

# WHY STUDY PHILOSOPHY (Washington University at St. Louis)

[https://philosophy.artsci.wustl.edu/  
why-major-philosophy](https://philosophy.artsci.wustl.edu/why-major-philosophy)

- Recent research has suggested that the number of students majoring in Philosophy is growing. Even the New York Times has noticed this trend!:

“In a New Generation of College Students, Many Opt for the Life Examined” NY Times, By WINNIE HU, Published: April 6, 2008  
(<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/06/education/06philosophy.html>)





- Although, of course, studying philosophy is intrinsically interesting and fulfilling, it also prepares students well for an array of careers. It's often noted that:
  - Philosophy graduates on average perform outstandingly well on the LSAT (law school aptitude test). Only Math and Economics students score more highly; all other humanities, social and natural science majors on average do less well.

- Philosophy students also perform well on the GRE exam (for general entrance into graduate school) on the verbal part of the GRE, philosophy majors outperform English majors; Philosophy is overall, the highest scoring Humanities major.
- Philosophy graduates also do well on MCAT, the entrance exam for medical school.

- But these professions are far from the only careers taken up by Philosophy graduates. Recent research in the UK for instance found that 12.2% of Philosophy graduates had taken up work in business and finance, while 7.3% were in marketing and advertising.

# Problem-Solving Skills

Studying philosophy is a particularly effective way to enhance your problem-solving capacities. It helps you analyze concepts, definitions, arguments and problems. It contributes to your capacity to organize ideas and issues, to deal with questions of value, and to extract what is essential from masses of information. Studying philosophy helps you put problems in a manageable form, frame hypotheses, and do research. It helps you both to distinguish fine differences between views and to discover common ground between opposing positions. And it helps you synthesize a variety of views or perspectives into a unified whole.



# Communication Skills -written and oral

- These regularly top the lists of skills that employers are looking for. Philosophy contributes uniquely to the development of expressive and communicative powers. It provides some of the basic tools of self-expression – for instance, skills in presenting ideas through well-constructed, systematic arguments that other fields either do not use, or use less extensively. It helps you express what is distinctive about your view; enhances your ability to explain difficult material; encourages fair-mindedness in considering opposing points of view; and helps you eliminate ambiguities and vagueness from your writing and speech.

# Analytic Reading Skills

- For most jobs that Washington University graduates are likely to hold, you will be effective only if you are able to read carefully and critically the verbal material you will be working with – whether it's a legal brief, a scientific report, a company's new policy proposal, or a memo from the head of your division. Philosophy brings you face-to-face with some of the most challenging (and rewarding) texts ever written. Once you have mastered those texts, you'll have the ability and confidence to handle most any text thrown your way.

# Persuasiveness

- Through its focus on clear formulations, good arguments, and apt examples, the study of philosophy helps you develop the ability to be convincing. You learn to build and defend your own views, to appreciate competing positions, and to indicate forcefully why you consider your views preferable to alternatives. While many fields give you practice in arguing for your position, philosophy is unique in its focus on the quality of the arguments themselves.

# Understanding Other Fields

- Philosophy is indispensable for understanding the foundational issues in many disciplines. Many important questions about a discipline, such as the nature of its concepts and its relation to other disciplines, are philosophical in nature. Philosophy of science, for instance, is needed to supplement the understanding of the natural and social sciences which one derives from doing scientific work itself. Similarly, philosophy of law, biomedical ethics, or history of philosophy gives you training in the sort of cross-disciplinary thinking important in today's fast-changing and interrelated careers. It can also help you do well in non-philosophy courses and in other majors or minors.

So Philosophy can be the path to many different successful careers. Rather than a narrow preparation for some specific career that closes the doors to other opportunities, Philosophy is a gateway into almost any future you might want to pursue.