Major Possibilities:
Philosophy

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Summary

- 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.

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, especially from philosophy departments. 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 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
Real Estate Attorney
Researcher
Salvation Army Worker
Social Worker
Teacher

Industry and Commerce
Administrator
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)
First United Methodist Church (Georgetown, TX)
Office of U.S. Representative Lon Burnam (Austin, TX)
Southwestern University Office of Diversity Education
The American University (Washington, DC)
The Car Communities (Austin, TX)
Williamson County Institute for Excellent in Non-Profits
YMCA (Austin, TX)

Sample full-time employers of SU grads

Administration Assistant (UT System)
Canvasser (Cleanwater Action)
Certificate Specialist (Marsh, INC)
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.)
Kindergarten Preparedness Teacher (Children's Center of Austin)
Legal Assistant (Smith Robertson Law Firm)
Location Specialist (Supportkids.com)
Management Trainee (Enterprise Rent-A-Car)
Officer Candidate (TX National Guard)
PSW Technologies
Publishing Work (Lerner)
Software Developer (Pier One Hosting)
VP of Technology (Green Brothers Sustainable Solutions LLC)
Volunteer (AmeriCorps)

Professional Associations

American Philosophical Association: www.apaonline.org
American Philosophical Practitioners Association: www.appa.edu
American Philosophical Society: www.amphilsoc.org
American Society for Aesthetics: www.aesthetics-online.org
National Philosophical Counseling Association: www.npcassoc.org
Society of Christian Philosophers: www.societyofchristianphilosophers.com
The Society for Women in Philosophy: www.uh.edu/~cfreelan/SWIP

Additional Web resources

Guide to College Majors in Philosophy: www.worldwidelearn.com/online-education-guide/arts-humanities/philosophy-major.htm
Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: www.iep.utm.edu
Philosophy Now: www.philosophynow.org
The Galilean Library: www.galilean-library.org/philosophy.php
University of Maryland: www.philosophy.umd.edu/deptwebsite/undergraduateprogram/careers/careers-philosophy-majors.html
Philosophy Documentation Center: www.pdcnet.org
Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: http://plato.stanford.edu

Career Services' print resources

2011 Response: A Directory of Full Time, Faith Based Volunteer Opportunities
Careers for Scholars and Other Deep Thinkers
Careers in Law
Career Opportunities in Politics, Government, and Activism
Insider Guide to Careers in Non-Profit and Government Agencies
Opportunities in Religious Service Careers
Philosophers at Work: Issues and Practice of Philosophy
The Legal Career Guide: From Law Student to Lawyer
Smart Moves for Liberal Arts Grads