

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 ex-communicated 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 most deeply 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 freshman applicants are considered within a competitive admission process for the Columbus campus; find admissions criteria at go.osu.edu/admissions. Upon admission to the university, students can declare a major in philosophy within the College of Arts and Sciences. 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 2500, 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 30 credit hours in courses numbered 2000 and above, not including Philosophy 2500. The major program must include the following:

- Gateway Seminar, Philosophy 3000 (3 credit hours)
- Three of the following History of Philosophy courses (9 credit hours):
 - History of Ancient Philosophy (3210)
 - History of Medieval Philosophy (3220)
 - History of 17th-Century Philosophy (3230)
 - History of 18th-Century Philosophy (3240)
 - History of 19th-Century Philosophy (3250)
 - Fundamental Concepts of Existentialism (3261)
- Moral Philosophy, Philosophy 3300 (3 credit hours)
- Two of the following Philosophical Topics courses (6 credit hours):
 - Philosophy of Logic (3530)
 - Intro to Philosophy of Language (3600)
 - Philosophy of Science (3650)
 - Sex and Death: Intro to the Philosophy of Biology (3680)
 - Introduction to Metaphysics (3700)
 - Introduction to Theory of Knowledge (3750)
 - Introduction to Philosophy of Mind (3800)
 - Philosophy of Action (3810)
 - Philosophy of Perception (3820)

Additionally, at least 6 of the required 30 credit hours in the major program must be philosophy courses 5000 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 websites:

Philosophy: philosophy.osu.edu

Arts and Sciences: artsandsciences.osu.edu

Ohio State: osu.edu

Admissions: undergrad.osu.edu

Multicultural Center: multiculturalcenter.osu.edu

First Year Experience: 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 General Education (GE) requirements. Because GE courses come from a variety of academic areas of study, this course work helps students develop fundamental skills essential to collegiate success and allows them to tailor these courses toward their interests. Note: This sample represents one of several possible paths to a degree in philosophy. Consult the departmental website, philosophy.osu.edu, for details on each specific track.

Freshman Year:

Survey course	1
Freshman Seminar	1
Political and Social Philosophy	3
Elective courses	3
GE courses	23
Total Hours	31

Sophomore Year:

Symbolic Logic	3
History of Ancient Philosophy	3
Gateway Seminar	3
History of 17th-Century Philosophy	3
Elective courses	5
GE courses	13
Total Hours	30

Junior Year:

Moral Philosophy	3
Metaphysics	3
History of 18th-Century Philosophy	3
Elective courses	9
GE courses	12
Total Hours	30

Senior Year:

Advanced Philosophy of Language	3
Advanced Philosophy of Law	3
Advanced Philosophy of Mind	3
Elective courses	9
GE courses	12
Total Hours	30

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. 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 3000-level and 5000-level courses in Philosophical Topics and 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 2015. Information subject to change. For the most up-to-date information on the philosophy program, please visit philosophy.osu.edu.

Contact information:

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