

What can I do with a degree in... **PHILOSOPHY?**

What is **PHILOSOPHY?**

Students of philosophy undertake the systematic study of questions and ideas that are so fundamental that people often avoid them or dare only simplistic answers: Should the law be used to enforce morality? Are science and religion really competing belief systems? Which forms of government best fit human nature? Can babies and animals think? Such questions don't admit simple answers, yet in philosophy we patiently pursue complex responses that are truly helpful.

Philosophy is widely regarded as an ideal preparation for law school, but it is much more than that. Philosophy emphasizes reading, analysis, listening, logic, and clear communication – the same talents needed in medicine, business, information technology, ministry, and other professional occupations. That is why, despite popular misunderstanding, the data show that philosophy majors tend to be professionally and financially successful. We count amongst our ranks Supreme Court justices, tech billionaires, politicians, and leading figures in the fight for social justice from ancient times to the present day.

What are the **DEGREE OPTIONS?**

Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) in Philosophy

What are the **CONCENTRATIONS?**

The two available concentration options focus on either **Philosophy** or **Religion**.

Philosophy: The concentration in the literature of philosophy emphasizes those texts, figures, ideas, and historical developments you will need to know to succeed in an M.A. or Ph.D. program in philosophy. You will study



philosophy from Plato to the present day, and you will have the chance to develop your own philosophical perspectives addressing problems of particular interest to you.

Religion: The concentration in the literature of religion emphasizes those texts, figures, and historical developments you will need to know to succeed in a masters or doctoral program in ministry or religious studies. The concentration ensures that you will study traditions from a wide array of cultures and historical periods, and that you will learn methods and ideas to help you make better sense of the world and the place of religion in it. (For more information, see the Religion major map)

What is the **ADMISSION PROCESS?**

The major is open to all students already admitted to WCU. You can declare the major either with the Department Head or by visiting the Advising Center, located in Killian Annex. Please make an appointment with your advisor via your MyWCU.

What **JOBS ARE AVAILABLE?**

Our graduates have gone on to a wide variety of programs and professions including medicine, law, counseling, business, teaching, music, art, city planning, and more. Additionally, WCU Philosophy majors have been accepted into graduate programs at such prestigious universities as Emory, Georgia, Villanova, Duquesne, Vanderbilt, Kansas, Colorado and Rutgers.

Who employs **PHILOSOPHY** graduates?

In short, just about everybody. Our graduates work in corporations, small businesses, government, and non-profits. Because the skills learned by philosophy majors are so flexible and so widely valued, our graduates have ended up in practically every sort of workplace imaginable. Most Americans change careers several times; Philosophy majors learn the transferable skills that help them change and adapt successfully.

MAJOR MAP

How to use this map: Review the four categories and suggestions of activities and when you should consider engaging in them. Remember, these are just suggestions! There is a fillable space for you to add in any other ideas you have to set yourself up for success in life after college.

1st YEAR

2nd YEAR

EXCEL IN ACADEMICS

1st First Year is a time for exploration and self-discovery. This is when you should actively aim to identify your real talents, interests, and values. Along with taking your first courses in the major, take classes in liberal studies that might help you figure out what truly engages you. Keep an eye out for a good minor or a second major. Check out the [8-semester plan for your concentration](#) and make an appointment with your advisor.

This is the time to study the core courses in philosophy to gain a foundation of knowledge, skill, and self-understanding. This is also the time to start or continue your foreign language study, and to plan for a semester or a year of study abroad. A year in France, Chile, or another country will really widen your horizons. Be sure to check out the [8-semester plan for your concentration](#) and make an appointment with your advisor.

GET HANDS-ON EXPERIENCE

Check out [WCU's DegreePlus program](#) and choose which events in any of the four categories you want to attend. Categories include: Professionalism, Teamwork, Leadership, or Cultural Responsiveness.

See what on-campus employment opportunities are available by logging in to JobCat via MyWCU.

Join your peers for visiting lectures, attend the Senior Capstone presentation series, and join us for other events on and off campus.

Get involved with the Philosophy and Religion Club; write for [The Gadfly](#) or another student publication.

If you are thinking about attending a graduate school, start engaging in hands-on experiences required in graduate school admissions.

Engage deeper with [DegreePlus](#); choose an additional competency to complete

BE PART OF THE COMMUNITY

Connect with the [Center for Service Learning](#) and ask about the [Lily Award](#), a program aimed to encourage students to be connected with their community.

Volunteer at area non-profit agencies such as [The Community Table of Sylva](#).

Consider the [study abroad program](#). Talk with a study abroad advisor about targeted experience for your concentration.

PREPARE FOR LIFE AFTER COLLEGE

Further explore your career options or career interests using the [Center for Career and Professional Development's](#) online resources, [Focus 2](#), and Onet Online.

Connect with a career counselor early on to explore opportunities and experiences you can do while in college to further develop your professional resume.

Check out [CCPD's list of career-building activities](#) and participate in an activity this year, such as attending Career Fair Plus.

Start a spreadsheet of professional/ graduate schools you wish to apply to in a few years with their admission requirements so that you are aware of the expectations.

Looking for a minor? Consider these options:

Anthropology

Biology

Business Administration & Law

Chemistry

Communication

English

Entrepreneurship

Hospitality & Tourism Mgmt

International Studies

Marketing

Political Science

Psychology

Sociology

3rd YEAR

As you begin to study topical classes and upper level seminars, your view of the world will be evolving. Now is the time to keep an eye out for a topic to focus on in your senior capstone research project. Be sure to check out the [8-semester plan for your concentration](#) and make an appointment with your advisor.

Consider internship experiences that will give you practical and hands-on experience to put on a resume.

Consider networking with professionals in your field at national or regional professional conferences such as the [Pacific University's Philosophy Conference](#).

Submit an essay to a regional undergraduate conference or even to the National Conference for Undergraduate Research.

Develop deeper relationships with the organizations for which you volunteer. Ask for special projects or responsibilities that you can highlight on a resume.

Connect with alumni in your field through [LinkedIn](#)

Visit the CCPD to hone your professional resume and cover letter. Apply for internships. Utilize the [Writing and Learning Commons](#) for MCAT, GRE, and other professional exam preparation sessions. Use [Big Interview](#) to learn more about professional interviews.

Schedule a visit to tour graduate schools of your choice, if applicable.

4th YEAR

This is the year you will complete your own capstone research project. Be sure to check out the [8-semester plan for your concentration](#), make an appointment with your advisor, complete your degree audit, and [apply for graduation!](#)

Investigate requirements for full-time jobs. Assess what skills or experiences you're lacking and invest time in seeking additional opportunities such as certification programs, classes, or professional development workshops during your last year to fill that gap. Connect with your faculty advisor or career counselor.

Submit an essay to an undergraduate journal or regional conference open to undergraduate and graduate students.

Join professional Philosophy and Religion organizations such as the [American Philosophical Association](#) or the [American Academy of Religion](#)

Network with employers and non-profits at the annual Career Fair Plus event, held each October and February.

Apply to professional/ graduate schools, if applicable.

Look for and [apply for jobs](#) between 4 and 6 months before graduation.

Polish your resume, cover letter, and interview skills by using the [CCPD](#).

Internships are still the number-one educational experience employers look for in a recent college graduate resume. (Chronicle of Higher Education's study on 59,000 employers)

DID YOU KNOW?

MORE INFORMATION

INTERNSHIP Information

At Western Carolina University there are numerous internship opportunities for students. In some cases internships are established through a faculty member in the student's major. Oftentimes students find part-time jobs in an area related to their field of study. When this happens, students should discuss with their academic advisor the possibility of receiving college credit. Generally, three hours of general elective credit can be earned for a minimum of 200 hours of experience.

SKILLS LEARNED in the classroom

Philosophy is widely respected as a discipline that teaches people to think clearly and independently. Core competencies emphasized in the major include:

- logic and argument
- clear communication, both oral and written
- careful reading and textual analysis
- independent thinking
- research
- self-understanding and internal motivation

KNOWLEDGE Base

This program will prepare students to:

- Identify and clearly articulate philosophical arguments, uncover and challenge hidden assumptions, and evaluate adequate and inadequate solutions to a wide range of complex problems.
- Analyze the strengths, weaknesses, and implications

of a wide array of moral theories, and apply these theories to contemporary moral problems.

- Recognize the origins and historical context and developing texts, ideas, and movements in the history of philosophy.
- Identify and clearly articulate the major texts, figures, movements, and institutions in the history of some religious traditions.
- Distinguish and use interpretive, explanatory, and evaluative approaches to philosophy and/or religions.
- Analyze connections between religion and other cultural practices and institutions (e.g., politics, gender, economics, race).

Professional RESOURCES

- American Philosophical Association: www.apaonline.org
- American Philosophical Association career guides: www.apaonline.org/page/guides
- American Academy of Religion: www.aarweb.org
- American Oriental Society: www.americanorientalsociety.org
- American Association of Philosophy Teachers: philosophyteachers.org
- North Carolina Religious Studies Association: organizations.uncfsu.edu/ncrsa

QUESTIONS?

For questions, please call the Philosophy and Religion program at 828-227-7262 or visit philrel.wcu.edu.

To schedule an appointment with a career counselor, contact the Center for Career and Professional Development, 828-227-7133 or careerservices@wcu.edu.