

# BUSINESS AND PHILOSOPHY

## WHY I SHOULD MAJOR IN PHILOSOPHY

### THE VALUE OF PHILOSOPHY

Recent articles in popular business periodicals have demonstrated the value of a degree in philosophy for people who are interested in careers in business or finance. Business employers seek employees who are able to extract key information from dense reports, summarize the information clearly, and assess the costs and benefits of alternative courses of action. These critical thinking skills prized by companies are developed in every philosophy course.

#### "Want Innovative Thinking? Hire from the Humanities"

*Harvard Business Review*, March 31, 2011. As Amos Shapira, the CEO of Cellcom, the leading cell phone provider in Israel, put it: "The knowledge I use as CEO can be acquired in two weeks...The main thing a student needs to be taught is how to study and analyze things (including) history and philosophy..."

#### "Philosophy is Back in Business"

*Business Week*, January 12, 2010. "Forget economics. Philosophy offers a deeper, broader way of thinking to help guide companies through times made tougher by overspecialized experts."

#### **PHILOSOPHY MAJORS OUTPERFORM BUSINESS MAJORS ON THE GMAT**

Business schools use the Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT) to measure potential for success in graduate programs, including MBA programs. Philosophy majors tend to score higher than every major except mathematics, physics, and engineering. In five years, from 2006 to 2011, the average score for philosophy majors was higher (by as much as 100 points) than the average score for every kind of business major (with the single exception of actuarial science in 2008-2009). *Profile of GMAT Candidates: Five Year Summary 2006-2011*, pp. 11-13.

#### **TOPICS OF INTEREST TO STUDENTS PREPARING FOR BUSINESS CAREERS:**

What distinguishes right action from wrong action?  
What obligations do institutions have to society?  
What is power? What is the relationship between power and capital?  
What are our obligations to obey the law?  
Who owns the rights to property? How should we understand intellectual property?  
What is technology?  
What distribution of resources is most just?

#### "I Think, Therefore I Earn"

*The Guardian*, November 20, 2007. "A philosophy degree has trained the individual's brain and given them the ability to provide management-consulting firms with the sort of skills that they require and clients demand. These skills can include the ability to be very analytical, provide clear and innovative thinking, and question assumptions."

#### "The Management Myth"

*The Atlantic*, June 2006. "If you want to succeed in business, don't get an M.B.A. Study philosophy instead."

## WHY I SHOULD MAJOR IN PHILOSOPHY

Questions?

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201 Introduction to Philosophy  
206 Introduction to Logic and Scientific Reasoning  
207 Introduction to Symbolic Logic  
230 Moral Theory and Practice  
235 Ethical Issues in A Diverse Society  
310 Ancient Philosophy  
314 17th Century Philosophy  
315 18th Century Philosophy  
316 19th Century Continental  
317 20th and 21st Century Continental Philosophy  
318 20th and 21st Century Anglo-American Philosophy  
330 Ethical Theory  
331 Moral Problems in Medicine  
332 Philosophy of Law  
334 Environmental Ethics  
335 Social and Political Philosophy  
336 Bioethics and Biotechnology  
338 Feminist Philosophy  
340 Aesthetics  
343 Philosophy of Technology  
350 Philosophy of Religion  
364 Metaphysics: God, Minds, and Matter  
366 Truth, Belief and Reason  
380 Philosophy of Science  
430 Value Theory  
450 Persons and Causes (Free Will)  
460 Epistemology and Metaphysics  
465 Brains, Minds, and Computers  
483 Philosophy of Biology  
485 Philosophy of Physics  
490 Independent Study  
496/596 Ecology and Society  
535 Contemporary Political Philosophy

## What Can I Expect from a Philosophy Course?

Philosophy courses tend to focus on fundamental questions about life, reality, and knowledge. In a philosophy course, students will read thought-provoking works. Students develop skills to interpret controversial points of view charitably, identify unstated assumptions, and distinguish relevant information from unimportant rhetorical flourishes. They are able to assess positions and their alternatives and identify underlying points of agreement and disagreement. Although there may be no single "right" answer, it is not true that any answer is just as good as another. Students are expected to provide reasons that make a clear case for accepting their point of view. Philosophy courses tend to be highly discussion-oriented and writing-intensive, improving clarity of presentation and argumentative rigor. Especially in courses numbered 300 and higher, enrollment is limited to facilitate discussion and provide students opportunities to engage with their peers and the professor. More than most other majors, philosophy encourages students to examine and develop their own points of view, rather than uncritically accept the current state of research. These skills of charitable interpretation and independence of critical thought enable philosophy majors to excel in a variety of career paths and lifelong activities.

## Philosophy Courses of Interest to Students Preparing for Business:

In these courses, students learn about philosophical theories that are essential to business practice and values. Businesses shape our lives in numerous ways: as employers, as service providers, and as producers. Individuals in business face moral questions about how to deal with coworkers, customers, vendors, pollution and waste, etc. Moral considerations arise persistently and yet many in business lack the tools to deal confidently and thoughtfully with ethical situations. Similarly, creative yet critical thinking is essential. A gut feeling or instinct is a good starting point, but without careful consideration they can lead to failure. Finally, philosophy students learn clear written and verbal communication, which are essential in business.

206 (Introduction to Logic and Scientific Reasoning) \* 207 (Introduction to Symbolic Logic) \* 230 (Moral Theory and Practice) \* 235 (Ethical Issues in a Diverse Society) \* 316 (19th Century Continental Philosophy) \* 317 (20th and 21st Century Continental Philosophy) \* 330 (Ethical Theory) \* 332 (Philosophy of Law) \* 335 (Social and Political Philosophy) \* 338 (Feminist Philosophy) \* 343 (Philosophy of Technology) \* 366 (Truth, Belief, and Reason) \* 380 (Philosophy of Science) \* 450 (Persons and Causes, Free Will)

## DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

### MAJOR IN PHILOSOPHY

A major in philosophy requires 33 credits in philosophy (eleven courses). At least fifteen of these credits shall come from the core curriculum, and at least six credits shall come from courses numbered 400 or above. The core curriculum requires:

One from: 330 (Ethical Theory),  
335 (Social and Political  
Philosophy), or  
535 (Contemporary Political  
Philosophy);

310 (Ancient Philosophy);

Either 314 (17th Century  
Philosophy) or 315 (18th  
Century Philosophy);

One from: 364 (God, Minds, and  
Matter), 366 (Truth, Belief, and  
Reason), or 380 (Philosophy of  
Science); and

207 (Introduction to Symbolic  
Logic)

### ADDING PHILOSOPHY AS A SECOND MAJOR

Combining a philosophy major with other majors is a great way to gain knowledge of philosophy and a deeper understanding of the conceptual foundations of the other major. The requirements for philosophy as a second major are the same as the requirements for the major. Philosophy may be designated as the primary or secondary major.

### MINOR IN PHILOSOPHY

A minor in philosophy is an excellent complement to any major. The minor in philosophy requires fifteen credits (five courses) in philosophy. At least nine of these credits shall come from courses numbered 300 or above.