze ethical problems arising out of their own interests and applies them to the frameworks they have learned. They evaluate and respond to ethical positions taken by their classmates.

*Prerequisite(s):* Communication Level 4 ICM completed.

**PL-397 Independent Study (2 credits)**

Under the approval and direction of a faculty member, independent study is available to students.

**PL-399 Formal Introduction to Advanced Work (0 credits)**

The Advanced-Level Event marks a significant accomplishment for each student as they proceed into the work of their major department. When a department determines that a student is ready for advanced work within a discipline, the student is invited to participate in a ceremony that is both a celebration and an explanation of future requirements of the major and support areas. They register for this experience at a point determined by their major department: for most majors the registration is connected to the taking of a particular course. Students and faculty gather for an afternoon during Mid-semester Assessment Days. Following a general program, students meet in departmental sessions with their faculty to discuss advanced outcomes, department courses, advising procedures, and so on.

**PL-410 Philosophy Perspectives & Methods (4 credits)**

The student examines the history of philosophy to determine the unique contributions of various philosophies as well as the common threads that run throughout philosophical thought. Up to this point, the student has studied various worldviews in their respective contexts but has not focused on the relationships across these views. Now they develop a historical overview that stresses philosophy as a developmental process through the centuries. For example, the student explores the relationship of enlightenment questions to the philosophies that preceded them. By the end of the course, they see their own point of view as growing out of a complex background of ideological and cultural factors.

*Prerequisite(s):* PL-310 or PL-311 or PL 312 or PL-250 completed For WGS Major/Minors: WGS-200 & Communication Level 4 ICM completed. Offered in Spring Term only.

**PL-497 Independent Study (2-6 credits)**

Under the approval and direction of a faculty member, independent study is available to students.