

## BA/BS in Philosophy

### Statement of Departmental Purpose

---

The goal of the Philosophy program in the Department of Philosophy and Religion is to educate the undergraduate major in philosophy so that he or she understands philosophical theories, methods, and problems. By this we mean to include three areas: a knowledge of the history of philosophy, a knowledge of the principles of reasoning, and a knowledge of the central problems in philosophy. In the first case students learn about personalities and movements, about (for example) Plato and Aristotle, Nietzsche and Mill, and about rationalism and empiricism, and utilitarianism and existentialism. In the second case they study the principles of reasoning: deductive and inductive methods, logical fallacies, and the rules of good argumentation. Finally they examine central areas and problems therein: for example, (1) Epistemology: knowledge and experience, science and myth; (2) Human nature: mind, body, and self, freedom and determinism; (3) Ethics: principles and consequences, and justice, rights, and utility; (4) Philosophy of religion: God and evil, faith and reason. Throughout this course of study the student gains the ability to read, think, and write philosophically, that is, critically and carefully.

### Intended Outcomes/Objectives

---

1. A student who majors in philosophy will acquire a fundamental understanding of philosophy, which will include
  - an understanding of the central problems of philosophy;
  - a comprehension of the various methods of philosophical inquiry and discourse;
  - a knowledge of the historically significant philosophers and philosophical movements;
  - a knowledge of the fundamental principles of logic;
  - an understanding of the basic theories of ethics.
2. A student who majors in philosophy will achieve a satisfactory level in the application of critical thinking skills.
3. A student who majors in philosophy will be able to write a satisfactory philosophical paper.
4. A student who majors in philosophy will express a high degree of satisfaction with the philosophy program and the instruction provided by the Department.
5. A student who majors in philosophy will acquire abilities that will prove beneficial in postgraduate activities and careers.

### Assessment Procedures and Criteria

---

1. The program in philosophy will be judged successful in providing a fundamental understanding of philosophy (intended outcome 1) when a survey of portfolios kept for each major, and containing samples of tests and papers from each of the required upper-level courses in philosophy, shows a basic understanding of philosophical problems, of philosophical methods, of historical philosophers, of fundamental principles of logic, and of ethical theories. The standard of satisfactory performance will be determined after two review periods.
2. The program in philosophy will judge its success in providing students with a satisfactory level of ability in the application of critical thinking skills (intended outcome 2) by administering to every major during his or her senior year a nationally standardized critical thinking exam. The standard of satisfactory performance will be determined after two review periods.
3. The program in philosophy will be judged successful in helping students achieve the ability to write a satisfactory philosophical paper (intended outcome 3) when papers produced in conjunction with Philosophy 4310 (Senior Thesis in Philosophy) capstone course are judged satisfactory by at least two members of the department. The standard of satisfactory performance will be determined after two review periods.
4. The program in philosophy will be judged successful in satisfying the needs of students (intended outcome 4) when the mode of student responses on the departmental "Student Assessment of the Philosophy Program" form indicates "very satisfied" in answer to the question: "Overall, how do you feel about your philosophy education up to this point in your study?"
5. The program in philosophy will be judged successful in helping students acquire abilities that will prove beneficial in postgraduate activities and careers (intended outcome 5)
  - a. when 75% or more of those who apply for graduate work are admitted; and
  - b. when a majority of graduates responding to a questionnaire administered within ten years after graduation will indicate that they agree with the statement, "UCA's BA/BS program in philosophy was very valuable in my acquisition of abilities that prepared me for my postgraduate career and life activities."