

Philosophy

The word *philosophy* comes from Greek words meaning “the love of wisdom.” The ancient Greek philosophers distinguished themselves from the sophists, who claimed to *have* wisdom, by insisting that philosophy is the *pursuit* of wisdom. This pursuit begins with questioning—questioning one’s own beliefs as well as the beliefs of others. It involves challenging the most basic shared beliefs of one’s society.

Not surprisingly, this activity has not always made philosophers popular. One of the first philosophers, Socrates, was sentenced to death by the Athenian courts for his challenges to accepted doctrines. The 17th-century philosopher Baruch Spinoza was excommunicated from the Jewish community and branded a heretic for his views. Today, reasonable people have come to value the practice of questioning the authority of even our deepest held beliefs. As the 20th-century philosopher Bertrand Russell wrote, “Philosophy is to be studied, not for the sake of any definite answers to its questions . . . but rather for the sake of these questions themselves; because these questions enlarge our conception of what is possible, enrich our intellectual imagination and diminish the dogmatic assurance which closes the mind against speculation.”

Philosophers ask the big questions in life: “Is there a meaning to life?” “Are there objective moral standards?” “Do we have free-will?” “How can we be justified in our beliefs about the world?” and “Is there a God?” These are questions that almost everyone ponders at some time or other. Philosophers, though, set about to examine these questions rigorously and provide reasoned defenses for their answers. Toward that goal, philosophers are trained to read carefully, think clearly, and write cogently. As a result, those who major in philosophy are well prepared for graduate work in law, the sciences, or the humanities, and they are relatively immune to many of the rhetorical tricks and fallacious arguments of everyday life.

Pursuing Philosophy at Ohio State

All Ohio State freshman applicants are considered within a competitive admission process for the Columbus campus. The primary criteria for admission are the completion of the applicant’s high school college preparatory program, performance in that program as indicated by class rank and/or grade-point average, and performance on either the ACT or SAT. Upon admission to the university, students can declare a major in philosophy within the Arts and Humanities. Interested students should contact the undergraduate advisor for Department of Philosophy and the Arts and Sciences Advising.

The major program in philosophy is planned by the student in consultation with a faculty advisor from the Department of

Philosophy. This is usually done in the student’s sophomore or junior year. The major program, after approval by the student’s faculty advisor, is filed in the college office.

Philosophy Requirements

The philosophy major consists of a prerequisite requirement (Philosophy 250 Symbolic Logic) and major program requirements. Students should try to satisfy the prerequisite soon after declaring a major in philosophy. The major program must include at least 45 credit hours in courses numbered 200 and above, not including Philosophy 250. The major program must include the following:

- **History of Philosophy (15 credit hours):**
Ancient Philosophy (301)
Two of the following courses:
History of Medieval Philosophy (302)
History of 17th-Century Philosophy (303)
History of 18th-Century Philosophy (304)
History of 19th-Century Philosophy (305)
- **Philosophical Topics (15 credit hours)**
Ethical Theory (431)
Two of the following courses:
Philosophy of Science (455)
Introduction to Theory of Knowledge (460)
Introduction to Metaphysics (463)
Philosophy of Action (465)
Introduction to Philosophy of Mind (467)
Philosophy of Perception (468)
Introduction to Philosophy of Language (473)

Additionally, at least 10 of the required 45 credit hours in the major program must be philosophy courses 600 or above.

Co-Curricular Opportunities

Ohio State offers many opportunities for students to learn and grow outside of the classroom. These range from cooperative education (co-op) and internships to study abroad programs to student organizations. Co-ops and internships place students in professional environments while they are Ohio State students. Ohio State offers more than 100 study abroad programs in 40 countries around the world. In addition, there are hundreds of student organizations on campus to meet the interests of a diverse student population. Philosophy majors will be particularly interested in the very active Undergraduate Philosophy Club.

These experiences enable students to gain valuable work experience, learn about cultures, and take on leadership roles before they enter the workforce. All of these experiences enhance learning and may provide an advantage in the job market.

For more information, check these web sites:

Philosophy: philosophy.osu.edu

Arts and Humanities: artsandhumanities.osu.edu

Ohio State: osu.edu

Admissions: undergrad.osu.edu

Multicultural Center: multiculturalcenter.osu.edu

First Year Experience Program: fye.osu.edu

Curriculum Sample

This is a sample list of classes a student may take to pursue a degree in Philosophy. Since university students need more than specific education in a narrow field, they also will take classes to complete the General Education Curriculum (GEC). The GEC will allow students to develop the fundamental skills essential to collegiate success across major programs. Course work options satisfying the GEC often come from a variety of academic areas of study allowing students to tailor their GEC toward their interests. Note: This sample represents one of several possible paths to a degree in Philosophy. Consult the departmental web site, philosophy.osu.edu, for details on each specific track.

Freshman Year:

Political and Social Philosophy	5
Electives	5
GEC (English composition)	5
GEC courses	30
Arts and Humanities Survey	1
Freshman Seminar	1
Total hours	47

Sophomore Year:

Symbolic Logic	5
Ancient Philosophy	5
17th-Century Philosophy	5
Electives	5
GEC (second writing course)	5
GEC courses	20
Total hours	45

Junior Year:

Ethical Theory	5
Metaphysics	5
18th-Century Philosophy	5
Electives	10
GEC courses	15
Total hours	40

Senior Year:

Philosophy of Language	5
Philosophy of Law	5
Philosophy of Mind	5
Electives	20
GEC courses	15
Total hours	50

Honors & Scholars Programs

Ohio State offers the Honors and Scholars programs to create an environment of intellectual support and stimulation within a close-knit community of high-ability undergraduate students. Through these programs, students have access to smaller classes, undergraduate research opportunities, close working relationships with faculty, priority scheduling, and unique housing options.

Honors and Scholars programs represent great opportunities to be part of a smaller community within a large university. Good candidates for these programs will receive additional information after admission to the university. Learn more about the Honors and Scholars program at honors-scholars.osu.edu.

Career Prospects in Philosophy

Some philosophy majors plan to go on to graduate school with the goal of teaching philosophy at the college level. For these students a major in philosophy is the best undergraduate preparation. Most philosophy majors, though, do not pursue graduate studies in philosophy. Philosophy majors can find careers in a number of professions. Business and government employers are often pleased to hire philosophy majors because of their ability to read carefully, write clearly, and to see to the heart of complex problems. The rigorous training philosophy majors receive in analysis and argumentation result in their performing particularly well on admissions tests for law school, business school, and graduate programs in academic disciplines.

Ohio State graduates with philosophy degrees have chosen non-academic jobs that include research administrator for the National Youth Employment Coalition, stockbroker with Dean Witter, systems engineer with IBM, assistant district attorney in San Francisco, film and TV screenwriter, and teacher with Teach for America.

Beginning salaries for philosophy majors who choose jobs outside academia depend on the candidate's skills and experience. Philosophy graduates find their marketable skills considerably enriched by their education. Philosophy graduates who earn a PhD may pursue an academic career.

More About Philosophy

The philosophy major is flexible and can be tailored to the individual student's specific interests and plans. A student planning to attend law school may want to select the courses in The Philosophy and Law, and Political and Social Philosophy. A student who wants to pursue an advanced degree in philosophy can acquire a very strong background by taking more than the required 50 credit hours, and by concentrating on the 400-level and 600-level courses in Philosophical Topics, and the History of Philosophy. Courses in all the major areas of philosophy are offered, as well as courses in The Philosophy of Religion, Asian Philosophy, Jewish Ethics and Jewish Mysticism, The Philosophy of Art, Medical Ethics, and Environmental Ethics. With careful planning, any of these courses can find a place in a major program.

Revised September 2009. For the most up-to-date information on the philosophy program, please visit philosophy.osu.edu.

Contact information:

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