

WHY STUDY PHILOSOPHY?

There are many fields of inquiry in philosophy:

- **Metaphysics:** What is reality?
- **Epistemology:** What is knowledge?
- **Logic:** What is the structure of reason or reasoning?
- **Philosophy of mind:** What are minds? What is thought? How do they relate to their objects and to the world?
- **Philosophy of language:** How does language function as a medium of thought?
- **Philosophy of science:** What is science? How is it able to give us knowledge of the world?
- **Ethics:** What are values? How should we live? What makes an action right or wrong, good or bad?
- **Political philosophy:** What is political authority? What would just institutions look like?
- **Philosophy of religion:** Is God possible? Can we know whether God exists? Is faith rational?

In all of the above fields of inquiry, the questions philosophy pursues are fundamental. And fundamental questions are often the most difficult. Philosophy is sometimes able to settle such questions but more often it makes progress by clarifying the questions, exploring the relationships between the ideas involved in asking and answering them, and limiting the range of plausible answers.

Many students entering the university are unfamiliar with the academic study of philosophy because they did not have the opportunity to take a philosophy class in high school. This should not be viewed as a roadblock but as an open path to discovery. Long before entering the university, students often find themselves reflecting on what are in fact central philosophical questions, ones arising from aspects of their own experience as human beings.

Just for Fun! Test Your Philosophy Acumen

What do you know about the philosophers listed below? Can you situate them in history or describe the philosophical tradition to which they belong?

Democritus	John Locke	Jacques Derrida
Montaigne	Mary Wollstonecraft	Hannah Arendt
Jürgen Habermas	Julia Kristeva	Jean-Paul Sartre
John Dewey	Baruch Spinoza	Immanuel Kant
Simone de Beauvoir	Boethius	René Descartes
Aristotle	Elizabeth Anscombe	Plato
W.V.O. Quine	Iris Murdoch	

Career Prospects

Philosophy majors find career opportunities in the humanities, the social sciences, the natural sciences, the exact sciences, and in many professions, because they have been trained to examine the basic questions that range across these areas. Philosophy majors from UT have found careers in **business, government, medicine, teaching, law/advocacy, science, journalism/media, social services, and academic philosophy.**

Employers in many fields value the education and training of philosophy majors to

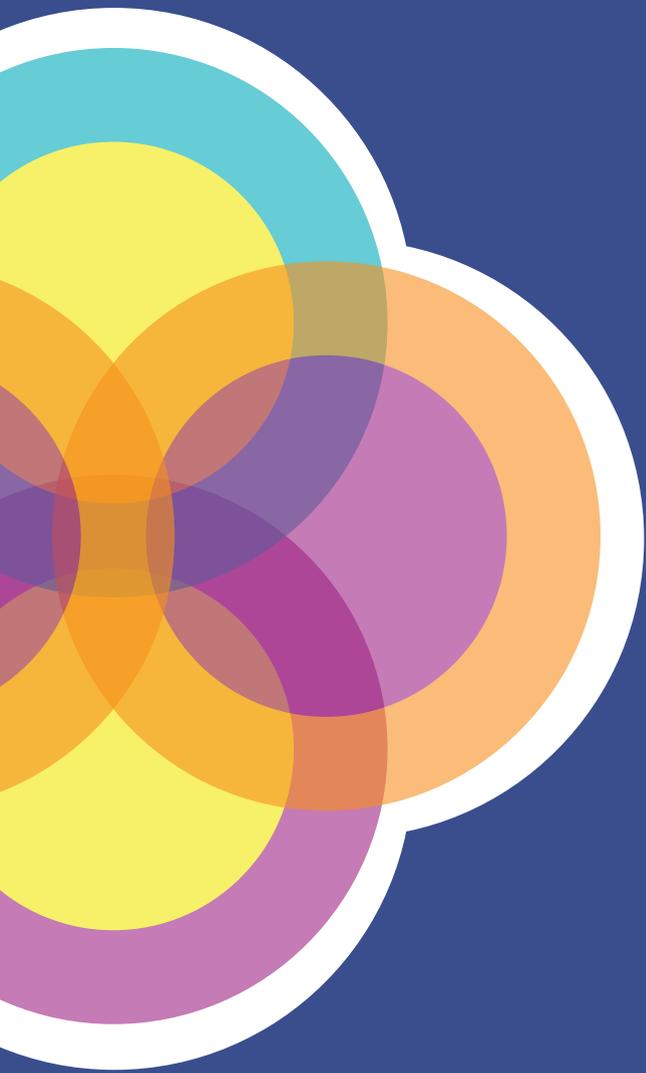
- think critically
- analyze arguments
- see the big picture
- question assumptions
- speak and write clearly
- understand alternative perspectives

A 2008 study found that by mid-career, philosophy majors earn on average \$81,200 a year—more than students majoring in chemistry, marketing, information technology, business management, and many other fields. See payscale.com/2008-best-colleges/degrees.asp for a full list of best undergraduate college degrees by salary.

Of course, your immediate employment prospects and earnings will be determined not only by your major, but by your grades, your work experience (including internships), and your planning.

“In the 21st century, mastery of the basic skills of reading, writing, and math is no longer enough. Increasingly, almost any job that pays more than minimum wage today—both blue and white collar—requires employees who know how to solve a range of intellectual and technical problems. In addition, we face an exponential increase of readily available information, new technologies that are constantly changing, and more complex societal challenges. Thus, work, learning, and citizenship in the 21st century demand that we all know how to think—to reason, analyze, weigh evidence, problem-solve. Effective communication, curiosity, and critical thinking skills...are much more than just the traditional desirable outcomes of a liberal arts education. They are essential competencies and habits of mind for life in the 21st century.”

Tony Wagner (Harvard Graduate School of Education), *The Global Achievement Gap: Why Even Our Best Schools Don't Teach the New Survival Skills Our Children Need—And What We Can Do About It*. New York: Basic Books, 2008.



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