Transfer Guide Leading to a Bachelor's Degree in Philosophy

All degree requirements are subject to the provisions and notices in the [NIU Undergraduate Catalog](#).

How to Choose Between a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) and Bachelor of Science (B.S.)

There is no difference between the requirements within the major for the two degree-tracks.

S**tudents should choose a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) if** they are feel comfortable completing a 2-4 semester foreign language sequence, or if they are interested in pursuing a double major with another B.A. degree.

Students should choose a Bachelor of Science (B.S.) if they feel comfortable complete a sequence of math and computer science or laboratory sciences, or if they are interested in pursuing a double major with another B.S. degree.

Courses Recommended Prior to Transfer:

Community college students are encouraged to complete an A.A. or A.S. degree prior to transfer, and to consult [NIU's articulation tables](#) for information regarding the transferability of courses.

Students transferring into the program in Philosophy are recommended (but not required) to complete three courses that will articulate as 100- or 200-level PHIL courses.

About the Department

Philosophy is the investigation of enduring and foundational questions about ourselves, the world, and our place in the world, such as: What is real? Does God exist? Is the mind distinct from the body? Do we have free will? What can we know, and how can we know it? What is the difference between right and wrong? Is morality objective? Why should we act morally? What is justice, and why does it matter?

The department offers an undergraduate major leading to either a Bachelor of Arts degree or a Bachelor of Science degree, allowing students maximal flexibility in tailoring their programs of study to their intellectual interests. The two tracks also allow students in any degree program to easily add philosophy as a second major. The requirements within the major are the same for both degree tracks. Either degree can be received with departmental honors.

Features of the Philosophy Program at NIU

An Excellent Faculty. The Department of Philosophy at NIU is nationally renowned for its outstanding graduate faculty, because of whom its graduate program is ranked in the top five in the nation among terminal M.A. programs in philosophy. All members of the graduate faculty teach undergraduate courses each semester, including introductory-level general education courses. Undergraduate students

at all levels therefore have the opportunity to study with the department's nationally renowned faculty, several of whom have won NIU's Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching Award. Feedback from students and graduates consistently praises the quality of teaching in the department along with faculty attention to and concern for students.

Availability of Graduate Teaching Assistants. The department's nationally ranked M.A. program attracts promising young teacher/scholars who carry out indirect instructional responsibilities, under the direct supervision of faculty. The responsibilities of graduate teaching assistants include grading, tutoring, and maintaining regular office hours. These highly qualified teaching assistants provide undergraduates with ready access to additional help with questions or problems concerning course assignments or lectures.

Program Size. Although contained within a large and diverse university, the philosophy program is comparatively small. Undergraduates receive individualized attention from their professors, student/faculty interaction is frequent, and upper-division class sizes are conducive to in-depth discussion and dialogue. Surveys of current majors and of recent graduates indicate these factors as being among the program's greatest strengths.

Engaged Learning Opportunities:

All philosophy students take a departmental writing seminar, typically in their junior year. This is a small, writing intensive course open only to students majoring in Philosophy. As part of this course, students participate in writers' workshops and receive extensive feedback on their writing, both from their peers and from the faculty member teaching the course. All philosophy students also complete a senior capstone project, which consists of a substantive philosophical essay written in conjunction with a 400-level Philosophy course. The faculty member teaching that course serves as a supervisor and mentor for this project. In addition, philosophy students who meet GPA requirements have the opportunity to write an honors thesis, which is a longer, more in-depth project, again completed under the supervision and mentorship of a faculty member.

Student Organizations:

There is an undergraduate Philosophy Club organized and run by philosophy students. The club offers an opportunity to gather outside of the classroom to share philosophical interests. The nature and frequency of activities depends on the students involved.

Career Information:

Studying philosophy teaches you critical thinking and writing skills that are conducive to success in a wide variety of careers and occupations. A recent article in *The Huffington Post* detailed the impact of philosophy majors in the business world, and recent articles in *The Atlantic* and *Salon* have called philosophy "the most practical major" because it prepares graduates for diverse employment opportunities through the inculcation of transferrable skills.

A major in philosophy is also outstanding preparation for advanced study in graduate and professional programs, including business, medicine, and law.

- Philosophy majors score among the highest of all majors (and significantly higher than business management majors) on the Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT), which is typically required for admission to M.B.A. programs.

- Philosophy majors are among the very top performers on the Law School Admission Test (LSAT).

- Philosophy majors have the highest mean composite score of all majors on the Graduate Record Examination (GRE), which is typically required for admission to graduate programs.

According to PayScale, philosophy majors who enter the work force directly after graduation from college are most frequently employed as program coordinators in non-profit organizations, paralegals, senior software engineers/developers/programmers, information technology managers, general/operations managers, and retail store managers. The State of Illinois Occupational Employment Projections (Long-term) 2006-2016 lists all of these as growth fields.

A salary survey conducted by PayScale, and reported by the Wall Street Journal, found that, on average, philosophy majors *more than double* their salaries over their first ten years in the work force. Indeed, philosophy majors enjoy *the highest percent change* from starting median to ten-year median (103.5%) of any major (except for mathematics, with which it is tied). The ten-year median salary of philosophy majors is $81,200, $5,100 higher than that of accounting majors.

NIU Career Services provides assistance with career decision making, career preparation, internships, job searches, and graduate school applications. The Philosophy page of the **NIU Major WebLinks** provides a wealth of career-related information for philosophy majors.

For More Information

Department of Philosophy
Zulauf Hall 915
Northern Illinois
University DeKalb, IL
60115

(815) 753-0331
philosophy@niu.edu
http://www.niu.edu/phil/