

Philosophy

The School of Humanities

Chair

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Professors

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Degrees Offered: B.A., M.A., Ph.D.

Philosophy is best described as the attempt to think clearly and deeply about the fundamental questions that arise for us as human beings. What is the nature of knowledge (epistemology)? How are we to distinguish between what really is and what only seems to be (metaphysics)? What is the right thing to do (ethics)? Is there any meaning to existence? To study the history of philosophy is to study the best, most enduring answers that have been given to these questions in the past. Because every other field of study adopts some stance toward these questions, though often implicitly, philosophical issues arise in the natural and social sciences, history, linguistics, literature, art, and so on. Special courses in philosophy deal with each of these. Characteristic of philosophy are commitments to the construction and evaluation of arguments, to expressing thoughts clearly and precisely, and to defending one's ideas and evaluating the ideas of others. The study of philosophy thus provides resources for critical participation in all realms of human endeavor.

The graduate program trains students to teach and pursue research in the main areas of department concentration: ethics (especially bioethics) and social and political philosophy, history of philosophy, continental philosophy, and core portions of contemporary analytic philosophy.

Degree Requirements for B.A. in Philosophy

For general university requirements, see Graduation Requirements (pages 16–18). Students majoring in philosophy must complete 30 semester hours (10 departmental courses); At least 18 hours (6 courses) must be at the 300 level or above. A double major must complete 27 hours (9 departmental courses) with all other requirements remaining the same. Majors must take the following specific courses.

PHIL 201/202 *History of Philosophy I and II*

PHIL 306 *Ethics*
 or PHIL 307 *Social and Political Philosophy*

PHIL 106 *Logic*
 or PHIL 305 *Mathematical Logic*

2 courses in the history of philosophy from the following:

PHIL 301 *Ancient and Medieval Philosophy*
 PHIL 302 *Modern Philosophy*
 PHIL 308 *Continental Philosophy*
 PHIL 321 *Kant and 19th-Century Philosophy*

Students may substitute PHIL 304 Metaphysics, PHIL 303 Theory of Knowledge, or PHIL 353 Philosophy of Language for one of the history courses.

Degree Requirements for M.A. and Ph.D. in Philosophy

For general university requirements, see Graduate Degrees (pages 60–65). Students have the additional option of applying for a doctoral program specializing in bioethics (see below).

For the **M.A.** in philosophy, candidates must:

- Complete with high standing at least 30 semester hours in advanced courses approved by the department
- Complete a written thesis on a subject approved by the department
- Perform satisfactorily on a final oral examination (not limited to the student's special field of study)

For the **Ph.D.** in philosophy, candidates must:

- Complete with high standing 42 hours of course work approved by the department (including logic)
- Demonstrate competence in logic
- Pass a qualifying examination
- Perform satisfactorily on an oral defense of their thesis proposal
- Complete a written thesis on a subject approved by the department (at least one year of thesis research must be spent in residence)
- Perform satisfactorily on a final oral examination (not limited to the student's special field of study)

Bioethics Program

The Ph.D. in philosophy with a specialization in medical ethics is offered in cooperation with the Center for Medical Ethics and Health Policy at Baylor College of Medicine. Applicants to this special program must have enough background in philosophy to complete two and a half years of strong general training in philosophy at the graduate level. After completing their general training, students receive instruction in clinical bioethics at Baylor College of Medicine and then write a dissertation drawing upon their philosophical and clinical training. Further information about this program is available from the Department of Philosophy.

Continental Philosophy Program

The Ph.D. program in Continental philosophy allows graduate students to take advantage of resource faculty in history, French studies, philosophy, and religious studies, all of whom have done distinguished philosophical work in the Continental tradition. Students master the basic fields of analytic philosophy while doing a substantial amount of their course work with resource faculty. Further information is available from the Department of Philosophy.

See PHIL (pages 485–490) in the Courses of Instruction section.