

School of Arts and Sciences

PHILOSOPHY

Philosophy is a central and essential component in any genuine education. Philosophers struggle with the profound and lasting questions of humankind. Everyone must come to terms with such questions, one way or another. Pitt can help you do that with its philosophy department, one of the best in the country and one with a long tradition of fine teaching. The department acquaints students with the major accomplishments of the world's greatest thinkers, helps students to develop their own powers of critical thought, and provides the basis for an educated response to problems and questions.

Because philosophy has this crucial role in education, regardless of one's intellectual specialty, the department has designed its offerings for compatibility with academic programs of all sorts. The Department of Philosophy recognizes that one of its primary missions is to offer programs for students with many different interests and career goals.

The University of Pittsburgh's philosophy department is widely regarded as one of the two or three best in the United States—perhaps the best. Major scholarly journals are edited here, and three members of the department have held the prestigious office of president of the American Philosophical Association.

A major in philosophy provides excellent preparation for such professions as law, medicine, and business. The conceptual sophistication imparted by training in philosophy is invaluable in virtually any field of learning or any serious profession. Philosophy, however, is not a vocational major, but the skills you develop in studying philosophy—well-reasoned and articulate writing, a capacity for critical analysis, the tendency to see things in perspective—are universally valued. You will do well to add a second major to your philosophy degree, something that the Department of Philosophy encourages by offering a Standard Major alongside its more time-consuming Intensive Major.

While the department encourages students to major in philosophy, either alone or as a second major, only rarely does it encourage students to pursue philosophy in graduate school as preparation for a scholarly career. Students who do especially well in either the standard or intensive major program are graduated with honors in philosophy. Because of the superior national reputation of the department, a major in philosophy or honors in philosophy will help Pitt graduates get into good graduate schools or professional schools. In fact, for law schools and theological seminaries the best preparation is often a philosophy undergraduate degree.

Requirements for Standard Major

I. The following four courses (acceptable substitutes shown)

PHIL 0500 Logic (or 1500 Symbolic Logic)

This course is an introduction to the concepts and methods of modern deductive logic. Propositional logic is emphasized, but quantificational logic is touched upon.

PHIL 0200 Ancient Philosophy (or 1020 Plato or 1040 Aristotle)

The aim of this course is to introduce students to some of the main achievements and leading ideas of ancient Greek philosophy up to classical times. The emphasis will be on understanding and evaluating the arguments and ideas of the Greek philosophical tradition.



PHIL 0210 Modern Philosophy (or 1110 Rationalism or 1140 Empiricism)

This course presents an introduction to the philosophical period from Descartes through Kant. Special attention is given to at least one rationalist, one empiricist, and Kant.

PHIL 0300 Ethics (or any course in value theory)

There is only one question in this class—what's right and what's wrong. The course considers this fundamental moral principle, and the results are applied to moral problems of serious interest today.

II. Any four 1000-level courses beyond those counted under category I above.

III. A total of at least 24 credit hours in philosophy.

Requirements for Intensive Major

I. The following three courses (acceptable substitutes shown)

PHIL 0500 Logic (or 1500 Symbolic Logic)

PHIL 0200 Ancient Philosophy (or 1020 Plato or 1040 Aristotle)

PHIL 0210 Modern Philosophy (or 1110 Rationalism or 1140 Empiricism)

II. At least five 1000-level courses beyond those counted under I above; these five courses must include at least one course from each of the following four groups:

a. History of Philosophy (PHIL 1020–1190).

b. Value Theory (PHIL 1300–1390).

c. Metaphysics and Epistemology (PHIL 1420–1490).

d. Logic and Philosophy of Science (PHIL 1500–1690).

III. A Senior Paper

You must sign up either for PHIL 1940 Honors Thesis (3 credits) or PHIL 1940 and 1941 (6 credits) with the prior permission of a faculty member who has agreed to supervise the student's work. Neither PHIL 1940 nor 1941 count toward the five 1000-level courses mentioned in II above.

IV. A total of at least 36 credit hours in philosophy.

Related Area

There are no restrictions for your related area beyond the general School of Arts and Sciences (A&S) regulations.

Foreign Language

There are no language requirements beyond the general A&S regulations. However, students who plan to pursue philosophy in graduate school are strongly encouraged to develop at least a good reading competence in one or more foreign languages of special relevance to philosophy (e.g., Greek, Latin, French, and German).

Joint Majors With Philosophy

Joint majors are not double majors; they are multidisciplinary majors offered by two or more departments. Presently, the Department of Philosophy offers a joint major in politics and philosophy with the Department of Political Science as well as a joint major in mathematics and philosophy with the Department of Mathematics. Students may also design their own joint major if they can secure the advice and consent of two faculty advisers, one from each of the participating departments.

Departmental Honors in Philosophy

Students who complete the standard major or the intensive major will be graduated with honors in philosophy if they have earned the grade of A- or better in at least six 1000-level (100) philosophy courses exclusive of PHIL 1902.

For more information about the philosophy program, contact:

Professor Michael Perlof

Department of Philosophy

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Pittsburgh, PA 15260

412-624-5781

www.pitt.edu/~philosop

For more information about other majors, contact:

Office of Admissions and Financial Aid

Alumni Hall, 4227 Fifth Avenue

Pittsburgh, PA 15260-6601

412-624-PITT

E-mail: oafa@pitt.edu

www.oafa.pitt.edu

Special Programs and Opportunities

Undergraduate Research

You will have the opportunity to conduct research projects with various philosophy department faculty members on various topics. Some of those topics have included philosophy of science, logic, and the philosophy of the mind. Undergraduate research is very valuable because it gives you experience that will make you more of an asset to your future career or graduate school. Contact your advisor for more information on how to get involved.

University Honors College (UHC)

UHC offers many resources for talented, active students—unique courses, special degrees, opportunities to perform independent research or teach, supplemental advising, and a social and academic community of similarly motivated students. UHC courses offer a more in-depth treatment of the material covered in a nonhonors course. Students work more problems, write more, read more, and discuss topics in greater depth. Although UHC does not have a formal membership and does invite all students to participate in honors courses, there are certain qualifications that must be met to be eligible to take UHC courses. Entering freshmen are automatically considered for UHC participation on the basis of their admissions applications. A minimum quality point average (QPA) of 3.25 is required for current Pitt students.

Philosophy Club

This student organization is an association of undergraduate students who meet to discuss philosophical issues in an informal setting and for occasional special events.

Certificate Programs

Certificate programs allow students to complete a concentrated area of study in addition to their major. They consist of 18-24 credits of course work and in many cases can be used to fulfill the “related area” requirement of the A&S degree. Certificate programs in Asian studies, Latin American studies, Russian and East European studies, and West European studies are offered through the **University Center for International Studies (UCIS)** and are designated by the U.S. Department of Education as among the best of their kind for research, teaching, and public service. Other UCIS certificate programs include Africana, European Union, and global studies. Certificate programs are also available in American Sign Language, children’s literature, conceptual foundations of medicine, film studies, geographic information systems, German language, historic preservation, history and philosophy of science, international engineering studies, Jewish studies, medieval and Renaissance studies, professional and public writing, structural engineering for architectural studies majors, photonics, professional translation, and women’s studies.

Study Abroad

Studying abroad is an exciting way to add an international perspective to your undergraduate education and strengthen your credentials as a graduate. Since only about 8 percent of American students have studied abroad, this experience distinguishes you when you enter the job market or pursue graduate study. The experience allows you to broaden your personal experience and gain an appreciation of other cultures while earning credits toward your degree. Scholarships are available, and financial aid is applicable.

Some study abroad programs of particular interest to philosophy majors are:

Pitt Exchange With the University of Sheffield

Participating in this study abroad program will make you feel right at home—Sheffield, England, is a sister city with Pittsburgh due to their close connection because of the steel industry. The university is located in the heart of England, and is only three hours from London. This program is a direct exchange with the University of Sheffield, which means for every student that goes to England, an English student comes to Pitt. This yearlong program provides you with the opportunity to study from a full curriculum at the university. You will live in either a single or double room in one of the university’s residence halls; you will be fully integrated with British students. Financial aid and scholarships are available.

Copenhagen, Denmark

If you’re thinking about studying abroad in Europe, why not try a country where Europe is a little different—Denmark? In Denmark, you can experience the Old World in a new form while challenging yourself and your mind. Denmark is a safe, affluent, and small country where you will feel right at home in no time at all. During this program you can study topics from the humanities and sciences, international business, marine biology and ecology, Arctic biology, architecture and design, and engineering. You will go to weekly field studies in most of your classes, guided by your professors, to Parliament, art museums, the Royal Ballet, maximum-security prisons, ecological farms, banks, industry, and many others. There are also study tours to Denmark outside Copenhagen; Stockholm, Sweden; and Russia and Estonia. Your living options include staying with a Danish family or living with Danish students. Don’t worry about a language barrier—all classes are taught in English, and most Danes speak English.

Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE)—Paris, France

What better place to study philosophy than the birthplace of the Enlightenment—Paris, France? This program will take you to the City of Light and the home of the Right and Left Banks, the Louvre, the Latin Quarter, the Sorbonne, the Bastille, and the Eiffel Tower, among numerous other sites of cultural, historical, and political significance. Courses are held at the Paris Center for Critical Studies, where you will have the opportunity to study literary criticism, cultural theory and criticism, history and theory of film, and contemporary philosophy. However, you can also take courses at La Sorbonne Nouvelle or the College International de Philosophie if you wish. You can attend the program for a semester or for an academic year, but you will have to locate your own housing in the city.