

INTRODUCTION

Why study philosophy?

Philosophy is fascinating, which is one of the best reasons to study anything. But there are other good reasons to study philosophy, particularly at university. Here are three.

1. *Transferable skills that employers value.*

Many degree programmes focus on teaching facts to be memorized (teaching that can soon go out of date). Philosophy, on the other hand, focuses much more developing *skills* – skills that you will find valuable whatever your chosen path in life. These skills include:

The ability to cut through waffle

The ability to spot errors in reasoning

The ability to make a point with clarity and precision

The ability to analyze complex issues and arguments

The ability to think independently and creatively (to 'think out of the box')

The ability to build a strong, rigorous case.

Philosophy develops an approach to thinking and problem solving that employers value – particularly when it comes to the most interesting and rewarding careers.

2. *Philosophy degree programmes produce some of the most intelligent and able university graduates.*

The skills philosophy programmes generate translate into higher performance on standardized tests for graduate education (GRE, LSAT, GMAT, etc.), as well as success in the

professional world. In the GRE tests of 3rd year degree majors (major = main subject studied) in the U.S.:

- Philosophy majors rank FIRST among all majors on the verbal section of the GRE. They even outperform those who take a degree in English.
- Philosophy majors rank FIRST among all majors on the analytical section of the GRE. That's predictable, given philosophy's emphasis on analytical and critical thinking.
- Philosophy majors rank FIRST among humanities majors and ninth among all majors on the quantitative (mathematical) section of the GRE. Only students following programmes with a large mathematical component (e.g. maths and physics) scored better.
- Philosophy majors ranked FIRST among all majors on the U.S. Law School Admissions Test.

3. *'What can you do with a philosophy Degree?' 'Anything you want.'*

Philosophy graduates succeed across a very wide variety of professions, including Journalism, Law, Banking and Management.

'I credit my success to my ability to logically think through problems and my writing skills, both items I attribute to my philosophy classes.'

Kim Feazle, Philosophy Graduate and Financial Analyst, Hill & Knowlton

'When I went to law school, I was told by all my professors that they were going to teach me how to "think like a lawyer". I soon found out that I already

knew how to do that; I had learned to do so as a philosophy major.'

John S. Paul, Philosophy Major and Attorney (Bryan, Texas)

'The quality that Philosophy graduates possess and that is lacking in non-graduates is the ability to examine a selected subject, identify key components and their relationships to each other, and assess the consequences of a component change. It is this analytical ability of philosophers that gives them the edge over their contemporaries in the modern environment.'

Tommy Attaway, Jr., Project Management Specialist, Switzerland

'While no single curricular path is the ideal preparation for law school, you should choose courses that sharpen analytical reasoning and writing skills. Law schools prefer students who can think, read, and write well, and who have some understanding of what shapes human experience.'

From the Law School Admission Council's Official Guide to U.S. Law Schools

'I have been pursuing a top job at one of the leading investment banks in the world. This position was "short listed" to 150 people as interviews went on concurrently in various countries around the globe. At the end of the process, I received the offer and am now working in New York as a Senior Strategist at one of Wall Street's leading firms. After accepting the offer, I asked the Board, who ultimately made the final decision, why I was chosen above the others. Without blinking an eye, the Head of the

Strategic Hiring Committee stated a list of reasons, the very first of which was “Out of all the people we considered, you were the only one who studied Philosophy, not to mention having a Masters Degree in it. That told us immediately that you can think outside the box.” I have come to realize the answer to the question perpetually posed, “Philosophy? What are you going to with that?” The correct response is “Absolutely anything you want”.

Jordan Kotick, Vice-President J.P. Morgan, Wall Street

Stephen Law
Editor