

RELI 3055 Logic and Scientific Methodology (3,2,2)

Logic is the study of patterns of valid inference. This course introduces some basic concepts for understanding a logical system and the techniques to draw valid inferences. Apart from purely rational knowledge like logic, the course also discusses methodological issues in the philosophy of science, such as Mill's methods, induction and its problems, probability and causal explanation.

Technicality will be kept to the minimum to make this foundational course beneficial to students from any background. Students are likely to find it useful in further philosophical study to have some familiarity with a formal logical language and the ability to use it to investigate logical relationships and to understand its use by others. This course also prepares students to proceed with courses in epistemology and philosophy of language.

RELI 3056 Philosophy of Mind, Consciousness, and Personal Identity (3,2,2)

Philosophy of mind is the study of the nature of the mind and various conceptual puzzles related to any mental aspects and activities of life, in particular humans. It is one of the oldest yet still the most prolific fields in philosophy. Contemporary discussions are fuelled by tremendous advances in many areas—neurosciences, psychology, psychiatry, medical sciences, linguistics, sociology, artificial intelligence, computer studies, robotics, to name but a few—giving the area a huge interdisciplinary character without detracting from its unique philosophical relevance.

This course aims to survey a particular issue in the philosophy of mind, namely, the mind-body problem. Dualists claim that mind and body are distinct substances, whereas physicalists claim that mental states are just physical states. The course starts by examining the origin and the implications of Descartes' dualism, and moves into the current philosophical debate on the relationship between the mental and the physical. Various theories will be examined including behaviourism, identity theory, functionalism, interpretativism, and eliminativism. The focus is on whether physicalists can reply to the challenges on intentionality, propositional attitudes and phenomenal consciousness. It explores what it means to be a person and how personal identity is formed. In the end of the course, we reflect on some assumptions such as the distinction of the subjective versus the objective, and whether the mind is confined by the body.

RELI 3057 Philosophy, Modernism and Postmodernism (3,2,2)

We have entered into a postmodern age, yet how should it be characterized exactly? Jean-Francois Lyotard, a French philosopher, once defined postmodern as "incredulity toward meta-narratives", meaning that an essential characteristic of the postmodern age is its disbelief in many modern ideas such as progress in history, reason and the existence of absolute truth. Instead, the postmodern era is marked by entrenched understanding of power relations in many areas, the emphasis on diversity and plurality, attempts to re-examine the nature of capitalism, the influence of consumerism and of new technology in the society, etc.

This course focuses on the philosophical debates between the modern and the postmodern ideas. It examines critical issues about the nature of truth, reason, agency, freedom, power, and knowledge by comparing the Enlightenment Project and critiques from postmodern philosophers. A focal debate is on whether we shall become relativists or nihilists while living in a pluralistic society. Textual studies and in-depth discussions will be conducted.

RELI 3065 History of Modern Western Philosophy: From Descartes to Marx (3,2,2)

This course aims to systematically introduce students to philosophies that shape the modern world. It covers the period from Descartes (the 17th century) to Marx (the 19th century). The course will outline the thoughts of various significant thinkers in the period, trace debates among their contemporaries, and

show how they set the agenda for later generations. Students are expected to philosophize with the great thinkers. The objective is to develop an entrenched understanding of ideas that still influence us today.

RELI 3066 The Meaning of Humanity: The Philosophies of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche (3,2,2)

Søren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche were seminal thinkers who have changed the course of philosophizing in our modern and postmodern era. They are often referred to as the fathers of existentialism and postmodernism. From their thoughts emerged provocative themes which are still very hotly discussed today, such as truth as subjectivity, the single individual, the leap of faith on the side of Kierkegaard, and the death of God, the Superman, and the transvaluation of values on the side of Nietzsche. They show comparable views in exposing the problems of man, of dominant philosophical traditions and of human society. Despite their common insights, however, their philosophies stem from very different foundations and go to opposite conclusions. For Kierkegaard, he holds on to an absolute faith in the Christian God in the face of uncertainty. And for Nietzsche, in foregoing both religion and morals, he posits artistic creation as the ultimate solution to save man from falling apart in the void of truth. The present course aims at a critical discussion and comparison of the important themes in the philosophies of the Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. It will also investigate in what manners these authors could help us understand ourselves and chart our search for truth and meaning of life.

RELI 3067 Modern Logic and Logics in Religious Discourse (3,2,1)

The course aims to provide a comparative study of modern logic and logics developed in different religious systems. In this course, we will introduce theories and concepts developed by modern logicians. Special attention will be given to first order theory of logic and some of its meta-theorems. We will then discuss logics developed in various religious systems such as Mohist and Buddhist logics as well as logical principles and concepts developed by medieval Christian thinkers. Throughout the discussion, we will refer to the theories and concepts of modern logic whereas it is deemed appropriate.

RELI 3075 Religions and Animals (3,2,2)

Is it true that different religious traditions benefit animals? Are religious people and religious institutions more or less likely to be respectful to animals—either those kept as companions or those used for other human purposes? This course is mainly designed to explore the role and status of animals of different religious traditions, in which the positive and negative resources will be addressed in order to equip students to understand the influence of religious traditions towards human attitude on animals. Moreover, the course will introduce the contemporary discussion towards animals rights and animals welfare movement in order to have dialogue between ethical and religious perspectives towards the human-animals relationship. Lastly, some current issues, e.g. food industry, animals test, vegetarianism and laws about animals, will be examined.

RELI 3076 Religion and Consumerism (3,2,2)

Of the various socio-cultural phenomenon of the late 20th and early 21st century, consumerism is the most conspicuous. This course first examines the socio-economic and technological factors that give rise to a consumer society, and the ideological impetus that give rise to the ideology of consumerism in its various forms and manifestations. The critique towards such consumerism would then be examined. After that, the religious reflection from various religious thinkers and practitioners towards modern day consumerism would be outlined and analysed. The spiritual movements arising from notable religious practitioners towards such consumerism would be examined. Their mutual influence and enrichment with secular counter-consumerism movement will be considered too. Lastly the impact of modern consumeristic attitude towards religious attendance and practice would be examined.