

College of Humanities and Social Sciences

The Philosophy Major

What is Philosophy?

The word philosophy means “the love of wisdom.” It is the study of life’s big questions—the nature of Reality, the existence of God, the meaning of life, and the purpose of all existence—using rational thought and argumentation.

Philosophers try to solve intellectual puzzles and/or address real-world problems by looking at these universal questions in a variety of ways:

Logic – analyzes systematic, rational thought.

Ethics – distinguishes between good and bad, right and wrong.

Metaphysics – examines the nature of Reality.

Epistemology – analyzes the nature of truth or knowledge.

Social and Political Philosophy – evaluates human nature, justice, and state power.

History of Philosophy – explores the influence of thinkers and schools of thought throughout time.

At Montclair State, our faculty specialize in American philosophy, epistemology, medical ethics, philosophy of science, feminist philosophy, and the philosophy of art.



“It’s a healthy thing now and then to hang a question mark on the things you have long taken for granted.”

– Bertrand Russell
20th century philosopher

Why Study Philosophy?

It’s practical! Philosophy Majors:

- Develop the skills in argumentation, analysis, and thought that can be applied to resolve and negotiate difficult issues in any area of life.
- Learn the effects that fundamental assumptions have on people’s views of the world, and how they shape human relationships.
- Apply their abstract thinking skills to other fields of study to establish deeper levels of understanding.
- Achieve on standardized exams...

On the GRE for all Graduate Schools:

Nationally, Philosophy majors rank 1st in both the Verbal and Analytical Writing sections of this exam.

Source: www.ets.org/s/gre/pdf/gre_guide_table4.pdf

On the LSAT for Law School:

Nationally, Philosophy majors tie for 2nd place with Religious Studies majors for overall scores on this exam.

Source: *Nieswiadomy, Journal of Economic Education* 37:2 (Spr 2006) p. 244-7

On the GMAT for Business School:

Nationally, Philosophy majors outperform students in all other humanities, social science, and professional degree programs on this exam.

Source: www.gmac.com/gmac/ResearchandTrends/GMATStats/ProfileofCandidates

To learn more about majoring in Philosophy, visit or call 446 Dickson Hall; 973-655-5144;
<http://chss.montclair.edu/philosophyreligion>

What can I do with a degree in Philosophy?

The Philosophy major provides you with the abilities to think issues through logically and systematically, to evaluate moral behavior, to analyze political and social structures, and to envision big-picture solutions to real-world challenges.

It is common for Philosophy majors to continue on to graduate school and become college teachers. But Philosophy majors often follow these career paths as well:

- Lawyer
- Technology Specialist
- Non-profit Administrator
- Community Affairs Specialist
- Public Policy Analyst

Our Philosophy majors can now get NJ Teacher Certification for Elementary School, Middle School or Special Education.



“When you study Philosophy, Socrates is always whispering in your ear, telling you that it is our job as humans to find the answers to life’s toughest questions.”

– Maryann Woods-Murphy,
NJ Teacher of the Year in
2009 (Montclair State class
of 1978)

