

IS MAJORING IN PHILOSOPHY RIGHT FOR YOU?

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY



This section of this page was originally written by Kaveh Kamooneh. The data have been updated.

While getting a bachelor's degree in philosophy is not for everyone, it is more than just for those who want to teach college level philosophy. Studying philosophy, aside from the considerable intrinsic pleasures it affords, prepares students for a wide range of careers.

Is majoring in philosophy right for you? After graduating do you want to:

go to law school?

go to business school?

go to graduate school?

Stop going to school and get a job?

The data below are all collected over a specified time period and in some cases covering relatively few test takers. Drawing broad conclusions on the basis of what is provided below may not be warranted.

Philosophy as preparation for law school.

According to data from the Law Schools Admission Council (unpublished, 1999, the most recent data available) there were 71,726 applicants to at least one of the American Bar Association (ABA) approved law schools nation wide for the application year of 1997-8. Their average Law School Admission Test (LSAT) score was 151.4 and 70.1% of them were admitted to at least one law school.

Below are the figures for the five majors with the largest volume of applicants for that year.

Major	# of Applicants	Average LSAT score	Rate of Admission
Political Science	12,737	151.4	73.5%
History	4,988	154.1	80.1%
English	4,854	153.8	78.4%
Psychology	4,062	151.8	73.8%
Criminal Justice	3,283	145.0	56.7%

Compare the numbers above with those of philosophy majors below.

Philosophy	1,570	156.9	82.4%
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Philosophy as preparation for business school.

The Graduate Management Admission Council (GMAC), the administrators of the Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT), in their latest Five-Year Summary (1997-2002), provide the following data for 2001-2002 (the most recent year available).

Major	Score	Major	Score
Physics	612	Architecture	533
Mathematics	590	Finance	532
Engineering	582	SocialSci--Other	523
Philosophy	573	Science--Other	518
Government	571	Int'lBusiness	515
Chemistry	564	Psychology	514
Economics	561	Op Mgmt	508
History	561	Accounting	507
English	554	Sociology	504
Biology	554	Business Ed	502
Statistics	553	Fine Arts	501
Computer Sci	551	Mgmt Info Sys	497
Anthropology	548	Management	489
Law	539	Education	484
Languages	536	Business--Other	482
Political Science	535	Marketing	477
Humanities--Other	534	Hotel Admin	472

Philosophy as preparation for graduate school in the arts and sciences.

According to data from Educational Testing Service (ETS), the administrators of the Graduate Record Exam (GRE), philosophy majors did better between July 1, 2001 and June 30, 2004 on the combined GRE score than students with every other major except physics/astronomy and mathematics. Compared to other majors, philosophy majors had the highest verbal scores, the highest analytical writing scores, and the highest quantitative scores of any humanities major. (The data is from the ETS.)

Major	Verbal	Quant	V + Q	Analytic
Physics/Astronomy	534	738	1272	4.5
Mathematics	502	733	1235	4.4
Philosophy	589	636	1225	5.1
Engineering--Materials	494	729	1223	4.3
Engineering--Chemical	485	727	1212	4.3
Economics	504	706	1210	4.5
Engineering--Other	490	714	1204	4.4
Engineering--Mechanical	467	723	1190	4.2
Engineering--Electrical	461	728	1189	4.1
Business--Banking	476	709	1185	4.3
Computer Science	469	704	1173	4.2
Chemistry	487	682	1169	4.4
Engineering--Civil	457	702	1159	4.2
Arts & Humanities--Other	558	594	1152	4.8
Engineering--Industrial	440	710	1150	4.1
Earth Sciences	495	637	1132	4.4
Biological Sciences	491	632	1123	4.4
Religion	538	583	1121	4.8
Political Science	522	589	1111	4.8
English	559	552	1111	4.9
Arts, History	538	571	1109	4.7
Anthropology	532	571	1103	4.7
Foreign Lang & Lit	529	573	1102	4.6
History	543	556	1099	4.8
Architecture	477	614	1091	4.3
Natural Sciences--Other	482	603	1085	4.4
Library Science	533	540	1073	4.5
Education--Secondary	486	577	1063	4.5
Business--Other	450	609	1059	4.1
Agriculture	461	596	1057	4.2
Arts, Performance	489	554	1043	4.3
Sociology	487	545	1032	4.6
Education--Higher	465	548	1013	4.6
Psychology	470	543	1013	4.5
Business--Accounting	415	595	1010	3.9
Education--Curriculum	462	548	1010	4.4
Communications	470	533	1003	4.5
Business--Administration	439	562	1001	4.2
Health & Med Sciences	447	552	999	4.2
Social Sciences--Other	465	528	993	4.4
Education--Eval	451	534	985	4.4
Education--Elementary	443	527	970	4.3
Education--Other	437	531	968	4.2
Public Administration	452	513	965	4.3
Education--Administration	427	523	950	4.2
Education--Special	432	502	934	4.2
Home Economics	435	498	933	4.2
Education--Counseling	428	500	928	4.2
Education--Early Childhood	418	495	913	4.1
Social Work	428	468	896	4.1

Jobs for Philosophy Majors

According to an article in the *New York Times* by Winnie Hu (“In a New Generation of College Students, Many Opt for the Life Examined,” April 6, 2008, Education section), (<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/06/education/06philosophy.html?scp=1&sq=In%20a%20New%20Generation%20of%20College%20Students,%20Many%20Opt%20for%20the%20Life%20Examined&st=cse>) the popularity of philosophy as an undergraduate major is increasing. One of the reasons is, according to Matthew Goldstein, the City University of New York chancellor, “philosophy is really the mother ship from which all of these disciplines [humanities or political systems or sciences in general] grow.”

Another article from Atlanta-Journal and Constitution by Laura Raines (“Think Your Liberal Arts Degree Won't Get You a Real Job? THINK AGAIN!” May 4, 2007) (http://www.ajc.com/hotjobs/content/hotjobs/careercenter/articles/2007_0506_degrees.html) discusses job prospects for liberal arts majors, such as philosophy majors.