

# PHILOSOPHY

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## DEGREES OFFERED: BA, MA, PHD

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 BA IN PHILOSOPHY

For general university requirements, see Graduation Requirements (pages 16–19). Students majoring in philosophy must complete 30 semester hours (10 3-hour departmental courses); at least 18 hours (6 courses) must be at the 300 level or above. A double major must complete 27 hours (9 3-hour departmental courses) with all other requirements remaining the same.

Majors must take the following courses:

- PHIL 201 *History of Philosophy I*
- PHIL 202 *History of Philosophy II*
- Either PHIL 106 *Logic* or PHIL 305 *Mathematical Logic*

In addition, majors must take at least 1 course from each of the following area lists:

**History**PHIL 301 *Ancient and Medieval Philosophy*PHIL 302 *Modern Philosophy*PHIL 308 *Continental Philosophy*PHIL 321 *Kant and 19th Century Philosophy***Core Analytic**PHIL 303 *Theory of Knowledge*PHIL 304 *Metaphysics*PHIL 312 *Philosophy of Mind*PHIL 313 *Philosophy of Science*PHIL 353 *Philosophy of Language***Value Theory**PHIL 306 *Ethics*PHIL 307 *Social & Political Philosophy*PHIL 316 *Philosophy of Law*PHIL 326 *History of Ethics*PHIL 327 *History of Social & Political  
Philosophy***SENIOR THESIS AND HONORS IN PHILOSOPHY:**

Qualified majors may apply before their senior year for directed research leading to a senior thesis, carried out during both semesters of the senior year. Each semester will require 3 credit hours; these 6 hours are in addition to the course hours required for the major.

To qualify for the program, students will be required to have an approved research proposal and the agreement of a faculty member to serve as advisor that that project. Applicants will normally be required to have a GPA of 3.75 in philosophy courses and to have completed at least 2 upper-level courses in the distribution area of the proposed research. (See the major requirements for the definition of the distribution areas.) Applications should be submitted to the undergraduate advisor (UGA) and will be evaluated by the department.

Students who are considering applying to write a senior thesis should consult the UGA and potential advisors as early as possible. Normally students will apply before preregistration in the second semester of their junior year and will spend time during the following summer reading from a list they have developed with their advisor. The thesis normally will be between 7,500 and 15,000 words (approximately 30–60 pages) in length. Students will enroll in PHIL 411 and 412. Students accepted into the Rice University Scholars Program should enroll in HONS 470 and 471 and will be awarded departmental honors for their work in that program if they meet the requirements in this statement. Note that acceptance into the departmental honors program is a separate process from acceptance in RUSP, as is the evaluation for departmental honors.

To be considered for honors, the senior thesis must be completed by April 1. The thesis will be read and evaluated by the advisor and a second reader chosen by the department, and the final decision on honors will be made by the entire faculty. A student will receive honors if he or she receives a grade of A or A- in PHIL 412. Completion of the major with at least a 3.5 GPA in all philosophy courses is required for departmental honors. Students who miss the April 1 deadline for thesis submission but meet the university deadline for the semester will receive a grade and credit for completed work but will not be considered for honors. Students whose thesis is not awarded honors will receive a grade and credit for completed work.

**DEGREE REQUIREMENTS FOR MA AND PHD  
IN PHILOSOPHY**

For general university requirements, see Graduate Degrees (pages 61–62). Students have the additional option of applying for a doctoral program specializing in bioethics (see below).

For the **MA** 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 **PhD** 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 1 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 PhD 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 2 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 on their philosophical and clinical training. Further information about this program is available from the Department of Philosophy.

**See PHIL in the Courses of Instruction section.**