Why Philosophy?

Studying philosophy provides good preparation for popular careers. Recent data show that philosophy majors do very well on the Law School Admission Test (LSAT), for example, outscoring majors in chemistry and biology, as well as English, psychology, political science, and economics. The results are not surprising as studying philosophy develops capacities to analyze complex arguments and to think critically.

Universities, of course, are not vocational schools. Their primary goals are to educate, to help students develop their critical faculties, and to broaden their intellectual horizons. If this is true for liberal arts majors, it is even truer for philosophy majors, who spend much of their time improving their analytic and writing skills. Our department at Maryland prides itself in the sheer breadth of intellectual course offerings. From political philosophy to neuroscience, from philosophy of music to philosophy of physics, from contemporary ethical issues to philosophy of science – what other department covers so many different fields of knowledge.

What Skills Does a Degree in Philosophy Provide?

Philosophy majors will develop a variety of skills that are attractive to employers across all fields. Some of the top skills a Philosophy major will develop include:

- Effective writing and oral communication skills
- Perceiving the world from multiple points of view/understanding of different cultures
- Influencing and persuading
- Gathering information
- Ability to read, reflect, and critique
- Using original sources
- Working with others
- Interpreting data
- Meeting deadlines and managing time
- Summarizing and presenting information

- Understanding components of complex problems
- Evaluating results
- Perceiving patterns/structures
- Analyzing texts and information
- Comparing/contrasting
- Writing creatively
- Synthesizing information
- Providing context and meaning
- Managing a project from conception to completion
- Finding solutions to intricate problems

In the National Association of Colleges & Employers’ (NACE) 2011 Job Outlook, the skills and abilities such employers are seeking were listed in order of importance. The top ten skills were:

- Communication (verbal)
- Strong work ethic
- Teamwork
- Analytical skills
- Initiative
- Problem-solving skills

- Communication (written)
- Interpersonal skills (relates well to others)
- Computer skills
- Flexibility/adaptability

Organizations consistently seek candidates who possess a collection of “transferable skills” - skills acquired through your classes, extracurricular involvement, experience, and hobbies that are applicable to virtually any position. The skills listed above all fit into this category and students in the Arts & Humanities, as noted by professionals and academics alike, participate in a rich curriculum that develops their skills in many, if not all, of these areas and beyond, making them extremely marketable and valuable to potential employers. In the current Recruiting Trends report put out by the Collegiate Employment Research Institute, nearly 40% of employers indicate that they will seek candidates across “all majors,” focusing more on the skills and abilities needed in the organization than on a specific academic discipline.
What Can I Do With a Philosophy Degree?

A Philosophy degree can be shaped to fit a variety of disciplines and the broad skill set you acquire allows you to apply your knowledge in many exciting areas. From the University Career Center’s most recent graduate survey, upon graduation ARHU students entered into a range of dynamic industries including:

Arts, Government, Academia/Education, Non-Profit, Communications/Media, Advertising, Technology, Food & Hospitality Services, Entertainment, Social Services and more!

Sample job titles include:

- Consultant
- Author
- Counselor
- Market Research Analyst
- Editorial Assistant
- Professor
- Psychologist
- Social Worker
- Insurance Underwriter
- Diplomat
- Lawyer
- Public Service Official
- Critic
- Lobbyist
- Clergy
- Paralegal
- Journalist
- Sales Representative
- Technical Writer
- Management Analyst
- Teacher
- Public Policy
- Fundraising/Development
- Intelligence Analyst
- Law Enforcement
- Research Assistant
- Public Policy
- Fundraising/Development
- Intelligence Analyst
- Law Enforcement
- Research Assistant

Gaining Experience With Your Degree

It’s never too early to start your search for experience. Ideally, you should begin at least one semester in advance. Make an appointment to talk with the University Career Center & The President’s Promise and/or your department internship coordinator and faculty advisor. Research shows that having an internship (or multiple internships) drastically increases your ability to obtain a full-time position upon graduation, especially since most employers use their intern pool as a direct talent pipeline. The most recent NACE Internship & Co-op Survey reported that 44.6% of employers’ hires came from their internship programs. The College of Arts & Humanities ensures that students can have an internship experience prior to graduating, offering numerous credit-granting courses for experiential education at the college and departmental level.

Internships enable students to gain a sense of what it would be like to work in a particular field as they develop marketable skills and establish contacts that may lead to a job offer upon graduation. To get started, visit the University Career Center & The President’s Promise website (www.Careers.umd.edu) and sign up for a Careers4Terps account, a free web-based job posting service, to search for internships and employment.

Have questions? Need an appointment? Contact Kate Juhl, Program Director
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