

Philosophy

[View Philosophy Department website](#)

The fundamental educational objective of the philosophy major is to turn students into lovers of wisdom (the original meaning of the Greek term, *philosophos*). As a field, philosophy is more than 2,500 years old. In the first instance, philosophy is a body of ideas and doctrines that have been articulated by thinkers who have sought to understand the basic features of what is, what could be and what ought to be. Philosophy students need to know these rationally developed positions in order to avoid repeating past errors and to build upon what is best in our philosophical heritage.

Students who complete the philosophy minor (a) understand the historical scope of philosophical discourse, especially the main movements of Western thought; (b) gain familiarity with the history and contemporary relevance of at least one non-Western tradition; (c) develop skills in critical and evaluative analysis of philosophical texts; and (d) accomplish some advanced work in composition of well-reasoned philosophical argumentation.

Equally important, philosophers attempt to rationally justify their most basic intuitions about the nature of reality. Philosophy is an activity that students engage in by thinking clearly, carefully, and systematically about fundamental problems of existence. This activity is not a replacement of but a complement to scientific investigation. Philosophy is a reflection upon hypotheses that, because of their fundamental and general character, cannot be verified or falsified by the current methods of modern science. For example, philosophers examine the claim that our consciousness is nothing more than a series of neurological events of the brain. They also consider the grounds of political obligation, or whether certain human actions are wrong beyond our happening to think they are, or whether our knowledge can be valid for all time periods and all cultural circumstances. Members of the department deal with fundamental and grave issues facing all of us in the 21st century, including war and peace, global justice, environmental health, and gender equity. Philosophical approaches include Western European traditions, East Asian and South Asian thought, and critical and feminist theories.

Because of the intensive and extensive training in conceptual analysis of fundamental

problems, the philosophy major provides an excellent preparation for virtually any professional career. Philosophy prepares us not only to earn a living, but also to address such questions as why we should live, and how we live, our all-too-human lives.

Learning Outcomes

- Situate important texts in the history of philosophy as responding to earlier thinkers
- Apply traditional philosophical concepts to issues of contemporary relevance
- Construct effective written and oral communication of ideas in Philosophy
- Construct a critique of the reasoning used for various arguments
- Ground in primary sources claims about thinkers

Degree Requirements for the Major

General College Requirements

General College Requirements (see Curriculum section), including the following requirements to satisfy the major

Course Requirements

At least 44 credit hours in philosophy, as specified in below. A grade of C- or better must be received in each course of the major and the cumulative grade-point average of courses used to satisfy the major must be at least 2.00. Courses taken for credit/no credit may not be used to satisfy requirements.

Required Core Courses: 32 credit hours

- PHIL 101: Introduction to Philosophy
or PHIL 120: Introduction to Ethics
- PHIL 215: Systems of Logic
- PHIL 300: Cranks and Sages: Greek and Roman Philosophy
- PHIL 302: Mind and Knowledge: Descartes to Kant
- PHIL 380: Topics in Philosophy or PHIL381: Happiness and Meaning or PHIL382: Meditation and the Mind
- PHIL 430: Ethical Theories

- PHIL 493: St. Mary's Project in Philosophy (note: prerequisite for 493 is PHIL 492)
- PHIL 494: St. Mary's Project in Philosophy

Upper-level electives:

eight credit hours chosen from any 300- or 400-level philosophy courses listed in the College catalog. A student must take at least one course (four credit hours) in a non-Western philosophical/religious tradition. Additional courses that satisfy this requirement may be approved by the department faculty. Note: courses used to satisfy requirements in section a. (above) may not be used to satisfy upper-level elective credit. Credits earned from internships, field experiences, and honors or senior projects cannot be used to meet this requirement.

Additional elective courses:

four credit hours chosen from any 300- or 400-level philosophy or religious studies courses listed in the College catalog. Additional courses that satisfy this requirement may be approved by the department faculty. Credits earned from internships, field experiences, or senior projects cannot be used to meet this requirement.

St. Mary's Project

Students who complete an SMP outside of PHIL 493/494 must complete eight additional credit hours chosen from any 300- or 400-level philosophy courses listed in the College catalog, in addition to the courses used by the student to satisfy the requirements of the philosophy major. After consultation with the department chair, a reduction of four or eight credit hours may be granted for SMPs with substantial philosophical content.

Sequence of Study

- **First year:**
Core Curriculum requirements and either PHIL 101 or PHIL 120, and PHIL 300 or 302.
- **Sophomore year:**
Core Curriculum requirements, PHIL 215 and completion of PHIL300/302, and one non-Western elective philosophy course.
- **Junior year:**
Completion of Core Curriculum requirements, PHIL 430 in the spring, one of 380/381/382, and one elective course in philosophy or religious studies, and PHIL 492 in the spring
- **Senior year:**
PHIL 493/494 and one elective philosophy course.

Degree Requirements for the Minor

General College Requirements

General College Requirements (see Curriculum section)

Course Requirements

At least 20 credit hours in philosophy as specified under the required and elective courses. A grade of C- or better must be received in each course of the minor and the cumulative grade-point average of courses used to satisfy the minor must be at least 2.00.

Required core courses (eight credit hours):

At least one course from each of the following:

- Either PHIL 101: Introduction to Philosophy or PHIL 120: Introduction to Ethics
- Either PHIL 300: Cranks & Sages: Greek & Roman Philosophy, or PHIL 302: Mind & Knowledge: Descartes to Kant

Elective courses:

Students minoring in philosophy must take an additional 12 credit hours, of which at least eight credit hours must be upper-level, and of which at least four credit hours must be non-Western philosophy. With approval from the department chair, other upper-level philosophical courses from outside the philosophy offering can be counted as electives where appropriate.

Faculty

Barrett Emerick (department chair), Brad Park, John Schroeder