This course is the required introduction for all master’s and doctoral PCC students in their first year of coursework. It has three goals: First, it allows students to become familiar with the scholarly work and worldviews of the several core PCC faculty, each of whom presents the key ideas and insights that teacher most wishes to emphasize as his or her contribution to the academic content and larger vision of the PCC program. Second, students meet each other at the start of their journey in the program and gain a sense of their cohort and the PCC community. Third, the course includes an introduction to essential skills in research, writing, and strategies for enhancing their learning experience throughout the course of the program. Prerequisite: Priority to PCC students.
To understand the current ecological crisis, we need to investigate the ontological and epistemological foundations of our knowledge about the environment. The science of ecology, in its social and biophysical permutations, is a dominant way of understanding the natural environment. Examining the social construction of scientific and ecological knowledge will shed light on how we know and what we know about the natural environment. In this course, we will critically examine the social construction of scientific and ecological knowledge, coming to see Western scientific knowledge as a particular cultural phenomenon. We will examine countervailing epistemological understandings, such as situated knowledge and traditional ecological knowledge, that challenge the idea of a dispassionate and omniscient scientific viewpoint. We will investigate the compatibility of religious and spiritual insights with ecological knowledge. Applying feminist and non-Western epistemologies to environmental issues, we will seek to generate alternative ways of understanding ecological crises, which may, in turn, generate healing alternatives.
Whitehead’s Adventure in Cosmology
Toward a Physics of the World-Soul

PARP 6133 | Online | Fall 2021 | 3 Units | Matt Segall

This course invites students to explore the relevance of Alfred North Whitehead’s philosophy of organism for contemporary scientific cosmology. The course begins with key historical influences, including Friedrich Schelling’s Naturphilosophie, William James’s “world of pure experience,” and Henri Bergson’s Creative Evolution. The course then examines Whitehead’s journey from mathematics and logic, through the philosophy of science, and finally into the adventure of full-blown cosmological speculation. Following the collapse of the Newtonian paradigm in the early 20th century, Whitehead was compelled to imagine a more adequate and comprehensive philosophical background for the increasingly specialized and fragmented natural sciences. The course unpacks how Whitehead’s novel interpretations of relativity, quantum, evolutionary, and complexity theories makes it possible to re-enchant and ensoul the cosmos while still remaining consistent with the latest scientific findings.
THE BOOK OF NATURE

PARP 6150 | ONLINE | FALL 2021 | 3 UNITS | JAKE SHERMAN

Can the ancient metaphor of “the book of nature” provide us with theoretical and imaginative tools for a critique of the current crisis of nature and culture? Increasingly, many see our current crisis crystallized in the apparent conflict between a humanism that ignores nature, on the one hand, and a naturalism that warps and disfigures our understanding of humanity, on the other. Can we look at things differently? This course seeks to respond to the prevailing crisis through a critical reconsideration of the metaphor of the book of nature, one of the central root metaphors for relating nature and culture throughout Western history. We will follow the development of this trope from its appearance in antiquity through to its high point of cultural influence in the Middle Ages, its transformation in early modern science and philosophy, and its continuing importance for much Romantic and environmental literature. Along the way, we will also consider the role of the imagination in the mediation of knowledge, the relationship between allegory and metaphysics, and the connection between dominant metaphors and the modes of consciousness attaching to them.
RESEARCH & METHODOLOGY
IN PHILOSOPHY & RELIGION

PARP 6158 | FALL 2021 | ONLINE | 3 UNITS | AARON WEISS

The theme of method touches upon every aspect of the discovery of truth and the production of scholarly knowledge, ranging from the everyday practices of research to the deeper questions of epistemology and the scholar's relation to truth. In this course, students will be introduced to a variety of practices and approaches in philosophy and religious studies. Themes covered include scholarly ethics, professional communication, best practices for researchers, and critical methodological reflection.
Thomas Berry (1914-2009) was one of the most influential ecological thinkers of his time. A prophetic voice against the devastation of Earth, Berry’s poetic interpretation of the universe story, and call for a shamanic-type communion with the planetary process, reverberated through fields such as eco-philosophy, ecological spirituality, “new cosmology,” deep ecology, and ecopsychology. Berry’s emphasis on cosmology, worldview, narrative, and the power story, like his concepts of “the New Story,” “the Old Story,” and being “between stories,” was remarkably prescient and remains profoundly relevant. Berry’s critiques of Western religion, institutions, and anthropocentrism offer not only an analysis of the crisis of modernity, but the outlines of a path into a new ecological era. This course will examine Thomas Berry’s writings, teachings, ideas, and inspirations -- including his various influences from Confucius to Teilhard de Chardin; from Indigenous spirituality to contemporary science. Through deep engagement with Berry’s cosmological vision, we will gain perspective on the religious roots of the ecological/climate crisis and glimpse new possibilities for a contemporary worldview that celebrates the unity of the universe, Earth, and human.
PCC & ESR
MA INTEGRATIVE SEMINAR
PARP 6897 | ONLINE | 3 UNITS | FALL 2021

ELIZABETH ALLISON

The PCC and ESR MA Integrative Seminar is the capstone to the PCC and ESR journeys, required of all graduating MA students. The course is structured as a guided excavation of your journey through PCC or ESR, culminating in a public talk that displays your knowledge and unique perspective, presented before the PCC and ESR communities, faculty, and invited guests. The course includes intensive practice and refinement of public speaking skills, writing exercises oriented toward excavating and synthesizing your knowledge, explorations of your PCC or ESR journey in relation to questions of karma, and activities to assist you in planning your life after graduation. Through review of subjects and texts studied, and reflection upon classroom and community experiences, you will draw together an integrated and integral conclusion to your PCC or ESR education. Prerequisite: ESR or PCC student. Note: REQUIRED for MA students in their final semester.
To understand the current ecological crisis, we need to investigate the ontological and epistemological foundations of our knowledge about the environment. The science of ecology, in its social and biophysical permutations, is a dominant way of understanding the natural environment. Examining the social construction of scientific and ecological knowledge will shed light on how we know and what we know about the natural environment. In this course, we will critically examine the social construction of scientific and ecological knowledge, coming to see Western scientific knowledge as a particular cultural phenomenon. We will examine countervailing epistemological understandings, such as situated knowledge and traditional ecological knowledge, that challenge the idea of a dispassionate and omniscient scientific viewpoint. We will investigate the compatibility of religious and spiritual insights with ecological knowledge. Applying feminist and non-Western epistemologies to environmental issues, we will seek to generate alternative ways of understanding ecological crises, which may, in turn, generate healing alternatives.
This course explores recent research in the emerging transdisciplinary field of collapsology in tandem with calls for the transition to an Ecological Civilization. It brings integral perspectives to bear on the near- and long-term fate of the Earth community in light of the increasingly apparent social and ecological unsustainability of industrial growth civilization. Lectures and readings include such topics as: collapsology (and collapsophy); ecological civilization; regenerative culture; Deep Adaptation and collapse anticipation; Extinction Rebellion (XE); the death/rebirth archetype and planetary initiation.
Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf, basing their work on study of Native American languages, developed a theory that suggested that language is a conditioner of thought process. This class will begin by examining this theoretical realm in preface to looking closely at the Sanskrit theories of language that developed over many centuries. This course will examine Sanskrit grammatical theory, its polysemic and polygonal lexical structure, theories of the relationship between the world and language (including the notion that the universe is nothing but Sanskrit!), and theories of mantra to explore the unique linking of language and consciousness in the traditions and theories of Sanskrit language.
Archeoastronomy & Embedded Cosmologies

PARP 6162 | 3 units | Online | Kerri Welch

Petroglyphs and ancient architecture the world over reveal some of the earliest evidence of humanity’s observations of celestial movements as markers of time. Studying these sites provides an excellent opportunity to learn about astronomical alignments and the stories that integrated these cycles into the spiritual and ecological lives of the people who marked them. We will cover the equinoxes, solstices, lunar standstills, the cycle of Venus, as well as some constellations and stars from the perspectives of a variety of ancient sites and cultural stories.
An overview of the long intellectual tradition as well as the contemporary academic field of archetypal cosmology. The course will begin by tracing the lineage from its roots in archaic astrology, cosmology, and Platonic-Pythagorean philosophy, through its integration with depth psychology in the twentieth century, and then focus on recent developments in the field with guest lectures by current practitioners and scholars. There are no formal prerequisites, but the courses Psyche and Cosmos I or II (PARP 7001 or PARP 7002) or some familiarity with astrology is recommended.