

Philosophy/Philosophy, Pre-Law

Department of Philosophy & Religious Studies, College of Arts & Sciences



Philosophy is the critical study of the intellectual foundations of virtually every area of human thought and action. Philosophers examine the nature of moral values, scientific explanations, religious beliefs, and much more. Such study will develop students' abilities to read critically, write logically, analyze divergent viewpoints, and give good reasons for their own beliefs.

Programs of Study

The Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies offers a major in Philosophy with two options: a general option and a Pre-Law option. It also offers two minors: a Philosophy minor and a minor in Ethics.

The general **Philosophy option** emphasizes the development of skills in logical reasoning, argumentation, and linguistic analysis. Students improve their ability to express their position clearly and precisely whether orally or in writing. Students learn to apply critical reasoning to topics such as the existence of God, moral principles, the nature of the mind, knowledge, free will, the scientific method, and the good life, while becoming acquainted with both historical and contemporary sources.

The **Pre-Law option** is designed for those students intending to go to law school. Many of the courses use the Socratic method and are concerned with ethics, justice, principles of sound reasoning, and legal history and practice. Reasoning by cases, hypothetical situations, and philosophical problem-solving skills are fostered in all courses. Ultimately, the Pre-Law option is designed to sharpen the ability to reason, to respond capably to opposing arguments, and to put one's point clearly and precisely both orally and in writing.

Faculty

All Philosophy faculty members have a Ph.D. in Philosophy. Students taking courses at any level, introductory or advanced, can be assured they are taught by faculty with excellent graduate training and earned doctorates who have a strong commitment to undergraduate teaching and are engaged scholars in their field.

Scholarships

With funding from the Mary Olive Woods Trust, the department is able to offer scholarships each semester to Philosophy majors. Awards of up to \$750 are offered to qualified students. The department also provides a stipend each semester to the graduating senior who is selected as "department scholar." Detailed information on scholarships is available from the department office, (309) 298-1057; Western's Scholarship office, (309) 298-2001; or on the Web at wiu.edu/Scholarship.

Honors in Philosophy

To be eligible for the Centennial Honors College, entering freshmen must have an ACT composite score of at least 28 OR have a 26 or 27 composite ACT and be in the top 15% of their graduating class OR have an ACT composite score of at least 24 and be in the top 10% of their high school graduating class. A comparable SAT score is acceptable. Transfer and current WIU students who wish to join the Honors College (including the Quad Cities Honors Program) must have a 3.4 grade point average on a 4.0 scale based on 12 semester hours or more. Honors credit is given for honors coursework completed at other accredited institutions. To find out more, visit wiu.edu/Honors.

General honors seminars in the humanities, sciences, and social sciences provide students with the opportunity to explore key academic issues with distinguished faculty members. Students completing the Philosophy major with honors have the opportunity to take general honors courses, Philosophy courses for honors credit, and the Bachelor's Thesis in Philosophy. For the thesis project, students work under the supervision of a faculty member, selecting and researching a topic, writing and revising the thesis paper, and conducting an oral defense of it.

Student Activities

The student organization for Philosophy majors and other students interested in philosophy, the Student Philosophical Association, meets biweekly throughout the academic year. Meetings are organized around topics of interest to students and include presentations by students and faculty members, discussions of films, and panel discussions.

Special Opportunities

The department's strong commitment to undergraduate teaching and student learning is evidenced by keeping classes at a size small enough that students can participate actively in class discussions and faculty can get to know students on an individual basis. Faculty members are accessible to students beyond the classroom, during office hours, and in informal settings such as student organization meetings and other social functions. Highly personalized advising and career counseling services are provided by the department to allow students to make the most of their education at Western.

The Mary Olive Woods Trust provides funding for an annual lecture series in which a nationally renowned scholar is brought in for a two-day visit, which includes a lecture and more informal meetings with students and faculty. The department also brings in other distinguished speakers through its Outside Speakers Series.

After College

Extensive study in philosophy can provide an excellent background for a variety of careers. Our graduates work in many fields, including business, government, academia, and technical writing. Many of our students go on to do graduate work in philosophy, and others seek professional degrees in law (Philosophy is considered to be one of the best majors for Pre-Law students), the ministry, business and public administration, counseling, and other areas. Still others seek graduate degrees in disciplines such as English, history, political science, and communications.

For More Information

See the department's website at wiu.edu/philosophy. The department office is in Morgan Hall 456, and visitors are welcome to stop by. An appointment to meet with the department chair to discuss programs can be arranged by e-mailing prs@wiu.edu or by calling (309) 298-1057.

For Your General Outlook

Both options in the Philosophy major participate in Western's GradTrac program so that students can finish their undergraduate degree in a timely manner—four years or less. Students are encouraged to complete their General Education requirements, including communication skills courses, during their freshman and sophomore years. They are also expected to take several introductory philosophy courses, in particular, Logic and Reasoning, during that time as well. The required History of Philosophy courses (Ancient and Modern) as well as the Philosophical Writing course should be taken in the junior year. In the junior and senior years, students will also take other upper-level Philosophy courses based on their interests and goals. An early choice of a suitable minor, preferably by the end of the sophomore year, is strongly advised.

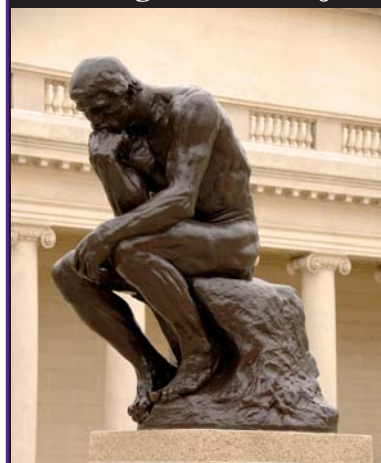
Leslie F. Malpass Library

The library and its five branches house more than one million cataloged volumes, 3,300 current journal subscriptions, and 25 foreign and domestic newspapers. In addition, the library provides computer access to resources worldwide, including 800 other Illinois libraries with more than 22 million volumes. When necessary, the interlibrary loan program can have materials in students' hands within a day or two.

Campus Visits

The Admissions Reception Center (Sherman Hall 115) is open most weekdays from 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM when the University is in session. Group information sessions are available at 10:00 AM and 1:00 PM, and campus tours are conducted at 11:00 AM and 2:00 PM daily. Individual appointments with an admissions counselor, advisers/faculty, or a financial aid adviser may be arranged during the week. The Admissions Reception Center is open from 9:30 AM to 1:00 PM most Saturdays when the University is in session. A group information session is available at 10:00 AM, and a campus tour is conducted at 11:00 AM. An individual appointment with an admissions counselor may be arranged. You may schedule your visit or tour online at wiu.edu/admissions by selecting "Schedule a Campus Visit." You may also schedule a visit, tour, or individual appointment by calling toll free (877) PICKWIU (742-5948) or (309) 298-3157, or by e-mailing admissions@wiu.edu.

Thinking about a Major?



Major in thinking.

wiu.edu/philosophy

Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies

Morgan Hall 456 • Western Illinois University
1 University Circle • Macomb, IL 61455-1390
Phone: (309) 298-1057



WESTERN
ILLINOIS
UNIVERSITY