

Mission Statement

The greatest possible clarity and logical rigor applied to the inherently most unclear and most disputed issues: This is the task that philosophy has set for itself.

Philosophy examines reality and the human knowledge of that reality, political and ethical values, and the values of art and beauty. Exalted subjects – while at the same time philosophy treats those subjects concretely and even humbly. For the characteristic philosophical methods are not grandiloquent metaphor or inspirational rhetoric but rather analysis, logical argument, and systematization.

Philosophy's methods also make it a discipline uniquely suited to examining the methods and assumptions in other domains of culture. Thus there is a philosophy of science and philosophy of religion; there are philosophical readings of literary and other artistic works.

Whether because it functions as a general critic of knowledge, because it asks such ambitious questions of its own, or because of its attempts to hew to a method, philosophy has often been thought of as a guide to life, not only an activity that wise people engage in but perhaps even the activity that makes them wise.

Partly this is a result of philosophy's exploratory character. Wittgenstein said, "A philosophical problem has the form: 'I don't know my way about.'" And certainly the philosophical practice of asking questions before there is any idea how to answer them helps students prepare to confront life-problems for which there are not simple or obvious solutions.

Moreover, the habit of philosophical debate helps cultivate the pursuit of a thoughtful balance – whatever the subject may be – between dogmatism and skepticism.

So philosophy is valuable as a tool and valuable in itself. It is an exercise in two senses of that word, for philosophy is an activity and also the preparation for other activities. As the systematic exercise of human thoughtfulness, philosophy helps one achieve clarity and solve problems, at the same time that it facilitates the natural human capacities for curiosity and meditateness.

Learning Outcomes

Students graduating with a B.A. in Philosophy will:

1. Be able to read philosophy; that is, to identify the central thesis of a piece of philosophical writing, to explain the argument adduced in support of the thesis, and to describe whether the relationship between thesis and support is deductive or inductive.
2. Be able to reason philosophically and criticize philosophy; that is, to understand and employ the basic principles of logic, to assess the success or failure of a philosophical argument, to distinguish valid from invalid deductive arguments, to discriminate between strong and weak inductive arguments, to evaluate the truth of the premises, and to identify possible equivocation and fallacious reasoning.
3. Be able to write philosophy; that is, to select and clearly identify an appropriate claim to defend, to offer persuasive reasons to support the claim, and to construct a logically coherent argument in support of the claim.
4. To be generally familiar with and be able to discuss major aspects of the history of Western philosophy, especially the periods of its classical antiquity (500-300 B.C.) and its early modernity (1600-1800), and at least one current or tradition from the philosophy of the past two centuries (i.e., logical positivism, ordinary-language philosophy, existentialism, phenomenology).
5. Be able to articulate and debate a number of philosophical issues in value-oriented areas of philosophy (i.e., ethics, politics, and aesthetics) and in ontologically-oriented areas of philosophy (metaphysics, epistemology, philosophy of language, philosophy of science).

Learning Outcome Grid

(Outcomes are numbered from 1 to 5 as listed above)

Courses	Learning Outcomes								
	1	2	3	4	5				
30000: The Rational Animal: Dimensions of Understanding	X	X	X	X	X				
30001/30100-30400:The Rational Animal: Honors	X	X	X	X	X				
10200:Introduction to Philosophy	X	X	X	X	X				
11100: Critical Thinking	X	X	X	X	X				
11200-12000: Special Topics in Philosophy	X	X	X	X	X				
20100: Logical Reasoning	X	X	X	X	X				
20200: Introduction to Logic	X	X	X	X	X				
20600: Philosophy of Science Fiction	X	X	X	X	X				
30500: History of Philosophy I: Ancient	X	X	X	X	X				
30600: History of Philosophy II: Modern	X	X	X	X	X				
30700: Metaphysics and Epistemology	X	X	X	X	X				
30800: Ethics	X	X	X	X	X				
30900: Social and Political Philosophy	X	X	X	X	X				
31000: Independent Study and Research	X	X	X	X	X				
31100-32000: Special Topics in Philosophy	X	X	X	X	X				
32100: Symbolic Logic		X							
32800: Philosophy of Social Science	X	X	X		X				
32900: Philosophy of History	X	X	X	X	X				
33400: Philosophy of Artificial Intelligence	X	X	X		X				
33500: Philosophy of Film		X	X		X				
33600: Philosophy of Space and Time	X	X	X		X				
33700: Decision Theory		X	X		X				
33800: Philosophy of Wittgenstein	X	X	X	X	X				
33900: Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Freud	X	X	X	X	X				
34000: Self and Identity	X	X	X		X				
34100: Philosophy of Psychoanalysis	X	X	X		X				

Learning Outcome Grid

Courses	Learning Outcomes								
	1	2	3	4	5				
34400: World Philosophies	X	X	X	X	X				
34500: American Philosophy	X	X	X	X	X				
34600: Feminist Philosophy	X	X	X	X	X				
34700: Contemporary Philosophy	X	X	X	X	X				
34800: Continental European Philosophy	X	X	X	X	X				
34900: Applied Ethics	X	X	X		X				
35000: Major Philosopher(s)	X	X	X	X	X				
35400: Seminar in Advanced Topics	X	X	X	X	X				