

Why Study Philosophy?

HZT4U1 - Mr. A. Wittmann - Unit 1 - Lecture 1



PHILOSOPHY

Not just for undergraduates

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Why?

- Studying philosophy is not like studying pre-med or engineering.
- It is unlikely to be a necessary condition for getting a job of a specific sort.
- But taking philosophy courses can improve your academic experience and also lead to intangible benefits that will enrich and enhance your future experience, whatever field you enter.
- Most importantly, philosophy forces to question everything.

Intellectual & Critical Thinking Skills

- Philosophy offers the potential of learning how to become more creative, and to think more carefully.
- To understand texts or chains of reasoning and develop argumentation skills.
- To assemble the data for yourself and draw your own conclusions about what they show.
- Philosophy strives to improve your writing and make you come across as more polished and more authoritative.

U of T LSAT (2008-2009) Results

- Philosophy majors score = 157.4
- Exceeded only by physics/math majors (160)
- Ties economics majors (157)
- Exceeds engineering (156.2), computer science (154), political science (153.1), and all other fields of science, social science, humanities, and management

U of T GRE (2003–2006) Results

- Philosophy majors score 590 verbal/5.0 analytical
- English Literature scores 561/4.8
- Life sciences scores 460/4.2
- Physical sciences scores 486/4.2
- Engineering scores 470/4.1
- Social sciences scores 487/4.5
- Humanities scores 545/4.7
- Management scores 440/4.1

Philosophical Careers

- PhD in philosophy is for one who wishes to become a professor in a philosophy department at a university: to write philosophy articles of the sort students read in our courses, and to teach philosophy courses at the undergraduate and perhaps also graduate level.
- MA in philosophy can serve many purposes: it can be a bridge to a PhD program for one who does not feel quite ready; the intensive focus and heightened intellectual atmosphere can be valuable in its own right, and can also distinguish one from the field in applications for jobs or positions in professional schools.

Intellectual Reasons

Everyday Philosophical Questions

1. Do space and time go on forever?
2. Is there a God?
3. Is anything ever really right or wrong?
4. Are there any absolute truths?
5. What is the meaning of life?
6. How do we know anything?
7. How language is possible?
8. What is the nature of death?

Big Philosophical Questions

1. Do we have free will?
2. What is the relationship between the mind and the body?
3. Do animals have moral rights?
4. How does one justify a belief?
5. Is scientific knowledge more reliable than other forms of knowledge?
6. How can one decide what the best system of government is?
7. Are individuals' first obligations to their countries, or do they have equal or more important global human obligations?
8. How does one determine the merit of a work of art?

Definitions of Philosophy

1. Philosophy is wonder... (Aristotle)
2. The aim of philosophy is to understand how all things in the broadest possible sense of the term, hang together in the broadest possible sense of the term. (Sellars)
3. Philosophy is something in which people engage. It is a practice or activity. And unlike, for instance engineering or playing the fiddle, the practice of philosophy is fundamentally an activity of techniques. It is, in short, a discipline. (Rosenberg)
4. Main concern of philosophy: to question and understand very common ideas that all of us use every day, without thinking about them. (Nagel)
5. If philosophy can't answer so many questions as we could wish, it has at least the power of asking questions, which increases interest of the world, and show the strangeness and complexity, just below the surface even in the commonest things of daily life. (Russell)

To sum up...



THE END