

“The unexamined life is not worth living.”
– Socrates, 470-399 B.C.E., *Apology*

A Major Matter: Minoring in Philosophy

Department of History & Political Science
SLU 10895
Hammond, LA 70402

Telephone (985) 549-2109
Fax (985) 549-2012

http://www.selu.edu/acad_research/depts/hist_ps/index.html

Southeastern Louisiana University



What Is Philosophy?

Every action begins with an idea. Since an idea may be either good or bad, the action that an idea produces may itself be either good or bad. Learning to tell the difference between a good idea and a bad, maybe even terribly destructive, idea is part of what philosophy is about.

Philosophy is the search for fundamental truths about human society and the natural world, the quest for the principles of morally right conduct, and the study of the rules of effective, truthful thinking. Philosophical studies are undertaken by relying on only two authoritative sources of knowledge: human reason and experience. Philosophers seek to establish standards of evidence, to provide rational methods of resolving conflicts, and to create techniques for evaluating ideas and arguments. Philosophy helps students develop the capacity to see the world from the perspectives of other people whose ideas are often very different from their own.

Major Branches of Philosophy

- **Logic** – the study of sound methods of constructing arguments in order to defend points of view and to distinguish good reasoning from bad reasoning.
- **Ethics** – the search for the meanings of moral concepts and for principles to guide moral decisions and conduct in both public and private life.
- **Metaphysics** – the search for basic criteria for determining what exists and to understand the whole of what there is.
- **Epistemology** – the study of the nature and of knowledge, i.e., what knowledge is and how we obtain it.

Special Fields of Philosophy

- Philosophy of Art (Aesthetics)
- Philosophy of Mind
- Philosophy of Science
- Philosophy of History
- Philosophy of Religion
- Political Philosophy

Valuable Life Skills from Studying Philosophy

- Better Reading and Writing Skills
- Better Problem-solving Skills
- Better Communication Skills
- Better Critical Thinking Skills

Valuable Academic Skills from Studying Philosophy

- Better understanding of ideas in other subjects
- Better understanding of connections between subjects
- Better research and analysis skills

Socrates
 Plato
 Aristotle
 Augustine
 Thomas Aquinas
 Machiavelli
 Hobbes
 Descartes
 Spinoza
 Leibniz
 Locke
 Berkeley
 Hume
 Smith
 Kant
 Hegel
 Schopenhauer
 Bentham
 Mill
 Darwin
 Nietzsche
 Marx
 Peirce
 James
 Dewey
 Hook
 Santayana
 Whitehead
 Ayer
 Carnap
 Russell
 Wittgenstein
 Ryle
 Maritain
 Gilson
 Merleau-Ponty
 Kierkegaard
 Heidegger
 Sartre
 Camus
 Quine
 Berlin
 Derrida
 Deleuze
 Dennett
 Popper
 Rawls
 Rorty
 Skinner
 Gettier



“Philosophy is at once the most sublime and the most trivial of human pursuits. It works in the minutest crannies and it opens out the widest vistas. It ‘bakes no bread,’ as has been said, but it can inspire our souls with courage; and repugnant as its manners, its doubting and challenging, its quibbling and dialectics, often are to common people, no one of us can get along without the far-flashing beams of light it sends over the world’s perspectives.” – William James, *Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking*, 1907

Careers Enhanced by the Study of Philosophy

- Law
- Teaching
- Criminal Justice
- Medicine
- Any career requiring clear thinking, good writing, and problem-solving ability
- Science
- Computer Science
- Business
- Public Service

Preparation for Philosophy Minor

Good reading comprehension
 Good writing skills
 Curiosity about ideas
 Self-discipline
 Emotional and intellectual maturity

Requirements for Philosophy Minor

18 semester hours:
 12 hours @ 300 level
 6 hours @ 400 level

When to Begin Your Philosophy Minor

After completion of English 102 or 122H
 First semester of sophomore year

PHILOSOPHY COURSES

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY & POLITICAL SCIENCE

Philosophy 301. Introduction to Philosophy. 3 hrs. **Prerequisite:** English 102 or 122H. Introductory study of philosophy considering the basic areas—metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, and logic.

Philosophy 302. The Great Philosophers. 3 hrs. **Prerequisite:** English 102 or 122H. Introductory readings of great philosophers from ancient Greeks to moderns.

Philosophy 310. Critical Thinking. 3 hrs. **Prerequisite:** English 102 or 122H. Methods of understanding, analyzing, and evaluating arguments. Designed to improve analytical and critical skills in thinking, reading, writing, and listening.

Philosophy 313. Ethics. 3 hrs. **Prerequisite:** English 102 or 122H. Major systems of thought concerning moral values, good and evil, right and wrong.

Philosophy 314. Special Topics. 3 hrs. **Prerequisite:** English 102 or 122H. Courses not included in the catalog, e.g., philosophy of science and philosophy of religion, etc.

Philosophy 315. Philosophy of History. 3 hrs. **Prerequisite:** English 102 or 122H. Study of the way major philosophers have understood history, usually in terms of searching for patterns and meanings in history.

Philosophy 320. Philosophy and the Arts (Aesthetics). 3 hrs. **Prerequisite:** English 102 or 122H. Readings concerned with question of beauty, or what makes something a work of art in film, literature, music, and painting.

Philosophy 321. Existentialism and Contemporary Philosophy. 3 hrs. **Prerequisite:** English 102 or 122H. Major figures in existentialism and other important figures in contemporary philosophy.

Philosophy 416/516. American Philosophy. 3 hrs. **Prerequisite:** Junior standing or consent of the Dept. Head. Major developments in American philosophy through detailed consideration of American thinkers.

Philosophy 417/517. Intellectual History (History of Ideas). 3 hrs. **Prerequisite:** Junior standing or consent of Dept. Head. Influences on western thought from Middle Ages to twentieth century.

Philosophy 418/518. Independent Study in the History of Philosophy. 3 hrs. **Prerequisite:** Junior standing, permission of the Dept. Head, and at least nine hours of undergraduate philosophy. Conducted as a tutorial for individual students seeking work above the introductory level.

The Value of Philosophy

Philosophy broadens the range of things that one can understand and enjoy. It can give one greater self-knowledge, foresight, and a sense of direction in life. It can provide special pleasures of insight to one's reading and social interaction. It can lead to self-discovery, expansion of one's awareness of the world, and commitment to higher ideals. Through all of this, and through its contribution to one's powers of expression, it nurtures individuality and self-confidence. Its value for one's private life can be incalculable; its benefits in one's public life as a citizen can be immeasurable.

PHILOSOPHY FACULTY



Barbara Forrest, Ph.D., Tulane University
bforrest@selu.edu

Teaching Areas — Introduction to Philosophy • Critical Thinking • Ethics • Philosophy of History • Intellectual History

• Independent Study in the History of Philosophy • Special Topics: History & Principles of Evolution

Scholarship — Evolution and Creationism • Religion and Public Policy • Separation of Church & State

Selected Publications — *Creationism's Trojan Horse: The Wedge of Intelligent Design* with Paul R. Gross (Oxford University Press 2007)

Awards — SLU President's Award for Excellence in Teaching 1998 • SLU President's Award for Excellence in Research 2006 • Woman's Hospital Distinguished Teaching Professorship 2001-2004 • Co-recipient, American Society for Cell Biology Public Service Award 2006



Jeffrey Bell, Ph.D. Tulane University
jbell@selu.edu

Teaching Areas — Introduction to Philosophy • Ethics • Philosophy of History • Intellectual History • Philosophy & the

Arts • Existentialism & Contemporary Philosophy • Independent Study in the History of Philosophy • Special Topics • Political Theory

Scholarship — Scottish Enlightenment, Gilles Deleuze

Selected Publications — *Deleuze's Hume: Philosophy, Culture and the Scottish Enlightenment* (Edinburgh University Press 2009) • *Philosophy at the Edge of Chaos: Gilles Deleuze and the Philosophy of Difference* (University of Toronto Press 2006)

Awards — Visiting Research Fellowship, Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities, Edinburgh • C. Howard Nichols Professorship in History & Govt. 2002-2005 • SLU President's Award for Excellence in Research 2010

There are many interesting specialties in philosophy that can provide lifelong opportunities for continued learning and enrichment. You can explore them as you consider earning a minor in philosophy in the Department of History and Political Science. The philosophy websites below are among the many resources available on the Internet.



Epistemelinks.com

<http://www.epistemelinks.com/index.aspx>

"EpistemeLinks includes over 19,000 categorized links to philosophy resources on the Internet and has several additional features. Online since early 1997, this site is free to use, and doesn't require user registration of any kind." – Epistemelinks



Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy

<http://plato.stanford.edu/>

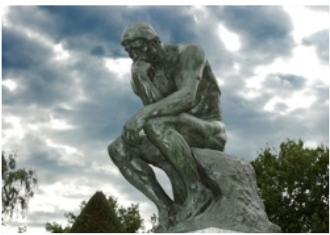
The SEP is a "dynamic reference work" in which "each entry is maintained and kept up to date by an expert or group of experts in the field" (SEP website). SEP offers scholarly articles in virtually all areas of philosophical interest, from the medieval theologian "Peter Abelard" to "zombies."



Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy

<http://www.iep.utm.edu>

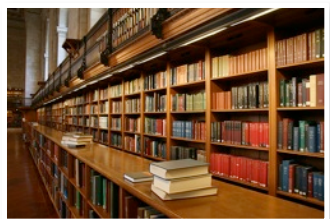
The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy provides "open access to detailed, scholarly information on key topics and philosophers in all areas of philosophy." (IEP website) The IEP is free to all Internet users world-wide.



Foundation for Critical Thinking

<http://www.criticalthinking.org>

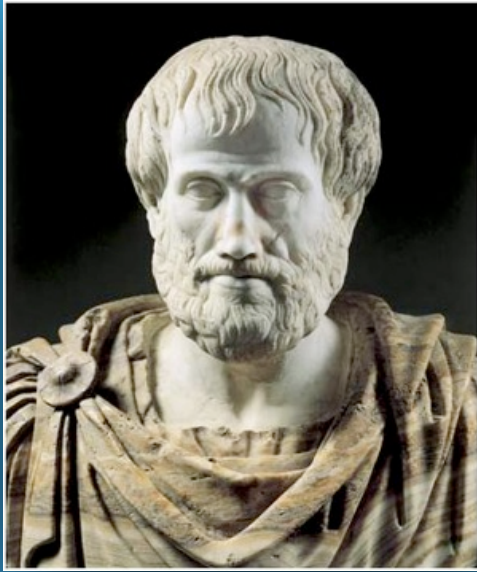
"Critical thinking is essential ... to get to the root of our problems and develop reasonable solutions.... It entails rigorous self-reflection and openmindedness.... Critical thinking requires intellectual virtues such as intellectual humility, perseverance, integrity, and responsibility." – FCT website



Online Library of Liberty <http://oll.libertyfund.org>

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Philosophy



“All men by nature desire to know.”
– Aristotle, 384-322 B.C.E, *Metaphysics*

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