Department of English and Philosophy

Course Information
The English and Philosophy Majors

To be both a speaker of words and a doer of deeds—this was Achilles’ ideal, and it could be yours. The Department of English and Philosophy prepares you for the ranks of modern warriors who embody a thoughtful, intellectual spirit of understanding and action. Former Secretary of Veterans’ Affairs, Army Chief of Staff, and instructor for the Department of English General (USA, Ret) Eric Shinseki has discussed the powerful connection between officership and the liberal arts:

“It is to the skills and lessons I acquired in the study of art, philosophy, and literature that I turned most frequently and used each and every day to understand, to communicate, to educate, and to motivate others in helping me accomplish my military responsibilities.”

If you take up Achilles’ challenge, you would explore a broad range of English or Philosophy courses with room to customize your educational experience. You would take thirteen courses, including a disciplinary methodology course; a disciplinary-specific senior seminar; three courses in a complementary support track; and eight other electives within the major. Should you qualify and wish to enroll in the Honors Program, you would add a two-semester senior thesis sequence. To graduate with honors, a cadet must attain a grade-point average of 3.0 in the core curriculum and 3.5 in the major.

For more information on the English or Philosophy majors:

COL John Nelson at 845-938-2248 or john.nelson@usma.edu
Ms. Kris Fox at 845-938-3967 or kristina.fox@usma.edu
THE ENGLISH MAJOR

Program Director: Professor Tony McGowan (x2670)

Cadets who major in English refine skills of analysis and creativity as well as enrich their imaginative capacities by studying the literary and artistic expressions of primarily Anglo-American, and to a lesser extent global, cultures. Exposed to a range of literary genres and modes of cultural expression, English majors graduate with a broader and deeper understanding of the history of ideas and of the ways in which imaginative literature has influenced human behavior and shaped cultural norms. History tells us what happened, Aristotle noted, poetry what might. By exploring the full spectrum of human behaviors and circumstances and by laying the groundwork for the cultivation of emotional intelligence and sympathetic imagination, the study of literature equips graduates to engage the world’s intellectual, moral, and emotional complexities with insight and the potential for empathy. English majors refine their listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills in a variety of analytic and creative situations from the textual analysis of poetry and prose to the study of literary history to dramatic performance. The English major with Honors further challenges cadets to compose a lengthy academic research project in close consultation with a member of the doctoral faculty. With an English major, a cadet graduates from West Point with the capacity to analyze textual evidence, to account for cultural context and complexity, to communicate precisely, and to imagine creative solutions to difficult problems — attributes that, taken together, constitute excellent preparation for Army service in the twenty-first century and for life more broadly.

Required Courses:

LITERARY METHODOLOGIES (EN300)
This course provides cadets the methodological tools required to analyze and evaluate primary and secondary sources. Through the study of representative primary sources ranging from the ancient to the postmodern, cadets will learn the critical vocabularies and theoretical contexts necessary for the meaningful study of literature. Attention to the nature and history of literary genres, the historical development of literary criticism, and a variety of theoretical approaches to literature will provide cadets with the foundational knowledge required of an English major.
THE ENGLISH MAJOR

Required Courses (cont.):

SENIOR SEMINAR (EN400)
Seminar in Advanced Literary Study challenges English majors to study a topic in depth and to refine the tools essential for the analysis and evaluation of literary and other texts. One of the primary goals of the course is to assess the value and the limitations of varied critical approaches (such as feminism, historicism, Marxism, cultural studies, postcolonial theory, and psychoanalysis) as tools for reading the literature centered on the special topic. As is the case with all departmental core and elective offerings, this course also provides the foundation of knowledge and skills necessary for an officer’s critical thinking, creativity, and pursuit of lifelong learning.

Distribution Requirements:

Cadets majoring in English must take at least one course in each of the following categories:

I. Early Period Survey:
   - Ancient to Early Modern Literature (EN311)
   - American Literature I (EN321)
   - British Literature I (EN331)

II. Late Period Survey:
   - American Literature II (EN322)
   - British Literature II (EN332)
   - Contemporary Literature (EN340)

III. Genre Course:
   - Poetry (EN361)
   - Film and Film Theory (EN362)
   - The Novel (EN363)
   - Drama (EN364)
Survey Courses

ANCIENT TO EARLY MODERN LITERATURE (EN311)
This course provides an introduction to some of the foundational literary works that have helped shape Anglophone literary history and culture. The course may examine classical texts as well as representative works through the Early Modern period.

AMERICAN LITERATURE I & II (EN321, EN322)
You do not have to take these courses in sequence. “American literature” shouldered its way onto the world literary scene during the Age of Exploration, where EN321 begins. Advancing toward the Civil War, we read works from the traditional Puritan canon as well as from authors such as Emerson, Lincoln, Dickinson, and Whitman. The investigation of cultural and intellectual history will also lead us to literature by Native Americans, French and Spanish colonizers, and African captives. EN321’s examination of a broad range of genres and modes of writing will serve as prologue to EN322’s consideration of traditional and nontraditional writings from the Civil War to the present. Central to both courses is the question of what, exactly, constitutes American Literature.

BRITISH LITERATURE I & II (EN331, EN332)
You do not have to take these courses in sequence. They examine the tradition and innovation that has shaped British literature and culture over the centuries, devoting attention not only to “major authors” but also to authors writing against the established tradition. EN331 will examine works of Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Pope, and others, while EN332 will focus on works by a range of authors including Wordsworth, Austen, Woolf, Joyce, and Yeats. An enriched understanding of the many strands of British Literature will also help us to understand our own complicated literary history.
Survey Courses (cont.)

CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE (EN340)
This course examines literature of the later 20th and the 21st centuries. In addition, it may explore the implications of contemporary information technologies for traditional literary forms, the role of globalization in literary production and reception, or the relation of literature to pressing current issues such as persistent violent conflict, immigration, and climate change.

Topic Courses

WORLD LITERATURE (EN351)
They say the world is shrinking, and maybe that’s so; but its literature is growing day by day. To be a well-read citizen of the global village you need to take this course. In EN351 our mission is to explore literary, cultural, and political difference. Toward that end we might pair Basho’s travel writing with Jonathan Swift’s Gulliver’s Travels or Conrad’s Heart of Darkness with Chinua Achebe’s critique of Conradian imperialism. Crossing genres and historical periods, we will acquire knowledge of the development of literary forms, insight into the dynamic relationship between art and political change, and appreciation of the strange echoes that carry across cultural, religious, and geographical expanses. Take this course before you find yourself a lieutenant in a foreign land.

POWER AND DIFFERENCE (EN352)
This course examines the complex relationship between language and power through in-depth study of both literary and theoretical texts. The course’s focus may include but is not limited to Indigenous literature, Asian-American literature, African-American literature, postcolonial literature, and LGBTQ literature.
WAR LITERATURE (EN353)
As one who aspires to a career in the profession of arms, you can’t go wrong by exploring the various ways in which writers, artists, and filmmakers have come to terms with the subject of war. One recent version of the course has asked questions like these: Was the Great War all that great? Was the Good War entirely good? How has the First World War affected and shaped modern memory? Why is Hollywood still revisiting the experience of World War II? Whatever a given version’s approach, it is worthwhile to traverse the territory of human conflict with creative figures who have attempted to capture at least part, if not all, of the truth of war. Cross the line of departure to a heightened awareness and appreciation of the aesthetic and moral dimensions of the military experience.

SPECIAL TOPICS (EN354)
This course explores an advanced topic in Literature. Specific subject matter will vary with the expertise of the senior faculty member conducting the course. Recent versions of this course include “Violence and Irish Literature” and “Postcolonial Theory and Literature.”

Genre Courses

POETRY (EN361)
Embracing a wide variety of authors, works, periods, traditions, and forms, this course considers the literary genre through which human beings have expressed their most intensely imaginative visions of themselves and the world, and connections between the two. Some consideration of poetics and prosody will complement the cadets’ reading of verse that ranges from Japanese haiku through the Shakespearean sonnet to the free-verse creations of modern and contemporary poets.
Genre Courses (cont.)

**FILM AND FILM THEORY (EN362)**

Andy Warhol once claimed, “It’s the movies that have really been running things in America ever since they were invented. They show you what to do, how to do it, when to do it, how to feel about it, and how to look how you feel about it.” EN362 examines film as the major new art form of the twentieth century and considers its potential as perhaps the most electric and influential medium of the twenty-first. Through the screening of films and the reading of screenplays, essays, and articles, we will learn about film form and genre, the history of Hollywood and world cinemas, the evolution of film criticism and theory, and the relationship between film and technology. What is Rosebud anyway?

**THE NOVEL (EN363)**

In this course the word *novel* designates any extended fictional narrative, almost always in prose. In addition to becoming better readers, we will work toward understanding the culturally complex world within and around the novel. We might travel from the alleyways of Defoe’s London to the mean streets of Dreiser’s Chicago, from the chill of Hawthorne’s New England to the Irish pubs of Joyce’s Dublin.

**DRAMA (EN364)**

Why is the play the thing? Why and how does it capture our imagination and entertain us even as it stirs our emotions, provokes us to thought, and maybe even teaches us a thing or two? As the literary genre that lives on both page and stage, drama demands not merely the reading of the text but also the imagining of the play’s stagecraft, the delivery of the lines, the appearance and attitude of the actors, and many other theatrical details. EN364 ranges from the classical to the contemporary with several stops in between. Drama’s susceptibility to a staggering variety of responses and interpretations is guaranteed to nurture the creative spirit.
Single Author Courses

SHAKESPEARE (EN370)
Shakespeare . . . in love or out, in war and peace, in verse and prose. The man Ben Jonson loved to hate and Dr. Johnson hated to love—the glove-maker’s son who was so extraordinary yet anonymous that some eccentric scholars persist in believing he was himself a fiction, that someone else wrote his plays: Christopher Marlowe, perhaps, or Francis Bacon, or maybe the Earl of Oxford. This course investigates William Shakespeare’s unique genius. You will read tragedies, histories, comedies, and the so-called “problem plays,” as well as representative sonnets. Topics of inquiry may include language, the theatrical and political contests of the English Renaissance, contemporary criticism, and the enduring influence of Shakespeare’s work on popular culture.

SINGLE AUTHOR COLLOQUIUM (EN371)
This course provides in-depth study of a single author (not Shakespeare). The course provides Cadets a window onto the literary, autobiographical, and historical arc of a particular writer or pair of writers.
## SAMPLE ENGLISH MAJOR W/ HONORS
(CSC Track: “literature and History”)

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## Complementary Support Course Tracks

### Literature and History

### Literature and the Natural World

### Literature and Philosophy

### Literature and Foreign Language

### Literature, Culture, and Society
THE PHILOSOPHY MAJOR

Program Director: Professor Robert Tully (x3410)

The scope of Philosophy is much wider than the areas of Ethics and Just War theory studied in PY201. Besides Ethics, Philosophy investigates the very nature of human knowledge; the relationship between mind and matter; and fundamental principles of the kind that underlie religion, science, and politics. The study of Philosophy also has a significant cultural dimension. It challenges us to understand attitudes, beliefs and arguments from societies more or less remote from our own: the Greek and Roman world; the classical age of Asian thought; 17th Century European thought in its adjustment to modern science; and American contributions to our understanding of traditional philosophical problems. Doing Philosophy is a superior example of Critical Thinking at work, thanks to the high value it places in all its courses on systematic investigation, conceptual analysis, and cogent reasoning. West Point’s Philosophy major is designed to ensure breadth and to encourage depth. It also provides opportunities to pursue further study in the ethics of war. A Philosophy major with Honors enables a cadet the opportunity for close, careful and creative study of a topic during two semesters under the guidance of a thesis director or committee. The intellectual skills and experience fostered by studying Philosophy are beneficial to the Army. The future officer in whom these skills take root will be an asset to any branch. For the individual, the study of Philosophy forms part of an examined life.

Required Courses:

PHILOSOPHICAL METHODS (PY300)

This course provides cadets the methodological tools required to analyze and understand the important moments and topics in philosophy, developing the philosophical language necessary for success within the philosophy curriculum. Through the study of philosophy within the western tradition, cadets will learn about major developments in logic, metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics, among other areas. This background provides the foundational knowledge required of a philosophy major.
Required Courses (cont.):

LOGICAL REASONING (PY305)
This course blends two areas of study that are often kept separate in university courses on logic: informal logic and formal (or symbolic) logic. Informal logic emphasizes natural language arguments, rules of valid inference (called traditional logic), and the identification of mistakes in reasoning that make arguments logically weak though possibly persuasive (fallacies). By contrast, formal logic builds a symbolic representation of sentences and arguments, describes rigorous tests for determining whether symbolized arguments are valid, and provides the means to assess arguments of far greater complexity than the rules of traditional logic can manage. Although symbolic logic may look like mathematics, it is really a useful means for examining sentences and arguments solely in terms of their logical meaning, much as x-ray machines enable a skillful eye to examine skeletons. The course will make some attempt to connect these two approaches to logic instead of leaving them in a state of tension or contrast or emphasizing one at the expense of the other.

SENIOR SEMINAR (PY400)
This course provides cadets with the opportunity for advanced study in the discipline. Through the advanced study of a topic in philosophy, cadets will build on the foundation established in PY300 and throughout their academic career at West Point. They will deepen their mastery of philosophical concepts and methods and grow as scholars by applying those concepts and methods to a number of different disciplinary perspectives. Through intensive study of primary and secondary texts, this course broadens the knowledge base by bridging disciplinary approaches and setting the stage for cadets’ continued educational development.
Required Courses (cont.):

Cadets majoring in Philosophy must take either PY310 or PY320. Whichever course is not taken as required can be taken as an elective.

REALITY AND KNOWLEDGE (PY310)

At some point we all want to know what is—and how we know it. Addressing those very questions, PY310 tackles the problems of ultimate reality (metaphysics) and human knowledge (epistemology). Are we really free, or are all of our actions determined? Do we have souls or spirits that survive after our death, or are we just material bodies with complex brains that in the end disintegrate? Is there life after death? If those metaphysical questions seem tough, what will you do with these epistemological puzzlers? Can you know anything for certain? What does it mean to say you know something? How can you justify your beliefs? By the end of the course, you will be able to articulate your own view of what is and how you know what is. Your roommate will be impressed.

OR

ETHICS (PY320)

This course offers a systematic examination and comparison of standard Ethical doctrines as well as an analysis of some of the fundamental concepts and assumptions belonging to the nature of ethical thinking itself (Meta-ethics). The ethical doctrines to be studied include those associated with renowned philosophers such as Aristotle (virtue theory), Kant (deontology), and Mill (utilitarianism). The focus will be not only on original texts which advance the doctrines but also on criticisms and defenses of them by contemporary philosophers. The texts of Meta-ethics to be studied belong to the analytic tradition of Philosophy and concern the meaning and status of normative language in general. PY320 provides a worthwhile background Cadets may apply in any course in applied Ethics, such as PY325 Military Ethics and PY326 Cyber Ethics. It will also prove useful to Cadets in other academic majors, particularly in Political Theory, Law, and History.
PHILOSOPHY ELECTIVES

Distribution Requirements:
Distribution Requirements for the Philosophy major are met by taking at least TWO electives from the Historical area (PY360-PY389) and at least THREE from the Sub-discipline areas (PY310-PY359). The electives are taught in a two-year cycle.

MILITARY ETHICS (PY325)
This course builds within the framework of Just War Theory introduced in the core course, PY201. The central concepts include justified responses to aggression, proportionality in the use of force, the rights of non-combatants, and the moral (as distinguished from legal) responsibilities of soldiers and their officers. PY325 works with these concepts in three creative ways. The course traces the underlying ethical principles of Just War Theory; it applies these principles to the contemporary context of asymmetrical warfare, such as found in the Middle East, Africa and Afghanistan, and it examines case studies of situations requiring officers to make moral decisions under combat pressure within the fog of incomplete or conflicting information.

CYBER ETHICS (PY326)
This multi-disciplinary course will examine the current ethical, social and legal issues related to cyberspace, with a particular focus on: (1) the regulation or regulability of cyberspace; (2) the inherent tensions between traditional government surveillance and public safety efforts, and the growing necessity for strong cyber security practices; (3) the ethical concerns surrounding government secrecy; (4) privacy and anonymization in cyberspace; and (5) cyber weapons and cyberwar.

TOPICS IN ETHICS (PY329)
This course provides cadets an opportunity for reading and analysis in depth of some of the seminal philosophical works in ethics. Taught in seminar format, the course challenges first-class and second-class cadets to take responsibility for discussion and analysis and for drawing connections between ideas as they occur throughout history and across cultures. The cadets will gain a deeper understanding of the human condition and of the complex world of values.
PHILOSOPHY ELECTIVES

POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY (PY330)
Combine contentious recent election campaigns, a controversial war, and a labyrinthine debate about what globalization means. What do you get? A great setting for philosophical investigation into the nature of justice, rights, liberty, equality, and other central political ideas. In PY363 we will haul classical and contemporary political theories before the tribunal of logic and experience. The effort will help us better to understand our political choices and ourselves.

PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION (PY345)
What are the arguments for and against the existence of God? How can a good God allow the presence of evil? Are miracles possible? Is there life after death? Is it rational to believe in God, or does faith demand the suspension of reason? Is there a necessary relationship between ethics and religion? Is there a single true religion? If these questions have ever intrigued you, you already know that you need this course, in which you will confront the words of the Oxford philosopher Anthony Kenny: "If there is no God, then God is incalculably the greatest single creation of the human imagination." Real or imagined, what subject could be more compelling than God?

PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE (PY350)
It has long been acknowledged that mathematics and the natural sciences provide knowledge of the world—if any disciplines do. But "the" scientific worldview has proved suspiciously unstable, thanks to Darwin, Einstein, and quantum theory. In PY386 you will roam the halls of science and learn how the structure was built. Knowing the equation is critically important, of course, but understanding the processes that led to our search for the equation provides insight into the whole scientific enterprise. Take this course to understand science better.

PHILOSOPHY OF MIND (PY355)
A mind is a terrible thing to waste. It's also a very difficult thing to understand. How can there be room for conscious beings in a world apparently composed of physical stuff and governed by physical laws? Are minds supernatural entities, souls that lie beyond the reach of science? Or are minds just very complicated physical structures? What is the relationship between psychology and physics, or psychology and computer science? Could a properly designed computer think? Could it experience emotion? This course—properly designed and loaded with emotion—will help you and your mind attempt to find plausible answers to fundamental questions.
ANCIENT PHILOSOPHY (PY360)
The ancient Greek philosophers gave Western culture its central ideas about humanity, science, ethics, and politics. You will examine the exciting theories about human nature and the nature of reality that set philosophy on its thoughtful way, including the works of such luminaries as Heraclitus, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics, Epicurus, and the Early Christian philosophers who sought to develop a rational framework for their faith. You will also examine some current scholarship on these philosophers, with an eye toward learning how and to what extent philosophy has changed, and how it is done today.

EASTERN THOUGHT (PY369)
In seeking understanding of the Eastern way, you will explore diverse primary sources such as the *I Ching*, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, *The Analects*, the *Bhagavadgita*, the *Tao Te Ching*, and the *Code of the Samurai*. We will study the philosophical significance of the ideas, images, symbolism, and methods of understanding in systems of thought like Hinduism, Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism. Attention to C. G. Jung’s conception of archetypes of the collective unconscious and to his commentaries on some of these classics may move us from the unconscious to the conscious. We may practice divination as described in the *I Ching* (what does the future hold?) and then analyze its philosophical importance.

17th- & 18th-CENTURY PHILOSOPHY (PY370)
This course examines a selection of texts written by central figures in the formative centuries of modern European philosophy. Their ideas have had continuing influence on philosophers down to our present day, as well as profound influences on the development of political thought and the scientific understanding of human beings. Two schools of thought will be covered: Rationalism and Empiricism. Associated with the first school are the continental philosophers Descartes (widely accepted as the founder of Modern Philosophy), Spinoza and Leibniz. The school of Empiricism includes the British philosophers Hobbes, Locke, Berkeley and Hume.
KANT & 19th-CENTURY PHILOSOPHY (PY375)
Kant is arguably the most important philosophical figure in the modern era. This course examines Kant’s reactions to early modern philosophy and explains his enormous innovations in epistemology, metaphysics, and political and ethical thought. Paying special attention to Kant’s influence, the course also examines major philosophical movements in the 19th century. These movements might include idealism, both in Germany and Britain, pragmatism, utilitarianism, existentialism, and the late-century birth of analytic philosophy. Hegel, Marx, J. S. Mill, William James, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and G. E. Moore are possible subjects of close study.

20th-CENTURY PHILOSOPHY (PY380)
Join with the thinkers of the famous Vienna Circle or engage Sartre and the existentialists in engaging the philosophical ideas of the 20th Century. This period saw an entire host of new views and fields emerge in the discipline of Philosophy. We’ll explore the rise (and sometimes fall) of major new movements such as Logical Positivism, Naturalism, Existentialism, Pragmatism, and the Philosophy of Language. Some of the important philosophers we’ll meet include A.J. Ayer, Wittgenstein, Bertrand Russell, Sartre, Heidegger, Charles Pierce, and John Dewey.

INTER-DEPARTMENT SEMINAR (PY390)
This course brings together a faculty member from DEP and one other department with Cadets majoring in those two departments with the aim of conducting a joint investigation of an important topic or cluster of topics, or the work of a single author, of recognized significance and shared interest. It will be taught every other year, on each occasion combining Philosophy with another discipline. Examples of second disciplines include History, Political Theory, Psychology, and Law. Examples of topics include: justice, philosophies of history, the evolution of human rights theory, the relationship between morality and law, cognition and mental phenomena, and evolving conceptions of citizenship. Examples of single author investigations include: Locke, Rousseau, Hume. The course will count as credit towards the major in both of the paired departments.
## SAMPLE PHILOSOPHY MAJOR W/ HONORS

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### Complementary Support Course Tracks

- History
- Law
- Psychology
- Literature and Language
- Strategic Studies
- Politics
- Cultural Studies
The counselors below will be happy to answer questions about the English or Philosophy programs.

LTC Bozeman (English)  x2231
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You may also contact Ms. Kristina Fox,
D/English and Philosophy XO (x3967) for further information.
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