

Why Study Philosophy?

Philosophy and the GRE

Philosophy majors:

- Have the *highest* average verbal reasoning score of students in *any major*.
- Have the *highest* average quantitative reasoning score of students in *any humanities major*.
- Have a *higher* average quantitative reasoning score than students in *any social science major*.
- Are the *only humanities* majors with an average quantitative reasoning score that is *above average*.
- Have the *highest* average analytic writing score of students in *any major*.

Students declaring an intention to go to graduate school in Philosophy:

- Have the *highest* average overall score of students in *any major* in the arts, humanities, social sciences, life sciences, education and business.
- Have the *highest* average verbal reasoning score of students in *any major*.
- Have a *higher* average quantitative reasoning score than students in *any social science major* except economics.
- Have the *highest* average analytic writing score of students in *any major*.

Philosophy and the LSAT

Philosophy majors:

- Have the *highest* average score of students in *any humanities major*.
- Have a *higher* average score than students in any *social science* or *natural science* major, except mathematics and economics.
- Have a *higher* average score than students in other popular pre-law majors like *political science*, *communications*, and *public administration*.

Philosophy and the GMAT

Philosophy majors:

- Score 15% *higher* than *any type of business major* (e.g., accounting, finance, management)
- Have a *higher* average score than students in any major, except mathematics.

Why Do Philosophy Students Do So Well on These Tests?

The reason usually given for their performance on these exams is that philosophy majors develop problem solving skills at a level of abstraction that cannot be achieved through the case-study or profession-specific approach favored in disciplines geared towards occupational training. *People with strong abstract reasoning skills do better in applied fields, on average, than people who lack the ability to abstract from particular problem-situations.*

Sources:

Guide to the Graduate Record Examination Program 1996-1997, Educational Testing Service.
2005-2006 Guide to the Use of Scores, Educational Testing Service www.ets.org/Media/Tests/GRE/pdf/994994.pdf
The Chronicle of Higher Education www.chronicle.com
LSAT Data, 1996-1997

Skills Acquired By Studying Philosophy

Critical Thinking Skills:

- The ability to think logically
- The ability to identify the key issues in a discussion
- The ability to assess the pros and cons of proposed solutions
- The ability to ask the right questions
- The ability to see beyond superficial categorizations (i.e., “to think outside the box”)
- The ability to draw accurate conclusions from confusing data
- The ability to clarify purposes, principles, and general objectives
- The ability to differentiate fact from value

Problem-Solving Skills:

- The ability to find creative solutions to hard problems
- The ability to define the parameters of a problem
- The ability to look at a problem from different angles and to identify alternative courses of action
- The ability to identify useful resource materials for solving a problem
- The ability to factor complex problems into solvable pieces

Argument Skills:

- The ability to use argumentation techniques to persuade others
- The ability to assess the implications of a proposal

Communication Skills:

- The ability to express and to explain difficult ideas clearly and straightforwardly
- The ability to express one’s point of view while respecting the views of others
- The ability to use a variety of tools and strategies to convey information

Information Management:

- The ability to sort, compile and rank data
- The ability to evaluate information and to use it to solve problems
- The ability to locate information in many electronic and paper media
- The ability to use creative insight to guide information searches
- The ability to abstract concepts in order to summarize information
- The ability to focus on the big picture, to see the forest and the trees
- The ability to discern what is valuable from what is irrelevant

Highly Recommended Philosophy Courses For Students in Any Major

PHI 101: Introduction to Philosophy	PHI 205: Prisons and Punishment
PHI 110: Critical Thinking & Argumentation	PHI 235: Aesthetics and Film
PHI 111: Symbolic Logic	PHI 240: Social and Political Philosophy
PHI 201: Ancient Social Philosophy	PHI 270: Race and Racism
PHI 202: Introduction to Modern Philosophy	PHI 271: Philosophy of Human Nature
PHI 203: Social Ethics	PHI 272: Utopias