

MED SCHOOL AND PHILOSOPHY

WHY I SHOULD MAJOR IN PHILOSOPHY

PHILOSOPHY PROVIDES NECESSARY SKILLS

Many people who are interested in going on to careers in medicine find philosophy classes truly rewarding, and there are good reasons why. Many of the skills and tendencies emphasized are similar - for instance:

- engaging in diagnosis (of situations, arguments, or positions)
- thinking clearly and with organization
- discerning and evaluating evidence
- creative thinking; the ability to imagine alternative scenarios
- logic, induction, deduction
- inference to the best explanation
- articulating thoughts concisely, precisely and without ambiguity
- being attuned to the importance of people, their rights and welfare.

SECOND HIGHEST ACCEPTANCE RATE TO MEDICAL SCHOOL

It's true that few pre-med students choose to major in philosophy. The Medical School Admissions Requirements (MSAR) book for 2000-2001 shows that only 0.5% of medical school applicants were Philosophy Majors in 1998. However, 50.2% of these were accepted, which is the second highest rate (just behind History at 52.7% - Biology majors were a mere 39.9%). In the previous year, the acceptance rate for Philosophy majors was the highest of all at 53%!

TOPICS OF INTEREST TO STUDENTS PREPARING FOR MEDICAL SCHOOL:

Is there a right to die? A right to be helped to die?

When is it right to make a decision on someone else's behalf, "for that person's own good" or does that undermine autonomy?

Is there a way to validate/justify the scientific method?

Are beliefs based on empirical observation the only kind of beliefs that can be known/justified?

How should doctors understand the human body and its relation to the mind?

What do terms like "health" and "harm" mean?

According to the Association of American Medical Colleges:

"Entrance requirements at most medical schools include completion of course work in biology, mathematics, chemistry, physics, and English. But keep your undergraduate experience well rounded by also studying humanities and the social sciences. The ideal physician understands how society works and can communicate and write well.

"It should be strongly emphasized that a science major is not a prerequisite for medical school, and students should not major in science simply because they believe this will increase their chances for acceptance"

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 Medical School:

In these courses, students learn about philosophical theories that underlie medical practice, research, and values. It is hard to think of many fields in which moral considerations come up as much as in medicine, and yet many in medicine lack the tools to deal confidently and thoughtfully with ethical situations. Similarly, many medical professionals lack a grounding in the views that ground medical policy: the respect for autonomy that leads us to allow refusal of treatment, or the sense of rights that keeps us from harvesting organs from unwilling live donors. Similarly, theoretical issues form the basis for our ideas about the scientific method, scientific progress, the knowledge we gain from medicine, and other issues explored in the Philosophy of Science.

206 (Introduction to Logic and Scientific Reasoning) * 207 (Introduction to Symbolic Logic) * 230 (Moral Theory and Practice) * 235 (Ethical Issues in a Diverse Society) * 330 (Ethical Theory) * 331 (Moral Problems in Medicine) * 332 (Philosophy of Law) * 336 (Bioethics and Biotechnology) * 343 (Philosophy of Technology) * 380 (Philosophy of Science) * 430 (Value Theory) * 450 (Persons and Causes, Free Will) * 465 (Brains, Minds, and Computers) * 483 (Philosophy of Biology)

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.