

PHILOSOPHY, B.A.

Seven Penn State campuses are scheduled for closure after Spring 2027: DuBois, Fayette, New Kensington, Mont Alto, Shenango, Wilkes-Barre, and York. New students are not being admitted at these campuses.

Begin Campus: Any Penn State Campus

End Campus: University Park

Program Description

This major provides in-depth study of fundamental issues that confront all people. Topics include ethics, social and political philosophy, and aesthetics—study of the good life, justice, and beauty; metaphysics, philosophy of mind, and philosophy of religion—study of the nature of reality, mind, body, and the meaning of life and death; epistemology, philosophy of science, and logic—study of the nature of knowledge, truth, objectivity, and principles of sound reasoning; and subjects such as comparative philosophies, theories of race, gender, and class, and philosophical issues in technology, language, education, and the professions of law, business, medicine, communications, engineering, and agriculture. These studies enhance imaginative, interpretive, analytical, critical, and communicative capacities. Majors should acquire the intellectual abilities crucial for self-fulfillment, responsible participation in public life, and success in a wide range of careers—including law, business, education, journalism, medicine, and public service.

Majors may pursue concentration in the history of philosophy; humanities and arts; philosophy of science and mathematics; social sciences; the professions; or justice, law, and values. These concentrations are combined easily with minors, area studies, and concurrent majors. Qualified students participate in honors study and internships.

General Philosophy Option

This option provides students with a concentration in the history of western philosophy and the historical development and impact of philosophical ideas and issues—from the ancient to the contemporary period. It is designed for all students who seek a broad liberal education, including students interested in graduate study in philosophy.

Humanities and Arts Option

This option provides students with a concentration in philosophical issues in the arts, art history, literature, languages, history, and religion. It is designed for students primarily interested in the philosophical dimensions of the arts, humanities, and cultural studies, including students with career or further educational goals in these fields.

Philosophy of Science and Mathematics Option

This option provides students with a concentration in philosophical issues in the life sciences, the physical sciences, mathematics, engineering, and technology. It is designed for students primarily interested in the philosophical dimensions of the natural sciences, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), including students with career or further educational goals in these fields.

Social Sciences Option

This option provides students with a concentration in philosophical issues in the social sciences, social and political theory, and education. It is designed for students primarily interested in the philosophical

dimensions of social thought and methodological and normative issues in the social sciences, educational theory, and public policy, including students with career or further educational goals in these fields.

Professional Studies Option

This option provides students with a concentration in philosophical issues and dimensions in the theory and practice of the professions of agriculture, business, engineering, journalism, law, and medicine and health care. It is designed for students seeking a foundation in the philosophical dimensions of these professions, including students who wish to combine humanistic study with career or further educational goals in these fields.

Justice, Law, and Values Option

This option provides students with a concentration in philosophical issues in ethics, jurisprudence, social and political theory, and everyday life. It is designed for students primarily interested in moral, social, political, and legal questions concerning value and is especially appropriate for those anticipating future educational work in law school.

What is Philosophy?

Philosophy is the oldest of the liberal arts, and is often defined simply as the love of wisdom. Philosophy is at the core of the liberal arts tradition and provided the foundation for the modern university, yet it remains highly relevant to life in technologically complex, diverse, global, information driven societies such as our own. The Philosophy major provides in-depth study of fundamental issues that inescapably confront all persons, such as ethics, social and political philosophy, aesthetics, metaphysics, philosophy of mind, philosophy of religion, epistemology, philosophy of science, and logic. These studies enhance imaginative, interpretive, analytical, critical, and communicative capacities. Majors thus may acquire intellectual abilities crucial for self-fulfillment, responsible participation in public life, and success in a wide range of careers—including law, business, education, journalism, medicine, and public service.

You Might Like This Program If...

- You want to develop critical thinking skills, including constructing, interpreting, and critically analyzing philosophical arguments.
- You want to learn about major thinkers, schools, and trends of the Western philosophical tradition, and to appreciate the importance and value of other thought.
- You want to compose clear, coherent written expressions of complex philosophical ideas, theories, and arguments.
- You have enthusiasm for inquiry and want engage in philosophical discussions about ethics, social and political philosophy, metaphysics, and aesthetics.