

Philosophy

What is Philosophy?

Philosophy is concerned with the most basic questions about the human experience, such as what reality is, what the ultimate values are, and how we know what we know. Philosophy majors are trained to think independently and critically, and to write clearly and persuasively. They may go to work in a number of business careers where these skills are appreciated—perhaps most of all in the long run as these former philosophy majors advance to positions of leadership. Some find that a philosophy major combines well with further training in law, computer science, or religious studies. Those with a graduate degree in philosophy may teach in a college or university setting.

Occupational opportunities

Philosophy majors find their training useful in a variety of fields. The analytic skills developed in college are easily transferable to a number of professional areas. Students of philosophy tend to have the flexibility and capacity for growth that employers find valuable. Many graduates accept jobs in business, journalism, computer science, public administration, teaching, publishing, and public relations. Teaching positions at the college level are very competitive and require a Ph.D. Some potential career paths for philosophy majors include:

- Attorney
- Book publishing professional
- Editor
- Journalist
- mediator
- Philosopher
- Political scientist
- Professor
- Public relations professional
- Teacher
- Writer

Career Snapshot: Philosopher

Two Years

At this stage, the recent philosophy Ph.D. graduate is either in a tenure-track job as an instructor or assistant professor or is working as a part-time or adjunct professor and looking for a job that will eventually lead to tenure. The young assistant professor works long hours, teaching several undergraduate classes and beginning to establish the research and writing record necessary to advance in his or her field. In addition, the recent PhD recipient is expected to present papers at philosophy conferences in order to establish professional contacts and submit his or her work to the scrutiny of other philosophers. In smaller and two-year colleges, there is often less pressure to publish, but these are busy years wherever the young philosopher teaches.

Five Years

A career in academia has begun to take shape at this point. The philosopher has probably published a handful of articles that have begun to establish clear areas of expertise. At this stage, assistant philosophy professors have more control over their teaching schedules; they are likely to be teaching fewer introductory classes and more classes and seminars in their areas of specialization with enrollments consisting of upper-level undergraduates and graduate students. In addition, as academic marketability is determined by a university's specific needs, professors become able to move around more between institutions as they establish themselves in their respective philosophical fields.

Ten Years

By now, philosophers have either made tenure at the university where they started, found another university that will give them tenure, or left the profession. With tenure comes the rewards of the philosophical life: The ability to say, write, and teach what one wishes with almost complete freedom.

The Philosophy Department is located on the fifth floor of the Newman Vertical Campus in room 5-295. You can contact them at (646) 312-4364.

Skills and Abilities

Students acquire and sharpen intellectual and practical skills valuable in a range of careers through the process of analysis and critical evaluation that makes up much of the study of philosophy. These skills include the ability to analyze and reason, use verbal argumentation, employ concrete examples, and write effectively and persuasively. The ability to interpret conflicting points of view with accuracy and reach a decision that is rationally and objectively defensible, for example, would typically be used by a mediation attorney, but would be equally important to a diplomat, crisis intervention counselor, or member of a biomedical ethics committee. A sampling of skills and abilities follows:

<u>Analysis</u>	<u>Communication</u>	<u>Problem solving</u>	<u>Research/Project Development</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reading critically• Logical reasoning• Interpreting data/relationships• Identifying/clarifying values• Synthesizing ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Advising• Arbitrating• Counseling• Articulating abstract concepts• Presenting alternative viewpoints• Writing effectively• Negotiating	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Defining problems• Weighing alternatives• Identifying solutions• Evaluating results• Investigating alternatives• Applying logic to problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Writing proposals• Evaluating information• Integrating opposing viewpoints• Comparing perspectives• Organizing ideas/information

Additional Resources

U.S. Government's Occupational Outlook Handbook
<http://stats.bls.gov/oco>

The American Philosophical Association (APA)
University of Delaware
31 Amstel Ave.
Newark, DE 19716-4797
(302) 831-1112
www.udel.edu/apa

American Catholic Philosophical Association
ACPA National Office
Center for Thomistic Studies, University of St. Thomas
3800 Montrose Boulevard
Houston, TX 77006
(713)942-3483
<http://www.acpaweb.org>

The Society for Women in Philosophy
<http://www.uh.edu/~cfreelan/SWIP/>

Idealist – The Non-profit career center
www.idealists.org

The School of Practical Philosophy
www.practicalphilosophy.org

Revised and updated by LS&JM 07/08. Information was obtained from the following sources:
The College Board Book of Majors. (2004); The Princeton Review Guide to College Majors (2005 Edition); The College Majors Handbook by N.P. Fogg, P.E. Harrington, & T.F. Harrington (1999 & 2004 Editions); The College Board Guide to 150 Popular College Majors (1992); Vault College Career Bible (2005 Edition); Quick Guide to College Majors & Careers by L. Shatkin (2002).