If you have ever pondered, "Why am I here?" or "What is the meaning of life?" then you have already thought about philosophy. Philosophy poses questions about every human endeavor and examines our basic assumptions about everything we think we know. It takes on challenging issues that sometimes defy resolution and trains the brain to think in a rigorous and analytic way about all the possible answers and what's at stake. Philosophy is not just a subject matter but a way of thinking.

In your philosophy courses, you will learn about the way that people throughout history have engaged in this kind of thinking with questions such as "Can I really trust my senses to tell me about reality?", "Is anything really morally right or wrong or is it all just relative?", "Do scientific theories tell us the truth about the world or are they tools that are useful for certain purposes?" and "Are some societies more just than others?". You will discover that thinking about these questions with an open mind is deeply satisfying. Philosophical thinking also contributes to a worthwhile life; in the words of Socrates "the unexamined life is not worth living".

Of course, life isn't all about having fun thinking. Philosophy is also much more practical than you might think! Because philosophy is so far-reaching, the method it uses for study enhances the study of other fields such as art, math, science, language, and law with tremendous success. It is a great complement to other majors as a second major or a minor. You can find details about good combinations on our website. Also, studying philosophy is a fantastic way to hone your critical thinking and analytic writing skills. You'll learn two types of critical thinking: First, a
method for rigorous analysis of arguments. Second, a habit of asking penetrating questions about the hidden assumptions of any position, ideology or practice. You will develop your capacities to conceive of alternative assumptions, evaluate which ones are best and determine where they lead. You'll learn to write papers that clearly demonstrate these skills.

And finally, you can reassure your parents about your choice of philosophy with the fact that the skills of critical thinking and analytic writing are highly desirable and sought by graduate programs and employers. Evidence of this includes:

- PHIL majors rank first among all majors in law school acceptance rate: 82.4%.
- PHIL majors rank first among all majors in verbal and analytic sections of the GRE (and first among humanities majors in the quantitative section)
- PHIL majors score higher on the Graduate Management Admissions Test (the test that most MBA programs require) than students in any business major (management, finance, accounting, marketing, etc.)
- PHIL majors' salaries increase more over 10 years than most other majors, including marketing and accounting (The Wall Street Journal).

"The present value of the extra earnings that graduates in humanities majors can expect over their lifetime is: $444,700 for English majors, $537,800 for history majors, and $658,900 for philosophy majors" (Forbes).

The College of Liberal Arts Advantage: More Than a Major
When you study Philosophy at the University of Minnesota, you gain the added advantage of a College of Liberal Arts education. At CLA, the liberal arts mean you get more than just a degree in one major or another; it means you will be exposed to different areas of study, to different ways of thinking and learning. In fact, the liberal arts teach you how to learn—how to ask the right questions, how to problem solve, and how to innovate. The liberal arts prepare students for the complexities of our world, because here at CLA you will study not just, say, politics or art but also where politics and art intersect, where science and ethics intersect, where economics and the environment intersect.

Meet Our Students

Maddy Glueck finds her studies in sociology and philosophy to be complementary. Her research assistantship over the summer gave her the opportunity to apply the reading, writing, and critical thinking skills she developed in both disciplines towards a positive end. Though unsure of her future plans, her studies have provided her with a readiness that is, as she puts it, “good for life in general,” wherever it might lead her.

Read more about Maddy's story, and learn more about our undergraduate program.

Student Experiences

Learning Abroad in Philosophy: Prepare to Lead in a Global Economy

“Abandoning the familiar in order to travel and experience different places, people,
languages, and cultures at its best fosters one's abilities to understand, analyze, and assess complex phenomena—all skills that serve the student of philosophy well. Study abroad is for the student today what the Grand Tour was for such great minds as Boswell, Goethe, and James.”
—Michelle Mason, Professor, Department of Philosophy

Learn more about study abroad for Philosophy majors.

Undergraduate Research: Turn Curiosity into New Knowledge

We encourage you to apply for the Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP). This program supports research projects dedicated to fulfilling the U of M's commitment to research and expanding the store of human knowledge and expression. If you successfully apply, you will receive a stipend to support your research and you will also have the opportunity to present your research at various university symposia.

If you earn a UROP, you will be mentored by one of nearly 3,000 diverse faculty members and you will meet other students who share a passion for discovery about the human condition. The UROP can be used to help you achieve practical goals like your senior capstone project or put you on a path to a career.

If you desire to pursue a program with UROP, please consult our undergraduate advisor, Peter Harle, or visit the Office of Undergraduate Research for more information.

Student Organizations: Find Friends and Grow as a Leader

• Philosophy Club

Meet Our Faculty
Philosophy Professor Jessica Gordon-Roth analyzes the work of 17th-century philosopher Anne Finch Conway, overlooked in part because of her gender. How does her perspective differ from other major thinkers of the time period, like Hobbes and Descartes?

Read more about Professor Gordon-Roth's work.

Meet Our Alumni

Research has shown that year after year, philosophy is one of the best majors for admission to law school. Just ask graduating senior Jordan Kleist, who will be heading to one of the most prestigious law schools in the country this fall.

Read more about Jordan's story.

CLA Graduates: Successful Careers and Purposeful Lives

CLA graduates succeed in many different careers — law, health care, medicine, business, government, teaching, advertising, arts and entertainment, international relations, and more — precisely because they understand how to navigate a
complex and interconnected world. As our alumni explain below, “Being a good employee means being curious, and continuing to evolve, and learn, and educate yourself, and I can think of no stronger foundation for doing that than a liberal arts education.

“An education in the liberal arts is a springboard to lifelong career success”
-- Dean John Coleman

You might also explore

Child Psychology
Global Studies
History
Political Science
Psychology

Associated Careers

Economists; Government Lawyers; Mathematicians; News Analysts, Reporters, and Correspondents; Postsecondary Teachers; Public Interest Advocates

Admission Information
TRANSFER STUDENTS: Requirements for the College of Liberal Arts

- Did you know? CLA Transfer Advising has created an official "transfer guide" for a number of degree programs, including Philosophy, to help you determine which credits will transfer, and how.

Beyond admission, if you have questions about transferring, the College of Liberal Arts (CLA) has transfer advisors to help. Please feel free to contact them about any of the topics below:

- Course plans before transferring
- Estimated time to graduation
- Career preparation in CLA
- Getting ready for orientation, if admitted
- Connecting with major/minor departments