

Majoring in

Philosophy

Description of Philosophy

What is philosophy?

Philosophy is the study of moral, legal, aesthetic, religious, and metaphysical ideas to better understand humans and the universe.

What do philosophy majors study?

Philosophy concerns those fundamental questions about reality, knowledge, and how humans should live that fall outside the scope of sciences.

Philosophy majors study five different areas:

1. Metaphysics – the nature of reality;
2. Epistemology – theory of knowledge;
3. Ethics, political philosophy, and ethics ;
4. Logic and philosophy of language – study of main tools of philosophy; and
5. History of philosophy.

What skills are important for a philosophy major?

Characteristics associated with success in this major include analytical and organizational skills, logical thinking, a strong sense of curiosity, and an ability to communicate clearly and with conviction.

What else do philosophy majors study?

Philosophy is a liberal arts major with a variety of courses to develop knowledge and skills that can be applied in both personal and professional settings.

Liberal arts courses provide a background to strengthen critical thinking; problem solving; written, oral, and interpersonal communication; quantitative, analytical, and reasoning skills. These skills are also considered very important for success in the workplace.

Course Requirements

General education: About 50 credit hours of general education courses are required. These courses give a broad range of knowledge in science, math, writing, arts, foreign language, civilization, literature, human behavior, and urban environment.

Major courses: A minimum of 30 credit hours of philosophy courses are required. Philosophy majors may take courses such as:

- Aesthetics
- Ancient Greek and Medieval western philosophy
- Ethics
- Existentialism
- Logic
- Mind and reality
- Modern western philosophy
- Philosophy of law
- Philosophy of religion
- Philosophy of science
- Reason and knowledge
- Social and political philosophy

Majors in philosophy must fulfill the requirements of either the regular concentration or the ethics and public policy concentration. Majors wishing to go to graduate school are advised to choose the regular concentration. Students whose main interests in philosophy are ethics, political philosophy, philosophy of law, or public policy should consider ethics and public policy concentration.

Electives: About 40 credit hours. Many philosophy majors choose to use their electives toward a minor (18-21 credit hours) to give them an additional area of specialization.

Careers in Philosophy

Some entry-level areas of employment entered by philosophy majors with appropriate experience and education include the following:

- Admissions representative
- Banking official
- Buyer
- Campus religious coordinator
- Customer relations representative
- Editorial assistant
- Employment interviewer
- Fund raiser
- Investment securities broker
- Lobbyist
- Management trainee
- Nonprofit organization director
- Office administrative assistant
- Public service director
- Public service official
- Sales representative
- Technical writer
- Youth program coordinator

Jobs that require additional education or experience for student majoring in philosophy include:

- Attorney
- Career counselor
- Chef
- Clergy
- Elementary teacher
- Guidance counselor

- Higher education administrator
- Philosophy professor

Next Steps

If you are interested in learning more about becoming a philosophy major at VCU, consider doing each of the following things. Check them off as you complete each step.

- Check out the VCU Department of Philosophy webpage.
- Take a philosophy course.
- Read about the philosophy major in the *Undergraduate Bulletin*.
- Review the philosophy major graduation worksheet with an academic advisor.
- Talk to one or more upper-level philosophy students about their major.
- Discuss the major with one or more philosophy professors.
- Go to the Career Center to read about careers in philosophy.
- Go to the VCU bookstore and browse in the philosophy textbook section.
- Explore internship possibilities through the Career Center and the Philosophy Department.

- Visit with the director of study-abroad program to discuss options available.

- Read specific information about careers in the Occupational Outlook Handbook located at www.bls.gov/oco.

Virginia Commonwealth University

**College of
Humanities & Sciences**

Department of Philosophy

Starke House
915 W. Franklin St.
P.O. Box 842025
Richmond, VA 23284

Phone: (804) 828-1224

Department of Philosophy website:

http://www.has.vcu.edu/phi/phi_home.html

This brochure is published by



University College in cooperation
with the Department of Philosophy