DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION

Dr. Jeffrey Samuels, Interim Head
Email: Jeffrey.Samuels@wku.edu

Cherry Hall, Office 300
Phone: (270) 745-3136; Fax: (270) 745-5261
Website: http://www.wku.edu/philosophy-religion

Philosophy

The mission of the philosophy program is to use its faculty’s collective expertise and experience in the various philosophical disciplines to teach philosophy with the intention of enabling its students to become effective, self-critical leaders able to empower others, to solve problems in diverse social and professional settings, and to experience satisfactions that can only come from living the examined life. To serve this mission, the philosophy program is committed to providing courses that:

• foster ethical understanding, analytical reading, logical thinking, and clear expression in our students;
• illuminate the assumptions, methods, and foundations of other disciplines for students who also major or minor in philosophy;
• acquaint students with paradigms and perspectives from past philosophies that provide recurring thought patterns whose strengths and weaknesses an autonomous individual should know;
• prepare students to deal with problems for which there are neither simple nor obvious solutions;
• equip students for graduate and professional study in fields such as law, government service, management, medicine, the ministry, and philosophy.

The philosophy program aids students to draw out from within themselves the assumptions and beliefs — often unconsciously but nonetheless deeply felt and held — governing their thoughts and actions, to express these inner convictions fully and clearly, and to subject them to critical analysis. This is the birth into the examined life. It is also the first step toward awakening in students the spirit of critical inquiry, encouraging them to question readily accepted ideas, to probe for and to expose all assumptions, and to subject all claims and all issues—personal or public, local or international — to close examination. Philosophy lays bare fundamental questions and instructs students in the methods for grappling with them. As students develop, they see how ideas drive the phenomena of daily life. Philosophy calls students to the responsibility of putting all ideas to the test to know their value.

Religious Studies

The mission of the religious studies program is to promote the academic study of religion at Western Kentucky University and in the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

The academic study of religion provides the student with the methodological orientation necessary to comprehend the central beliefs, ethical practices, ritual systems, symbols, and social institutions of diverse religious traditions in their historic, contemporary and global contexts. Study in this field is multicultural and comparative, examining the life, ways, and moral worlds of societies past and present, our own as well as others. The student learns to probe for the structure, function and meaning of religion through those rites of passage, sacred narratives, faith communities, and codes of behavior that give meaning to human existence.

Asian Religions and Cultures

The continent of Asia is home to some of the most ancient and formative civilizations in history. All of the world’s largest religious traditions have their origins on the continent, and Asian peoples have shaped and reshaped how humanity understands the world and itself for centuries. The Asian Religions and Cultures major facilitates the understanding of the continent and its peoples, allowing students to understand not only the Asian past but to put current issues and problems into a broader historical, religious, and cultural context.

The department offers a major and a minor in philosophy, religious studies, and Asian religions and cultures. These majors prepare students for graduate work in a variety of disciplines, including philosophy and religious studies. Majors and minors in these fields also contribute to preparation for a variety of professional and vocational fields. In each case, the number of semester hours required is modest in order to encourage second majors and minors. The requirements are flexible enough to permit students to select courses which develop and extend their interest.

Degrees

• Asian Religions and Cultures, Bachelor of Arts (615) (http://catalog.wku.edu/undergraduate/arts-letters/philosophy-religion/Asian-religions-cultures-ba)
• Philosophy, Bachelor of Arts (745) (http://catalog.wku.edu/undergraduate/arts-letters/philosophy-religion/philosophy-ba)
• Religious Studies, Bachelor of Arts (769) (http://catalog.wku.edu/undergraduate/arts-letters/philosophy-religion/religious-studies-ba)

Minors

• Philosophy, Minor (429) (http://catalog.wku.edu/undergraduate/arts-letters/philosophy-religion/philosophy-minor)
• Religious Studies, Minor (447) (http://catalog.wku.edu/undergraduate/arts-letters/philosophy-religion/religious-studies-minor)

Pre-Theology

Advisor: Dr. Jeffrey Samuels
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Theological seminaries, accredited by the American Association of Theological Schools, require for entrance the Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science degree from an accredited four-year college or university. Pre-theological students should seek to attain a broad background in liberal arts subjects in their university studies. In selecting majors, serious consideration should be given to the fields of English, history, philosophy, and religious studies. Minors and free electives should be chosen from the areas of English, history, mass communication, philosophy, psychology, religious studies, sociology, and communication.

Entry requirements for specific theological seminaries and for different programs within these institutions vary. Students should consult
seminary catalogs and the pre-theology advisor. Special attention should be paid to the language requirement made by some seminaries.

The courses recommended below to be taken in fulfilling Western Kentucky University’s general education guidelines are not mandatory but include every basic recommendation of the American Association of Theological Schools:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Hours</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ENG 100</td>
<td>Introduction to College Writing</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>ENG 300</td>
<td>Writing in the Disciplines</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLNG 152</td>
<td>Biblical Languages I: Introductory Hebrew</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>BLNG 153</td>
<td>Biblical Languages II: Intermediate Hebrew</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLNG 154</td>
<td>Biblical Languages III: Introductory Greek</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLNG 155</td>
<td>Biblical Languages IV: Intermediate Greek</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIST 101</td>
<td>World History I</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIST 102</td>
<td>World History II</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Natural Science (chemistry, physics, biology, or geology)</td>
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<tr>
<td>PHIL 101</td>
<td>Enduring Questions: Truth and Relativism</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHIL 102</td>
<td>Enduring Questions: The Good and the Beautiful</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHIL 103</td>
<td>Enduring Questions: The Committed Life</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSY 100</td>
<td>Introduction to Psychology</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or PSYS 100</td>
<td>Introduction to Psychology</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>RELS 100</td>
<td>The New Testament</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>RELS 101</td>
<td>The Old Testament/ Hebrew Scriptures</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RELS 102</td>
<td>World Religions</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMM 145</td>
<td>Fundamentals of Public Speaking and Communication</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
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Social Sciences (six hours from sociology, economics, political science, anthropology, political science)

MATH (three hour elective)

Please note: Recommended courses are based on WKU’s assessment of specific professional school requirements. Students should, in consultation with their advisor, review the requirements at the professional school of their choice.

**Faculty**

**Professor**

Isabel Mukonyora PhD, University of Oxford, 1999
Jeffrey Samuels PhD (Religious Studies), University of Virginia, 2002
Michael J. Seidler PhD (Philosophy), Saint Louis University, 1981
Lawrence W. Snyder PhD (Religious Studies), University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, 1992

**Associate Professor**

Audrey L. Anton PhD (Philosophy), The Ohio State University Main Campus, 2011
Paul A. Fischer PhD (East Asian Languages and Civilizations), University of Chicago, 2007

**Assistant Professor**

Sophia R. Arjana PhD (Religious/Theological Studies), University of Denver, 2011
James W. Barker PhD (Religion), Vanderbilt University, 2011

**Instructor I**

Jannai M. Shields PhD (Philosophy), University of Rochester, 2016

Elizabeth J. Gish THD, Harvard University, 2013