



CENTER FOR CAREER & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Major Possibilities: Philosophy

Quick Facts

- Philosophy is a mode of engaging thoughtfully and critically with the grounding ideas and assumptions of human practices. Such thinking includes reflection on the relationship between different forms of knowledge and the material world, as well as reflection on the intertwining social, historical, and geographical forms of power and human community.
- Philosophy majors learn strong research, writing, and analytical skills that are broadly applicable in many occupations. To explore those options, internships help shape professional identities, develop 21st century career-readiness skills, and make meaning of the academic experience.

Philosophy Major Synopsis

Courses in philosophy develop a wide range of intellectual abilities and offer a unique opportunity for students to develop their own modes of thoughtful and critical engagement with different domains of knowledge and practice. The emphasis is on reading and discussing primary texts and their ideas. The curriculum aims to cultivate philosophy as a self-reflective practice and therefore emphasizes the history of Western philosophy as vitally important to contemporary philosophy. Students take classes on ethics, religion, race, culture, feminism, and more, as well as history classes on philosophical movements. It is possible to pair the Philosophy and Feminist Studies majors by double-counting three cross listed courses (see catalog for more details).

Sample Occupational Areas

LAW

No special coursework is required for law school, but a Philosophy major graduates well equipped for the rigors of law school. Many skills that are needed for philosophy majors—such as analyzing dense written material and reasoning through both profound and mundane questions—are important to the study of law. Lawyers can be described as philosophers trained in specifics of a country's legal system. Law students are famously subjected to a distinctly philosophical form of on-the-spot classroom quizzes known as the Socratic Method, based on the teaching style of the famous philosopher.

HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONS

Philosophy graduates are well-represented in the medical profession, both as practitioners and administrators. Traditionally, medical schools look favorably upon candidates with a liberal arts degree. Career paths in medicine can be in psychiatry, orthopedics, dentistry, oncology, etc. According to the Association of American Medical Colleges, Philosophy majors have some of the highest acceptance rates out of all the majors that apply to medical school. Graduates with a degree in Philosophy stand out in their applications because they are more unique than the biology and pre-med majors.

BUSINESS

When going into an interview, Philosophy majors have an advantage over other applicants because their major shows that they are intrigued by difficult and fundamental problems, that their interests are broad, that they are critical thinkers, and that they express themselves well. The ability to look at old problems and process them in a new way is invaluable in the business world. Students thinking of going for MBA degrees do not need to major in business or economics alone; many of the best MBA schools like to admit students who have shown interests in other areas, such as history, languages, and philosophy, in addition to finance and management.

COMMUNICATIONS

People with degrees in Philosophy can choose from a variety of occupations in communication, such as journalism, public relations, editing, marketing, and advertising. Philosophers have the skills necessary to be good communicators, in both speaking and writing. Philosophy is one of the best possible majors for aspiring journalists, especially at schools that may not offer a separate Journalism

major. Aside from teaching students to write well, analyze facts critically, and developing research skills, courses in ethics, political philosophy, and the history of ideas expand students' conceptual repertoire and provide essential background knowledge for informed journalists whose work will make a positive contribution towards educating their society. In public relations, being able to help justify an institution's work and its future projects as well as to develop consistent policies on controversial issues can be vital assets for PR work with larger organizations. A major/minor combination of Communication Studies and Philosophy would be an invaluable addition to a future career in the communications field.

FOREIGN SERVICE AND DIPLOMACY

Like political science or government, a Philosophy major is often excellent preparation for positions in state or national civil services, policy research institutions, jobs as congressional aides and researchers, and so on. If you are planning to go on to an advanced degree in public policy, government administration, international affairs, or similar programs, an undergraduate major in philosophy will provide an excellent basis for further study in applied political fields. In international affairs when working with people of different cultures in occupations such as ambassador or cultural advisor, the philosophical ability to discover unconscious assumptions and work around them is particularly important.

RELIGION AND MINISTRY

Students who go on for advanced degrees in theology or into seminaries to study for the ministry often start with an undergraduate degree in philosophy, which is often comparable to a theology or religious studies major for these purposes. It is good to have some training in philosophy if planning to work in areas related to theology. Both fields deal with various ways in which human beings have tried to understand and give expression to the nature and meaning of reality, knowledge, the self, and the purpose of human life.

Sample Job Titles

ART, MEDIA, AND ENTERTAINMENT

Author

Archeologist

Archivist

Arts Consultant

Critic

Editor

Freelance Writer

Journalist

Producer/Director

Public Relations Coordinator

Publisher

GOVERNMENT, SERVICE, AND EDUCATION

Administrator

Ambassador

Defense Attorney

Foreign Service Officer

Information Systems Specialist

Judge

Lawyer

Missionary Worker

Museum Curator

Nursing Home Director

Professor

Public Policy Manager

Public Service Official

Researcher

Salvation Army Worker

Social Worker

Teacher

INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE

Banker

Business Administrator

Claims Adjuster

Consultant

Counselor

Employee Interviewer

Entrepreneur

Financial Consultant

Insurance Underwriter

Lobbyist

Management Analyst/Trainee

Sales Analyst

Software Developer

Sample Internship Employers of SU Students

American College of Dublin (Dublin, Ireland)

American Studies Program (Washington, DC)

Art Palace (Austin, TX)

CATO Institute (Washington, DC)

Central Texas Marketing (Austin, TX)

Colorado Foundation (Austin, TX)

First United Methodist Church (Georgetown, TX)

Minitwist.com (London)

Office of US Representative Lon Burnam (Austin, TX)

Southwestern University Office of Diversity Education

The American University (Washington, DC)

The Care Communities (Austin, TX)

Williamson County Institute for Excellent in Non-Profits

YMCA (Austin, TX)

Sample Full-Time Employers of SU Grads

Canvasser (Cleanwater Action)

Content Editor (Expert Village)

Development Researcher (UT Austin)

ESL Instructor (Language Studies International)

English Teaching Assistant (US Dept. of State Fulbright Program)

GIS Specialist (Landworks, Inc.)

Legal Assistant (Smith Robertson Law Firm)

Location Specialist (Supportkids.com)

Management Trainee (Enterprise Rent-A-Car)

Officer Candidate (TX National Guard)

Software Developer (Pier One Hosting)

Teacher (Teach for America)

VP of Technology (Green Brothers Sustainable Solutions LLC)

Volunteer (AmeriCorps)

Professional Associations

American Philosophical Association

American Philosophical Practitioners Association

American Philosophical Society

American Society for Aesthetics

Minorities and Philosophy

National Philosophical Counseling Association

Society of Christian Philosophers

The Society for Women in Philosophy