

## Philosophy

### Program Mission Statement

The Philosophy Program provides students the opportunity to investigate questions of wide-ranging significance (such as, Can I know that what I experience exists in reality? Do we possess free will? Is there a god? What is the fairest way to organize a society? Is justice possible on a global scale?), develop crucial skills of critical thinking and reflection, and communicate in a clear and organized manner. The program focuses both on equipping students with knowledge of the main areas of philosophy, including logic, ethics and social-political philosophy, metaphysics and epistemology, and the history of philosophy, and on acquainting them with the range and diversity of traditions and orientations in philosophy including the Anglo-American, Continental European, and Comparative and Non-Western traditions. Courses in the program emphasize skills that are both discipline specific and transferable, fostering students' ability to think critically, develop well-reasoned arguments, analyze pressing issues, and reflect on the world around them and their experiences in order to cultivate meaningful lives.

The program promotes meaningful institutional, professional, and community engagement, especially in the applied areas of ethics and practical philosophy, emphasizing the application of philosophical knowledge and skills in both teaching and research. Informed by these commitments, the Department of Philosophy seeks to assist its multiple constituencies in appreciating the great intellectual conversations, in clarifying unexamined assumptions, in evaluating the ideas and norms that motivate intellectual inquiry, and in participating intelligently and responsibly in public debates.

### Student Learning Outcomes

#### Graduates will be able to:

##### Content/Discipline-Specific Knowledge/Skills

- Explicate key terms, concepts, and ideas in the discipline of philosophy
- Articulate the historical developments in the tradition and/or methods used in the discipline of philosophy

##### Communication Skills

- Write in a reasoned, persuasive, and argumentatively effective manner

##### Critical Thinking Skills

- Develop arguments that are well reasoned, fallacy-free, with conclusions properly following from premises
- Reconstruct and evaluate ideas and arguments, recognizing forms of fallacious, invalid, and unsound reasoning
- Interpret complex texts in a systematic and critical manner

### Assessment Approaches

In philosophy courses, student learning is assessed through analyses of course-embedded final assignments. Students' progress and the program's success on the six main learning outcomes - including content, critical thinking, and communication - is evaluated by analyzing either term papers or final essay exams drawn from selected courses required for majors. Each semester, a course is selected from which to draw artifacts and learning outcomes relevant to the course are assessed. A two-person team of faculty assess a random sampling of artifacts from that course by applying the appropriate rubrics and rating each paper with respect to each of the outcomes that is being assessed.