

## WHY MINOR or MAJOR IN PHILOSOPHY?

Philosophy helps develop breadth of understanding and clarity of thought. It is simply interesting and, well, addictive (BEWARE!). If you like to **think things through**, or ask this other **question** that “is a tangent”, or “leads too far off”, or if you’re **dissatisfied with taking things for granted**, or to leave them alone even if “this doesn’t follow, but it’s close enough”, then you’re likely to **enjoy philosophical work**.

This character of philosophical inquiry makes a **double major** attractive to many students. Moreover, with appropriate supporting courses, a philosophy major can be a sound **preparation for many careers**, whether or not they involve further study.

## WHAT CAN I DO WITH A PHILOSOPHY DEGREE?

### **ANYTHING AND EVERYTHING!**

### **Is Philosophy practical?**

The special thing about a philosophy major is that, as the abilities it trains you in are

PERFECTLY GENERALLY APPLICABLE AND SOUGHT FOR, like

- The ability to analyze and solve problems, to assess the pros and cons of proposed solutions.
- The ability to write and speak clearly. The ability to persuade.
- The ability to conduct thorough research.
- The ability to ask the right questions. The ability to think creatively and imaginatively.

### **What careers do philosophy majors typically pursue?**

Thereby, philosophy major is attractive to THE WIDEST RANGE OF OPTIONS AMONG THE HUMANITIES AND SCIENCES. The list of careers and career areas typically pursued by philosophy majors includes:

- law, medicine, education,
- academic careers in ALL sciences, but also philosophy (PhD, then college teaching),
- F.B.I., government, publishing, writing,
- research, consulting, social and community services,
- business, and computer programming.

### **How do philosophy majors score on standardized tests?**

In short, philosophy majors score among the very best. Because they can. (see below, "PRACTICAL")

### **Philosophy? Hey, WHY NOT?!?! DOUBLE MAJOR!**

The Major in Philosophy at NU requires

**13 courses in all, with only 4 core requirements at the 100- and 200-level (which cover 2 distro areas).**

That makes it **the IDEAL DOUBLE MAJOR COMPLEMENT**. Any other major will require more classes to take, or provide less coverage.

Again, this is a consequence of the CENTRAL POSITION PHILOSOPHICAL RESEARCH occupies WITHIN THE SCIENCES. It has been called by some practitioners “the interpreter and mediator among all sciences, no matter whether social, formal or natural”. Philosophy takes on a large number of subject matters and research, for which areas and research methods it attempts to find explanations, understanding, foundations, relations to other fields, or to general human concerns.

Example: An economically sound argument might conclude that exterminating all people with long-term illnesses is the most efficient way to “deal with the problem”. OBVIOUSLY, this is not going to be accepted. WHY? This is, as the economist presenting the theory will tell you, a “value” question, or “philosophical”. Yea, exactly!!!

**So: DOUBLE MAJORING IN PHILOSOPHY AND XYZ is one of the smartest choices you can make.**(Typical high level British degrees reflect this: Politics, Philosophy&Economics (PPE) etc.)

## **If you're worried about what your parents (or anyone else) will think of you if you major in PHILOSOPHY...**

Here are just a few of the philosophy majors you may certainly have heard of:

### **Government, Politics, Law and Religion:**

- Thomas Jefferson (U.S. President), Jane Addams (first woman to receive Nobel Peace Prize),
- David Souter (Supreme Court Justice), William Bennett (Secretary of Education and best-selling author), Patrick Buchanan (presidential candidate and political columnist), Fred Thompson (former Senator and presidential candidate)
- Jerry Brown (former governor of California and presidential candidate),
- Raisa Gorbachev (former first lady of the Soviet Union),
- Pope John Paul II, Martin Luther King, Jr., Madelyn Murray O'Hair (famous atheist).

### **Business:**

- J. Paul Getty, Carl Icahn (CEO, TWA Airlines), Gerald Levin (CEO, Time Warner, Inc.),
- George Soros (financier),
- Lachlan Murdoch (son of Rupert Murdoch, media magnate),
- Carly Fiorina (CEO Hewlett-Packard)

### **Contemporary Writers, Performers and Broadcasters:**

- T. S. Eliot, Christopher Hitchens, James Michener, Iris Murdoch, Alexander Solzhenitsin,
- Umberto Eco, M. Scott Peck, Ken Follett, Susan Sontag, Sam Harris, David Foster Wallace,
- Ayn Rand, Elie Wiesel.
- Harrison Ford, Susan Sarandon, Woody Allen, Richard Gere, Steve Martin,
- George Carlin, Jay Leno, Dennis Miller, Kim Thayill (Soundgarden), Stone Phillips,
- John Chancellor, Alex Trebek, Gene Siskel, Willard Scott, Jimmy Kimmel,
- Ricky Gervais (creator of The Office), Wes Anderson.
- Sports: Bruce Lee, Phil Jackson, Michael McKaskey (Owner, Chicago Bears), Aaron Taylor (OT, Notre Dame and the Green Bay Packers).

(Source: <http://staff.kings.edu/wtirwin/pages/courses/major.htm> )

## **Practical? Well, yeah!**

### **Better GREs:**

"Philosophy majors received higher scores on the LSAT than students in all other humanities areas, higher scores than all social and natural science majors except economics and mathematics, and higher scores than all applied majors. Moreover, the differences are in most cases substantial: for example, philosophy majors scored 10% better than political science majors on the LSAT. On the GMAT philosophy majors outperformed business majors by a margin of 15%, and outperformed every other undergraduate major except mathematics." [["Philosophy Students Score High on LSAT, GMAT & GRE"](#), Andreas Teuber]

### **Better Employability, Upper Average Salaries (for humanities):**

"Every year around graduation time we hear the reports of average starting salary of college graduates by major. This data is often used to discourage people from majoring in disciplines like philosophy. Now, however, PayScale.com has released data showing average mid-career salaries of college graduates by major. This data makes the philosophy major look like a much more prudent choice. PayScale.com's current data on 'Best Undergrad College Degrees By Salary' ([www.payscale.com/2008-best-colleges/degrees.asp](http://www.payscale.com/2008-best-colleges/degrees.asp)) lists starting median salary and mid-career (15.5 years after graduation) median salary for 50 different university majors. Of the fifty, the philosophy major ranks sixteenth in mid-career median salary. Seven of the majors ranking above philosophy are various engineering fields. Of particular interest is the comparison with Business Management. The starting median salary for Business Management majors is \$43,000, while the starting median salary for Philosophy majors is \$39,900. By mid-career, however, the median salary for Business Management majors has risen to \$72,100, while the median salary for Philosophy majors has jumped to \$81,200." [[American Philosophical Association](#)]

"In the US, where the number of philosophy graduates has increased by 5 per cent a year during the 1990's, only a very few go on to become philosophers. Their employability, at 98.9 per cent, is impressive by any standard....Philosophy is, in commercial jargon, the ultimate 'transferable work skill'." [["Philosophy: A Quintessentially Modern Discipline"](#), *London Times*]