Undergraduate Philosophy

Degrees Available at SIUE

• Bachelor of Arts, Philosophy (specialization available in the following)
  ° Law
• Bachelor of Science, Philosophy

Philosophy at SIUE

Philosophy is the attempt to think carefully, critically and systematically about the most challenging questions that face humanity. Philosophy is the oldest academic discipline, with roots that trace to ancient Greece and to thinkers who asked probing questions about themselves and the world around them. Philosophy is called, “the queen of the sciences” because every major academic discipline—from math to psychology—was part of philosophy at one time. Philosophy continues to spawn new cutting-edge fields, such as cognitive science.

At SIUE, pursuing a degree in philosophy allows you to follow your interests. Classes are centered on discussion so you can be an active participant every day. In order to develop your abilities to solve complex problems, generate ideas, communicate clearly, respond to others, adapt to change, and think creatively, faculty in the Department of Philosophy will challenge you throughout your course of study. Being challenged helps students develop deep analytical skills that will translate into everyday life, as well as their chosen profession. Philosophical questions you will encounter in your coursework include:

• What does it mean for us to say that we know something is true?
• What does it mean to live well?
• What are persons, minds, and bodies, and how are they related?
• Should we fear death?
• Can wars ever be just?
• Why do we punish people?
• Do human beings have free will?
• Is it wrong to tell jokes about race or gender?
• Is it ever morally permissible to lie?
• Is science compatible with religion?

What can I do with a degree in philosophy?

The focus on clear thinking and writing prepares students for a wide range of careers, including law, medicine, bioethics, finance, diplomacy, journalism, public relations and business. Philosophy students tend to score higher on the Law School Admissions Test (LSAT) and the verbal and analytical writing portions of the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) than students from other majors, and are among the highest scorers on the Graduate Management Test (GMAT). Famous philosophy majors include: Steven Colbert, Angela Davis, Carly Fiorina, Mary Higgins Clark, Carl Ichan, Bruce Lee, George Soros and David Souter. The skills developed by philosophy majors help ensure they will thrive wherever their interests take them.

Many students choose to double major, combining philosophy with another academic field. Since philosophy engages many of the methods, assumptions and fundamental questions that underlie other areas of study, majoring in philosophy can deepen one’s understanding of the subject matter in another major. The relatively modest number of hours required for a degree in philosophy also makes it easier to pair with other majors.
Philosophy as Pre-Law Preparation

Students are admitted to law school from a wide variety of academic disciplines, and no specific major is required for entrance into law school. The American Bar Association (ABA) recommends pursuing an area of study that interests you and that helps you develop a strong skill set in problem solving, critical reading, writing, oral communication and research. Law schools judge applicants based upon their diversity of experiences, grade point average and Law School Admission Test (LSAT) scores.

The philosophy major offers excellent preparation for law school because it excels at teaching the skills that you will use in law school and in legal professions. On average, philosophy majors tend to excel on the LSAT, and philosophy majors have a high law school admission rate. The Department of Philosophy offers a BA in philosophy with a specialization in law that specifies 15 hours of 33 required credit hours to complete the philosophy major. By including this coursework, the BA in philosophy with a law specialization is designed to guide students toward curricular decisions that will facilitate their future success in law school and in subsequent legal professions.

Students aspiring to law school may also wish to complete the pre-law minor. Students completing the BA in philosophy with a law specialization will need to complete five additional courses outside of philosophy for the pre-law minor. Other programs of study correlated with high law school acceptance rates and high LSAT scores include economics, English, history, and political science. These may be combined with the philosophy major as either a second major or a minor.

Admission Requirements

To be admitted to the Bachelor of Science or Bachelor of Arts program, students must:
- Complete all academic development courses required by the University
- Complete any courses required to address high school deficiencies
- Complete RA 101 or PHIL 212 with a grade of C or better
  - Note: RA 101 does not count for credit toward the major in philosophy

Graduation Requirements

- Complete all specific program requirements
- Complete all University requirements including:
  - All general education requirements
  - A minimum of 120 credit hours
    - At least 30 of which must be completed at SIUE
    - At least 60 of which must be completed at a regionally accredited four-year institution
  - A minimum cumulative GPA of 2.0
  - Bachelor of Arts only: one year of the same foreign language
  - Bachelor of Science only: one additional LAB experience course
- File an application for graduation by the first day of the term in which you plan to graduate

Philosophy Minor

A minor in philosophy can deepen and broaden one’s understanding of another major. A minor in philosophy is especially appropriate for those who plan to enter the professions of computer science, teaching, medicine, journalism, business, science, social science, law, or theology.

Admission Requirements

Students must successfully complete RA 101 or any PHIL course with a C or better before applying for a minor in philosophy.
- Note: RA 101 does not count for credit toward the minor in philosophy.

Required Courses

A minor in philosophy consists of successful completion (C or better) of 18 hours in philosophy, including three different courses in three of the following areas:
- History of Philosophy
- Metaphysics and Epistemology
- Value Theory
- Cultural Pluralism
- Religion

Contact Information

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