

Fordham's Philosophy Department

What Do You "Do" with a Philosophy Major or Minor?

Philosophy is fun and interesting, but what can you *do* with it – in terms of a career, that is? Answer: Almost anything you want! The reason is simple: philosophy helps you develop that most marketable of all skills: the ability to *think* – clearly, critically, creatively. It teaches you how to understand and solve difficult problems, how to communicate clearly, and how to understand and assess diverse points of view. Majoring in Philosophy is therefore an *excellent* preparation for a career in Law, Business, Politics, Public Policy, Education, Journalism, and Publishing – to name just a few. It is one of the best kept secrets for professional success. Here are just a few of the ways it can contribute to a successful career:

Law. Philosophy is one of the best majors, if not *the* best, to prepare for a career in law. Philosophy majors not only acquire the logical skills necessary to excel in law school, they also learn the ethical and political traditions that underwrite our legal system, something that enables them to think in a more sophisticated way about the law, and hence that may ultimately enable them to be more effective legal professionals. In addition, Philosophy majors consistently outperform other majors on the Law School Admissions Test (LSAT) – including Pre-Law and Political Science majors!^[1] They are therefore more likely to get into the law schools of their choice.

Business. Philosophy can provide excellent preparation for a career in business. It teaches one how to think critically and creatively, how to solve problems and communicate clearly – skills that help one excel in business. In addition, as the marketplace becomes more competitive, graduate degrees become more desirable, and that entails a strong performance on the Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT), the exam most business schools require their applicants to take. Philosophy majors consistently outperform other majors on the GMAT, including *all* business majors, *all* humanities majors, and *all* social sciences majors.^[2] Philosophy majors enjoy *enormous* advantages going into business.

Politics and Public Policy. Philosophy can provide excellent preparation for work as a congressional aide or researcher, as well as for positions in state or national civil services, policy research institutions, etc. Creative problem-solving skills, the ability to "think outside the box" and communicate clearly and effectively are all extremely important for this sort of work, and these are precisely the skills a philosophy major helps students develop. In addition, philosophy provides an excellent basis for further study in applied political fields such as public policy, government administration, and international affairs.

Education. Philosophy can provide excellent preparation for a career in teaching. The same logical skills that philosophy majors use to understand and evaluate arguments and theories enable them to identify the most essential information to communicate to students in the classroom, and to present that information in clear, systematic way the students can understand – the essence of good teaching! In addition, teaching at the college level requires an advanced degree, and that means going to graduate school. Philosophy majors consistently outperform other majors on the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) – including majors in English, Education, History, Political Science, Psychology, Biology, Computer Science, and Communications!^[3]

Journalism. Philosophy is one of the best majors for aspiring journalists. It provides a solid foundation for becoming an insightful and persuasive writer: It teaches students how to write well, critically analyze evidence, and develop incisive research strategies. It broadens one's horizons and develops the keen insight and understanding that distinguishes the most informed and influential journalists.

Graduate and Professional School. Students who plan on seeking an advanced degree should not overlook the comparative performance of various undergraduate majors on standardized tests such as the LSAT, MCAT, GRE, and GMAT. The latter are necessary for admission to graduate and professional schools, and higher scores on them can often make or break students' chances of attending the schools of their choice. *Philosophy majors are consistently among the highest performers on these tests*, which means they stand a better chance of attending the schools they want. The following summarizes some comparative results; all the data were provided by the organizations that administer the exams: the Law School Admission Council, The Graduate

Management Admission Council, and the Educational Testing Service.

LSAT: Majors in Philosophy consistently outperform majors in Pre-Law, Political Science, English, Communications, Economics, Psychology, History, and all Business fields.

GMAT: Majors in Philosophy consistently outperform *all* business majors, *all* humanities majors, *all* education majors, *all* communications majors, *all* life science majors, and *all* social science majors.

GRE: Majors in Philosophy consistently outperform *all* humanities majors, *all* education majors, *all* business majors, *all* communications majors, *all* life science majors, and all social science majors except economics. On the Verbal component of the GRE, which tests reading comprehension and language skills, philosophy students outperform *everyone* – period! – including English and Communications students – and by a *wide* margin. The following chart summarizes the results for the GRE Verbal component; numbers reflect points above or below the mean for all test takers.

Major	Points +/- Mean
Accounting	-8.7
Biology	+2.9
Business Admin.	-8.7
Communications	-2.1
Computer Science	-1.2
Economics	+4.4
Education*	-6.4
Engineering*	-1.5
English	+16
Foreign Language	+8.7
History	+12.5
Mathematics	+5
Philosophy	+22.2
Physical Sciences*	+2.1
Political Science	+7.3
Psychology	-1.9

* reflects mean for all subfields

Minoring in Philosophy

A minor in Philosophy can prove helpful professionally for the very same reasons a major can, and is well suited for combination with a major in business, education, the sciences, and the humanities. A Philosophy minor may complement a major in political science, history, or languages as part of a solid portfolio for further work in politics, and it can be an excellent addition to the portfolio of someone planning to teach Arts & Letters subjects in high school. It can also be helpful in combining legal work with other specializations, such as biotechnology and environmental science, and can also make you more attractive to law, business, and medical schools.

Requirements for a Major in Philosophy at Fordham: a minimum of eight (8) philosophy courses in addition to the freshman and sophomore core courses.

Requirements for a Minor in Philosophy at Fordham: a minimum of four (4) philosophy courses in addition to the freshman and sophomore core courses.

[1] Source: The Law School Admission Council.

[2] Source: Graduate Management Admission Council.

[3] Source: Educational Testing Service.