

Simmons College
Department of Philosophy
Student Handbook



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Faculty



Diane Grossman, Ph.D., New York University

Professor of Philosophy and Women's and Gender Studies;
Chair of the Women's and Gender Studies Department

Specializes in feminist philosophy, applied ethics, and critical theory.



Shirong Luo, Ph.D., University of Miami

Associate Professor of Philosophy

Specializes in Chinese philosophy, Asian philosophy and religion, ethics and comparative philosophy



Wanda Torres Gregory, Ph.D., Boston University

Professor of Philosophy; Chair of the Philosophy Department

Specializes in philosophy of language, logic, contemporary philosophy, and nineteenth-century philosophy.



Jo Trigilio, Ph.D., University of Oregon

Senior Lecturer in Philosophy; Director of the Gender/Cultural Studies Graduate Program

Specializes in feminist theory, American pragmatism, social and political theory, applied ethics, and sexuality studies.

Majoring in Philosophy at Simmons

The Department of Philosophy welcomes your interest in our undergraduate program. This information is designed to supplement the College's general Catalogue. Please consult the Catalogue for more information.

If you have questions about this program, please don't hesitate to contact us through our administrative assistant, Rachel Lacasse at lacasse@simmons.edu or by emailing the department chair, Professor Torres Gregory at wanda.torres-gregory@simmons.edu.

THE STUDY OF PHILOSOPHY

Unlike most disciplines studied in a university, philosophy is usually unknown to the entering college student. Although high school students are intellectually capable of studying philosophy, the curriculum seldom provides them with the opportunity to do so. Furthermore, the impressions students often pick up about philosophy are apt to be distorted: philosophy is sometimes confused with religion, with psychology, and with mystical experience. Thus, the undergraduate student is commonly uninformed or misinformed about the nature of philosophy to an extent that is not the case with other academic subjects.

Yet, philosophy is one of the most important subjects a student can study. Students who graduate from college without taking a course in philosophy has been deprived of a valuable part of their intellectual heritage. Because philosophy emphasizes reasoning, thinking, seeing the big picture, and looking at different points of view, training in philosophy is never dated.

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE PHILOSOPHY MAJOR

The Philosophy major, regardless of whether it is to be single or double, requires 40 semester hours (ten courses). All majors must take Philosophy 122 (Critical Thinking) or Philosophy 123 (Symbolic Logic), Phil 130 (Ethics), at least three courses in the history of philosophy (Philosophy 241, 242, 243, 244, 245), at least two other intermediate level courses, and the seminar, Philosophy 390, which may be taken more than once and counts toward the independent learning requirement.

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE PHILOSOPHY MINOR

The Philosophy minor requires 20 semester hours (five courses). All minors must take Philosophy 122 (Critical Thinking) or Philosophy 123 (Symbolic Logic), at least two courses in the history of philosophy (Philosophy 241, 242, 243, 244, 245), and two other courses in philosophy.

Philosophy: What Can You Do With That?

Students thinking about majoring in philosophy hear this question routinely from friends and family. If you are drawn to philosophy, you can rest assured that the major will prepare you for more than just graduate school in philosophy. In addition to its intrinsic pleasures, studying philosophy prepares you for a broad range of careers. Consider the following:

Majoring in philosophy is practical.

The philosophy major provides a true education, rather than mere training. Employers today seek smart people who are able think critically and respond positively to changes and problems. More so than perhaps any other major, philosophy teaches skills and abilities that are practical and applicable to any career. These never go out of style:

- The ability to think logically.
- The ability to analyze and solve problems.
- The ability to assess the pros and cons of proposed solutions.
- The ability to write and speak clearly.
- The ability to persuade.
- The ability to conduct thorough research.
- The ability to ask the right questions.
- The ability to think creatively and imaginatively.

The philosophy major prepares you well for graduate education in a broad range of fields.

Careers in Law

Average LSAT scores by the 11 most popular pre-law majors (2014):

Philosophy 157.0

Economics 156.2

History 154.5

English 153.5

Psychology 151.7

Political Science 151.5

Accounting 151.5

Sociology 149.4

Communications 149.4

Business Administration 148.2

Criminal Justice 145.4

Careers in Business

The Graduate Management Admission Council (GMAC), the administrators of the Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT), in their latest Five-Year Summary (2005-2010), provide the following data on mean scores for the 2009-2010 year.

Mathematics	608	Political Science	556
Physics	604	Foreign Language	555
Engineering	593	Finance	555
Philosophy	587	Architecture	545
Economics	583	Psychology	533
Computer Science	581	Accounting	520
History	574	Sociology	519
Chemistry	567	Fine Arts	504
Statistics	563	Management	503
Biological Sciences	563	Marketing	493
English	560	Education	482

Careers in Medicine

If you want to pursue a career in medicine, you should know that majoring in philosophy, along with taking the necessary pre-med courses, is excellent preparation. In fact, many medical schools look very favorably on a major in the humanities as long as the requisite science courses are taken as well. Indeed, Philosophy majors actually have a significantly higher medical school acceptance rate than biology or chemistry majors. Medical School acceptance rates by major, according to 1998 statistics of the Association of American Medical Colleges:

Philosophy 50%

Biochemistry 43%

Biology 35%

Chemistry 39%

Physics 42%

History 49%

English 46%

All Majors 37%

<http://www.amsa.org/AMSA/Homepage/Publications/TheNewPhysician/2000/tnp275.aspx>

Careers in Technology

Philosophical skills are always welcome in the world of high technology. While specific technical knowledge becomes quickly obsolete, philosophical skills are needed in every technical area. Philosophy majors develop the ability to take vaguely formulated problems and find precise ways to deal with them. Philosophers have played major roles in fields such as artificial intelligence and computational linguistic.

Advanced Degrees in Philosophy or Other Humanities Areas

From 2001 to 2004, philosophy majors had the highest average among all majors on both the Verbal and Analytical Writing parts of the GRE (Graduate Record Examination). Excluding the physical sciences and engineering, philosophy majors had the second highest average on the Quantitative part of the exam, after economics majors.

GRE 2005-2006 Guide to the Use of Scores

All of this is good news for those who want to study philosophy. The major provides an education that is as practical as it is fulfilling. The largest study conducted to date, a study by the National Institute of Education, Standardized Test Scores of College Graduates, 1964-1982 showed that during the 18-year period of the study:

- Students majoring in philosophy received scores substantially higher (5% better or more) than the average on each of the tests studied.
- Philosophy major's scores on several tests exceeded those of students majoring in other humanities areas, in the social sciences, and in several of the natural sciences.

The study (1986), whose results are summarized in the table below, compared the scores of 550,000 U.S. citizens who took the Law School Admissions Test (LSAT), the Graduate Management Admissions Test (GMAT), and the verbal and quantitative portions of the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) in 1981-82 with the corresponding data for earlier years. The performance of philosophy majors on all four tests was remarkable:

On the LSAT

- Philosophy majors made higher scores than did students in any other humanities area.
- Philosophy majors made higher scores than all social and natural science majors except economics and mathematics.
- Philosophy majors made higher scores than all "applied" majors.
- Philosophy majors scored 10% better than political science majors--a popular choice of students planning to study law--on the LSAT.
- Philosophy majors scored 5.3% better on the LSAT than accounting majors--another popular pre-law choice.

On the GMAT

- Philosophy majors outperformed business majors by a margin of about 15%.
- Philosophy majors outperformed every other undergraduate major except mathematics.

On the GRE

- Philosophy majors' scores on the verbal portion of the GRE were higher than in any other major, even English.
- Philosophy majors scored substantially higher than did all other humanities majors.
- Philosophy majors were alone among humanities majors in scoring above the overall average.
- Philosophy majors were alone among humanities majors in scoring above the overall average on the quantitative portion of the GRE.

Full report may be obtained through ERIC Document Reproduction Service, 1-800-LET-ERIC (1-800-538-3742).

Employment and Salary Information

According to census data, **92%** of college graduates who majored in philosophy or religious studies are employed.

What's it Worth? The Economic Value of College Majors.
<http://cew.georgetown.edu/whatsitworth>

The mid-career median salary of philosophy majors ranks **16th** out of 50 studied--above chemistry, marketing, information technology, and business, management, for example.

www.payscale.com/2008-best-colleges/degrees.asp

According to the Wall Street Journal, philosophy B.A.'s have the **highest percentage salary increase** from starting pay to mid-career pay: 103.5% (tied with Math).

http://online.wsj.com/public/resources/documents/info-Degrees_that_Pay_you_Back-sort.htmlCareers in Law

The Proof is in the Pudding!

OK. So where are all these successful philosophy majors now? Take a look!

FAMOUS PHILOSOPHY MAJORS

PERFORMERS

Woody Allen--Director and Comedian
Harrison Ford--Actor
Chris Hardwick--MTV Host
Bruce Lee--Actor
Jay Leno--Comedian
Amy Madigan--Actress
Steve Martin--Comedian, Actor
Dennis Miller--Comedian
Stone Phillips--News Broadcaster
Brad Roberts--Crash Test Dummies
Susan Sarandon--Actress
Gene Siskel--Movie Critic
Jeff Smith--Frugal Gourmet
Steve Thomas--TV Host, This Old House
Alex Trebek--TV Host, Jeopardy

BUSINESS

Carl Icahn--CEO, TWA Airlines
Gerald Levin--CEO, Time-Warner, Inc.

SOCIAL STUDIES

Gertrude Himmelfarb--Historian
Herbert Simon--Economist, Artificial
Intelligence and Nobel Laureate
C. Vann Woodward--Historian

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

Jules Debray--Writer and Government Official,
France
Rahm Emanuel--Clinton White House
Political Advisor
Thomas Jefferson--U.S. President
Martin Luther King Jr--Minister & Civil Rights
Activist
Aung San Suu Kyi--Human Rights Activist,
Nobel Peace Prize Winner

ARTS AND LETTERS

Joseph Chaikin--Theatre Director
Ethan Coen--Film Maker
Umberto Eco--Novelist and Semiologist
Ken Follett--British Writer
Michael Frayn--Novelist
Northrup Frye--Literary Critic
Martin Gardner--Essayist
Philip Glass--Composer
Rebecca Goldstein--Novelist
Claude Lanzmann--Film Maker
Ira Levin--Writer
James Michener--Writer
Iris Murdoch--Novelist
Steve Reich--Composer
Meyer Schapiro--Art Critic
Alexander Solzhenitsin--Writer
Wallace Shawn--Playwright and Actor
Susan Sontag--Writer
David Foster Wallace--Novelist
Elie Wiesel--Writer

SPORTS

Phil Jackson--Coach, Chicago Bulls
Michael McKaskey--Owner, Chicago Bears
Aaron Taylor--Offensive Tackle, Green Bay
Packers

RELIGION

Joseph Bernardin--Cardinal, Chicago
Mircea Eliade--Religious Studies
Madelyn Murray O'Hair--Famous Atheist
Pope John Paul II

Even better, here is what some Simmons Philosophy Majors have gone on to do after graduating....

- Cornell, Masters Program in Public Policy
- Stenton Law School, Florida
- Simmons, Masters Program in Gender/Culture Studies
- Simmons, School of Social Work
- Baltimore Hebrew University, Masters Program in Hebraic Studies
- New School, Masters Program in Philosophy
- University of Maine, Portland, Law School
- Tufts University, Masters Program in Philosophy
- University of California, Davis, Ph.D. Program in Computer Science
- Maine's People Alliance, Director of Field Organizations
- Gillette
- Tufts University, Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy
- New England School of Law
- Unitarian Universalist Service Committee
- New York University, Masters in Public Policy
- Thomas Crowley Law School
- University of Connecticut Law School
- Peace Corps

Library Guide to Resources in Philosophy

<http://simmons.libguides.com/Philosophy>

The Simmons Library guide to resources in Philosophy offers information on books, articles, writing & citing, careers in philosophy, research, and much more.

- Articles on Your Topic provides a selection of online resources that include a vast number of articles on topics in Philosophy for conducting research.
- Philosophers, Theories & More is a great place to find information on topics in philosophy including biographies of philosophers, overviews of philosophical theories, and more.
- Writing & Citing offers formatting and style guides for using MLA and APA style citations as well as database citation tools and easy access to RefWorks where you can organize your own personal database of references and format bibliographies.
- Careers in Philosophy includes the latest job, fellowship, and internship listings for Philosophy majors as well as job-hunting tips and graduate school information.

INDEPENDENT LEARNING & THE PHILOSOPHY MAJOR

Simmons requires a minimum of 8 semester hours of independent learning of all students. Because this work is done at an advanced level, students often satisfy this requirement in the area of their major. Independent learning emphasizes student initiative, planning, and implementation on a contractual basis with a faculty member. The student must assume the primary responsibility in this experience. She must choose a topic appropriate to her goals, define the problem, and carry out the work of the project. It is the joint responsibility of the student and her faculty sponsor to monitor the progress made in completing the project and to evaluate the experience.

In the Philosophy Department, the independent learning requirement can be met in the following ways:

PHIL 350-1,2 Independent Study
PHIL 355-1,2 Senior Thesis
PHIL 370-1,2 Internship in Philosophy
PHIL 390-2 Seminar

The Seminar in philosophy is shared among the faculty in the department, with different topics every other year. This seminar is a careful examination of a problem in philosophy (e.g., free will vs. determinism), a particular philosopher's perspective (e.g., Nietzsche), or a sub field in philosophy (e.g., Feminist Ethics).

PHILOSOPHY 350: INDEPENDENT STUDY

Normally, students engage in independent study for one semester for four credit hours. Independent study will be conducted and evaluated according to the following guidelines:

1. The semester before they start their independent study, interested students should identify a Simmons philosophy professor who agrees to serve as their independent study advisor. Prior to registering for independent study, students must provide that professor with a proposal containing the following information:
 - A brief (1-2 page) background description of the topic area.
 - A preliminary annotated bibliography. Annotations should describe the relevance of each citation to the topic area.
 - A preliminary outline of the independent study topics.
 - A preliminary timeline for the project.

Following approval of the proposal by the independent study advisor, students may register for the agreed upon number of credit hours of independent study.

2. During the semester, students will meet regularly – normally bi-weekly – for discussion with their independent study advisor.
3. Writing will be arranged jointly by the student and her thesis advisor. Normally, students will write a 20-25 page paper.
4. Each independent study student will give a presentation on her work and at the Philosophy Department's "Independent Learning Symposium."
6. The independent study and its presentation to faculty and students will be evaluated by the independent study advisor according to the following criteria:
 - Clarity
 - Focus
 - Quality of critical, philosophical reflections on issues
 - Overall performance of independent work.

Simmons Independent Study Examples From Recent Years

- "Dealing with a Rape Culture: A defense of femininity."
- "Comparative Philosophy of Language."
- "Kierkegaard's Philosophy of Language."
- "19th-century Aesthetics."
- "Art and the Absurd."
- "Should Confucianism or Buddhism Be Classified as a Religion?"
- "Nietzsche and Kierkegaard on the Individual."
- "Quine's Philosophy of Logic."
- "Intermediate Symbolic Logic."
- "The Consolation of Philosophy."
- "Civil Liberties Post 9/11."
- "Karl Marx's Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts."
- "A Materialist Feminist Analysis of Surrogacy."
- "The Problem of Universals in Indian Philosophy: A Comparative Essay on Nyaya Realism and Buddhist Nominalism."
- "Wittgenstein and the Rabbis of the Babylonian Talmud: A Drawing of Parallels."
- "Heidegger's and Foucault's Conceptions of Language."
- "Schopenhauer on Will and Intellect."

PHILOSOPHY 355: SENIOR THESIS

Students may engage in thesis work for one or two semesters, and for four to eight credit hours in any one semester. Normally, thesis work will be conducted and evaluated according to the following guidelines:

1. The semester before they start their theses, interested students should identify a Simmons philosophy professor who agrees to serve as their thesis advisor. Prior to registering for thesis work, students must provide that professor with a proposal containing the following information:
 - A brief (1-2 page) background description of the topic area.
 - A clear, concise statement of the question to be addressed by the thesis.
 - A preliminary annotated bibliography. Annotations should describe the relevance of each citation to the thesis question.
 - A preliminary outline of the thesis topics.
 - A preliminary timeline for the project, noting deadlines for completion of research and writing. The timeline should be coordinated with the outline.

Following approval of the proposal by the thesis advisor, students may register for the agreed upon number of credit hours of thesis work.

2. During the semester, students will meet regularly – normally bi-weekly – for discussion with their thesis advisor.
3. The thesis will be submitted in triplicate to the Philosophy Department on a date to be arranged jointly by the student and her thesis advisor. Theses are normally in the range of 60 - 80 pages.
4. Each thesis student will give a presentation and defense of her thesis to the Philosophy Department faculty on a mutually agreed upon day and time.
5. Each thesis student will give a presentation of her thesis and its philosophical relevance at the Philosophy Department's "Independent Learning Symposium."
6. The thesis, its defense, and its presentation to faculty and students will be evaluated by the thesis advisor according to the following criteria:
 - Clarity
 - Focus
 - Quality of critical, philosophical reflections on issues
 - Overall performance of independent work.


Simmons Senior Thesis Examples From Recent Years:

- “Epictetus and Stockdale: A Philosophy of Free Will and Freedom in Practice”
- “Between Chatter and Silence: A Comparison of Earlier and Later Heidegger’s Conception of Language.”
- “Modern Epistemology and Contemporary Cognitive Science: A Dialogue between the Normative and the Empirical.”
- “John Rawls.”
- “Ethical Leadership.”
- “Transcending the Individual: Determinism and the Interconnected Self.”
- “Manic Depression through Many Lenses; Parallels Between Ancient and Contemporary Views of Emotion and Mental Disorder.” “Ambiguity in the Philosophy of Simone de Beauvoir.”
- “Jewish Influences in Levinas’ Thought.”
- “Immigration Policy Post 9/11.”
- “Communication in a Practical Light.”
- “Philosophical Counseling.”
- “Albert Camus’ Notion of Individuality.”
- “Biomedical Ethics Cases.”

PHILOSOPHY 370: INTERNSHIPS

Normally, internships will be conducted and evaluated according to the following guidelines:

1. The semester before they start their internships, interested students must identify a Simmons philosophy professor who agrees to serve as their internship advisor. Students should provide that professor with a preliminary data sheet containing the following information:
 - A description of the purpose of the internship, including its philosophical relevance, your job title and a detailed description of the work to be performed, including total work hours per week.
 - Supervisor’s name, title, address, and phone number and email address.
2. Prior to the start of the internship, students should complete the Supervisor Agreement Form (included at the end of this Handbook) and bring a signed copy to their Simmons advisor.
3. During the semester of the internship, students will normally complete a weekly 1-2 page e-mail report on incidents and issues encountered at work. Evaluation criteria:
 - Regularity
 - Quality of critical, philosophical reflections.
4. Normally, students will write a paper focusing on philosophical issues related to their internship. Students should schedule a mid-semester meeting with their Simmons advisor to discuss their final paper topic.

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5. One week after the mid-semester meeting, students should hand to their Simmons advisor a proposal for their final paper. The proposal should be 2 pages, typed.
 6. Students will write a 10-12 page paper, due the final day of classes.
 7. The internship will be evaluated by the internship advisor according to the following criteria:
 - Clarity
 - Focus
 - Quality of critical, philosophical reflections on issues
 - Overall performance of independent work.
 9. Students are responsible for soliciting and monitoring the receipt of a final letter of evaluation from their internship supervisor. A form for this letter is included at the end of this Handbook. The supervisor evaluation will be included in the final evaluation of the internship.

Internship Examples From Recent Years:

- Various law firms
- Fairness.com
- Unitarian Universalist Service Committee
- Boston Mobilization
- Center for New Words
- Brigham and Women's Hospital

*Students can secure placements individually or with the assistance of the Career Education Center.

Simmons College

Department of Philosophy

PHIL 370: Internship in Philosophy

Supervisor Agreement

Job title _____

Start/stop date _____

Total work hours/week _____

Supervisor contact information

Name _____

Address _____

Phone Number _____

Email _____

Detailed description of work to be performed (use a separate sheet if appropriate):

Student's Signature

Supervisor's Signature

Date _____ Date _____

Simmons College

Department of Philosophy

PHIL 370: Internship in Philosophy

Supervisor Evaluation

Evaluations are requested within 1 week of the completion of the internship. Use a separate sheet if appropriate.

Please provide an evaluation of the work of _____

Supervisor's Signature

Date _____