

# PHILOSOPHY, BALAS

*for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Arts and Sciences: Major in Philosophy*

Philosophy is the oldest, broadest, and most fundamental form of inquiry. Some philosophical questions have to do with the understanding of ourselves and whatever else there may be. Others focus upon the nature of different forms of knowledge and experience, and upon ethical issues and problems of value. The study of philosophy is one of the most important elements in a good liberal education. It also improves one's ability to think clearly, and to construct, analyze, and criticize arguments of any kind. The major and minor are sponsored by the Department of Philosophy.

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A Major Plan of Study Form must be completed and submitted to the LAS Student Affairs Office before the end of the fifth semester (60-75 hours). Please see your adviser.

## Major With Distinction

To become a candidate for graduation with distinction in philosophy, a student must satisfy the major requirements and must satisfy the further requirements of either the Thesis option or the Coursework option. If a candidate has satisfied both sets of requirements, the student will graduate with whichever is the highest level of distinction earned.

**THESIS: Requires 35 hours of philosophy courses (including PHIL 492 and 4 other courses at the 300 level or above), a GPA of 3.5 in all philosophy courses, and a written thesis with a grade of A- or above.**

Students wishing to pursue this option must have at least a 3.5 GPA in all philosophy courses to begin thesis work, though students may petition the Director of Undergraduate Studies in the Department of Philosophy for an exemption. In order to earn distinction for thesis work, the student must graduate with at least a 3.5 GPA. The student should first approach a potential thesis adviser from one of the department's professors, associate professors, or assistant professors. This should be someone with whom the student already has a working relationship (typically through coursework). The student should have a preliminary idea of the sort of thesis research he or she would like to conduct. If the professor expresses a preliminary willingness to advise the thesis, the student should prepare a Plan for Thesis Work. The Plan should be 600-800 words. It should include the following information:

- A tentative project title
- The name of the proposed thesis adviser
- The primary area of philosophy (e.g., political philosophy, metaphysics, philosophy of mind, etc.) the project will concern and the particular discussions it will engage
- A lucid statement of the central claim(s) that the project will defend (bearing in mind that this may change during the course of the project)

- An overview of the kind of research that will be completed and, as far as they are known, the arguments and considerations that the student hopes to marshal in support of the central claim(s).

The student should submit the Plan for Thesis Work to both the Director of Undergraduate Studies and the proposed adviser. If both approve of the Plan for Thesis Work, the student should register for thesis work (PHIL 492) with the selected adviser and meet with that adviser to set up a research schedule. Thesis projects are usually in the 25-30 page range, and occasionally take two semesters to complete. When the thesis adviser decides that the thesis is ready for defense, the department chairperson will appoint a committee of two members of the department (including the thesis adviser). The committee will judge the project's quality, originality, and impact and assign a grade (which may be different from the grade the student's thesis adviser assigns for thesis coursework). If the thesis earns a grade of A- or above, distinction will be awarded as follows:

**Thesis Grade A- Distinction**

**Thesis Grade A High Distinction**

**Thesis Grade A+ Highest Distinction**

As a rough guideline, High Distinction is awarded when committee members feel that the work is of high enough quality that the student should be encouraged to pursue graduate study in philosophy. Highest Distinction is where the work is of such high quality that it would be a shame if the student did not pursue graduate study. Distinction is where the work is of high quality, though not so high as to clearly evidence potential for graduate study.

**COURSE WORK: 38 hours of philosophy courses (including eight courses at the 300 level or above) and a 3.5 GPA in all philosophy courses.**

The level of distinction will be determined by the Director of Undergraduate Studies on the basis of the student's Philosophy GPA in the following manner:

**GPA 3.5 - 3.69 Distinction**

**GPA 3.7 – 3.89 High Distinction**

**GPA 3.9 – 4.0 Highest Distinction**

## Graduation Requirements

Minimum hours required for graduation: 120 hours.

Minimum hours required major and supporting course work: normally equates to 44 hours including at least 32 hours of Philosophy courses. Twelve hours of 300- and 400-level courses in the major must be taken on this campus.

## University Requirements

The university and residency requirements can be found in the Student Code (<https://studentcode.illinois.edu/article3/part8/3-801/>) (§ 3-801) and in the Academic Catalog (<http://catalog.illinois.edu/general-information/degree-general-education-requirements/>).

## General Education Requirements

Follows the campus General Education (Gen Ed) requirements (<https://courses.illinois.edu/gened/DEFAULT/DEFAULT/>). Some Gen Ed requirements may be met by courses required and/or electives in the program.

Code	Title	Hours
Composition I		4-6
Advanced Composition		3
Humanities & the Arts (6 hours)		6
fulfilled by PHIL 203 and PHIL 206		
Natural Sciences & Technology (6 hours)		6
Social & Behavioral Sciences (6 hours)		6
Cultural Studies: Non-Western Cultures (1 course)		3
Cultural Studies: US Minority Cultures (1 course)		3
Cultural Studies: Western/Comparative Cultures (1 course)		3
Quantitative Reasoning (2 courses, at least one course must be Quantitative Reasoning I)		6-10
fulfilled by PHIL 202 and any other course approved as Quantitative Reasoning I or II		
Language Requirement (Completion of the fourth semester or equivalent of a language other than English, or completion of the third semester in two different languages other than English is required)		0-20

**Major Requirements**

Code	Title	Hours
PHIL 202	Symbolic Logic	3
PHIL 203	Ancient Philosophy	4
PHIL 206	Early Modern Philosophy	4
PHIL 421	Ethical Theories	3
PHIL 426	Metaphysics	3
or PHIL 430	Theory of Knowledge	
PHIL 499	Capstone Seminar	3
At least 12 additional hours of coursework in Philosophy, with 9 of those hours being above the 100-level (including at least two 300- or 400-level courses)		12
A student may select either of two types of programs of supporting course work and should work out a specific program of the type chosen with the help and approval of a departmental adviser.		12
Twelve hours minimum. Select from:		
Option I: Intensive study in another discipline. Courses normally beyond the 100 level in one other discipline. Most approved minors satisfy this requirement. A second major may also be used to satisfy this requirement		
or		
Option II: A special program of study built around a unifying theme or topic. Course work outside philosophy in one or more other discipline(s), normally beyond the 100 level.		
<b>Total Hours</b>		<b>44</b>

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**Sample Sequence**

This sample sequence is intended to be used only as a guide for degree completion. All students should work individually with their academic advisors to decide the actual course selection and sequence that works

Information listed in this catalog is current as of 03/2026

best for them based on their academic preparation and goals. Enrichment programming such as study abroad, minors, internships, and so on may impact the structure of this four-year plan. Course availability is not guaranteed during the semester indicated in the sample sequence.

Students must fulfill their Language Other Than English requirement by successfully completing a fourth level of a language other than English. See the corresponding section on the Degree and General Education Requirements page (<http://catalog.illinois.edu/general-information/degree-general-education-requirements/>).

**First Year**

First Semester	Hours
Free Elective course	1
PHIL 100-level or above course	3
General Education course	3
Composition I or General Education course	3
Language Other Than English (3rd level)	4
<b>Total Hours</b>	<b>14</b>

**Total Hours 14****First Year**

Second Semester	Hours
PHIL 202	3
General Education course	3
General Education course	3
General Education course or Composition I	3
Language Other Than English (4th level)	4
<b>Total Hours</b>	<b>16</b>

**Total Hours 16****Second Year**

First Semester	Hours
PHIL 203	4
General Education course	3
General Education course	3
General Education course	3
Free Elective course	2
<b>Total Hours</b>	<b>15</b>

**Total Hours 15****Second Year**

Second Semester	Hours
PHIL 206	4
PHIL 200-level or above course	3
General Education course	3
General Education course	3
Free Elective course	2
<b>Total Hours</b>	<b>15</b>

**Total Hours 15**

<b>Third Year</b>	
<b>First Semester</b>	<b>Hours</b>
PHIL 421	3
PHIL 300-400 level course	3
Philosophy supporting coursework	3
Free Elective course	3
Free Elective course	3
<b>15</b>	
<b>Total Hours 15</b>	

<b>Third Year</b>	
<b>Second Semester</b>	<b>Hours</b>
PHIL 426 or 430	3
PHIL 300-400 level course	3
Philosophy supporting coursework	3
Free Elective course	3
Free Elective course	3
<b>15</b>	
<b>Total Hours 15</b>	

<b>Fourth Year</b>	
<b>First Semester</b>	<b>Hours</b>
Philosophy supporting coursework	3
Philosophy supporting coursework	3
Free Elective course	3
Free Elective course	3
Free Elective course	3
<b>15</b>	
<b>Total Hours 15</b>	

<b>Fourth Year</b>	
<b>Second Semester</b>	<b>Hours</b>
PHIL 499	3
Free Elective course	3
<b>15</b>	
<b>Total Hours 15</b>	

**Total Hours: 120**

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The Philosophy Department aims to produce four main learning outcomes.

1. Philosophical Knowledge: Students will be familiar with major figures and movements in the history of western philosophy; familiar with central topics, theories, and debates in epistemology and metaphysics, in ethics and value theory, and in logic; and familiar with current developments in professional philosophy.

2. Philosophical Reading: Students will develop the ability to analyze persuasive and argumentative prose: identifying the main claims asserted, the reasons alleged to support those claims, and the logical relations between the claims and the reasons, including identifying any gaps in the arguments.
3. Philosophical Inquiry: Students will develop the ability to formulate abstract principles in epistemology and metaphysics, in ethics and value theory, in logic, and in related special topic areas in philosophy; they will develop the ability to identify consequences of the principles they formulate; and they will develop the ability to construct arguments for those principles and compare them to competing principles.
4. Philosophical Writing: Students will develop the ability to write clearly and with logical precision on a wide range of important issues, including (but not limited to): civic and social challenges at local, national, and global levels; social and cultural issues related to race, indigeneity, gender, class, sexuality, language, and disability; and the ways that complex, interdependent global systems—natural, environmental, social, cultural, economic, and political—affect and are affected by the local identities and ethical choices of individuals and institutions.

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**department website:** <http://www.philosophy.illinois.edu/>  
**department faculty:** Philosophy Faculty (<https://philosophy.illinois.edu/directory/faculty/>)  
**advising:** Philosophy advising (<https://philosophy.illinois.edu/academics/undergraduate-studies/advising/>)  
**email:** [philosophy@illinois.edu](mailto:philosophy@illinois.edu)

**overview of college admissions & requirements:** Liberal Arts & Sciences (<http://catalog.illinois.edu/schools/las/academic-units/>)  
**college website:** <https://las.illinois.edu/>