The Lantern: What is the main virtue of the philosophy major for students interested in law school?

Jake: In retrospect, quite a few of the skills developed for philosophy research and paper writing have been immensely helpful. Taking a text or a quote from a philosopher and analyzing it from different perspectives is pretty much equivalent to what law students do when looking at various regulations, laws, and judicial opinions. In addition, the critical thinking skills and opinion/argument structuring tools provided by being a philosophy major have made my legal writing much more clear, concise, and persuasive. As far as specific courses within the philosophy major: Symbolic Logic (as instructed by Dr. Robert Lane at the time) has been, and frankly continues to be, one of the most valuable courses I took in undergrad. The help it provided in structuring my thinking going into the LSAT (the law school entrance exam of sorts) was great for being able to quickly break down and answer the logic games and puzzles, helping me get a higher score and thus be more desirable to law schools.

Did philosophy do anything else for you? What is the main virtue of engaging in philosophy more generally?

In broad terms, philosophy helps me look both at the big picture of things that happen in my life; while at the same time helping me to be able to analyze and examine the smaller details of things. For example, there are things that happen in our lives (both good and bad) that are simply out of our control. Philosophy has helped me be able to accept those things, knowing I can't change or control them. As a result I have been able to look more closely at my reactions to those things and use said reactions to make bad situations better, and good situations great. Further, philosophy is wonderful for being able to keep an open mind when discussing complex or challenging subjects. There is always an angle on something, or some kind of missing variable or perspective when contemplating lots of the prevalent political or social issues. Engaging in philosophy more generally helps to keep one from closing off potential solutions that may have been overlooked due to previous bias or beliefs, and helps to be able to take in new information and perspectives to form more informed and expansive opinions and responses.
Did you come to UWG with the philosophy major in mind? When and why did you see it as a viable option?

Oddly enough, I did not come to UWG with philosophy as a consideration. I had hopped around a bit from biology to theatre to psychology to computer science, all before landing on philosophy. During my stint as a computer science major, I had taken the "intro to philosophy" course. The professor teaching intro at the time, Dr. John Garner, was enthusiastic about encouraging class discussion, questions, and engagement with the materials in a way that I hadn't experienced in college thus-far, or any schooling, really. That kind of passion for the material, and willingness to discuss and debate the substantive issues (even after class) really lit a fire in me for studying philosophy. The next thing I knew, I was diving head first into all that the philosophy course had to offer.

When did the law school route show up on your radar? What, besides the obvious prestige of the profession, drew you to that route?

I had honestly not given much consideration to what I would "do" with philosophy at first, I just knew that it was something I had an interest in. This naturally prompted lots of questions from friends and family about how I would make a philosophy degree into a career. The philosophy department faculty were actually the ones that let me know that law school might be an option, and were quite helpful in giving me tips and guidance to figure things out. Unfortunately, at the time this was going on, my family had gotten into a year-long custody dispute over care of my grandmother who has Alzheimer's. The custody dispute, and resulting outcome, gave me an up-close and personal look at some of the more gritty and intricate aspects of law. With the encouragement of the philosophy department, I decided that if I was going to spend my time analyzing things and making persuasive arguments, I would do so for the benefit of those who could not, like my Grandmother. (Don't worry by the way, Grandma Witty is well taken care of in a specialty care facility and she is happy and as healthy as she can be.)

Were there any particular philosophies you studied at UWG that appear in retrospect like they were particularly helpful to your career route, to your life generally, or in any other way?

I had always considered myself to be a "practical" person, and I think that the Pragmatism course with Dr. Lane was great for helping me flesh out the importance of the difference between knowledge "of" and knowledge "applied." Dr. Walter Riker's Philosophy of Law course had some great thought experiments we did in class that came up again in law school, which was pretty cool. In this same area, the Ethics course also had quite a few reappearances in law school in the professional and legal ethics classes. As previously mentioned, the Symbolic Logic course was indispensable for preparing for law school. Additionally, my senior seminar class covering bioethics was really great for the medical law classes I've taken. My Existentialism and Feminist Philosophy courses with Dr. Janet Donohoe and Dr. Rosemary Kellison respectively have been great for more in-life situations, such as empathizing with others who are struggling with the systemic societal issues that we find ourselves in. Quite frankly, there isn't a course or kind of philosophy that isn't helpful in some aspect. Tangentially related, the friends I made in the philosophy department are still treasured and close to this day.

(continued on page 6)
PHIL 2020-01: Introduction to Philosophy
Dr. Walter Riker
June 26-July 23: 100% Online
In this course we will consider several central questions in philosophy. There are good prudential reasons for obeying the law—is there also a moral duty to obey it? Do we ever have a moral duty to break the law? Can we be free or responsible for our actions in a deterministic universe? Does “knowledge” require certainty, that is, that we cannot be wrong? Can we prove that God exists? If God is all-good, all-knowing, and all-powerful, then why does evil exist? Philosophers aren’t the only people who ask these questions, so as we consider answers to these questions, we will think about what is means to take a “philosophical” approach to a problem. This course is no-cost. Fulfills Core Area C-2. Required for all philosophy majors and minors. Counts toward the Religion minor.

PHIL 2020-01: Critical Thinking
Dr. Walter Riker
June 1-June 25: 100% Online
Should we regard non-human animals as “persons”? What does religion tell us about our relationship to animals? Do we have good reason to deny that some animals have natural rights? Is it moral to keep animals in zoos? In this class you will learn to recognize and evaluate different kinds of arguments. You will then apply these skills to assessment of philosophical arguments that deal with our relationships with other animals. This course is no-cost. Fulfills Core Area B-1. Required for all major Tracks and the Philosophy minor. Counts toward the Religion minor.

PHIL 3030-01: Introduction to Ethics
Dr. Robert Lane
May 8-May 26: 100% Online
Everyone has beliefs about morality, and to some extent we all agree about what actions are right and wrong; for example, we all agree that murder is wrong and that helping those less fortunate than us is right. But there are many moral questions about which people disagree: Is abortion immoral? What about the death penalty? Is it wrong to spend money on expensive cars and homes when people in other parts of the world are dying from easily preventable diseases? Is it right to cause pain to chickens, cows, and other animals on factory farms in order to create affordable food products? This course will enable you critically to evaluate your own beliefs about concrete ethical issues like these. We will also consider more theoretical questions, such as: Where does morality come from—God, society, or somewhere else? What makes an ethical argument good or bad? What general rules or principles should we live by? No prior experience in philosophy is necessary, so if you want to start thinking critically about morality, this course is a great place to begin. Fulfills Core Area C-2. Required for all philosophy majors and philosophy minors. Counts toward the Religion minor.

PHIL 3030-02: Introduction to Ethics
Dr. Robert Lane
June 1-June 25: 100% Online
Same description as above.

PHIL 3030-03: Introduction to Ethics
Dr. Rosemary Kellison
June 26-July 23: 100% Online
This course serves as an introduction to ethics: philosophical thinking about the question of how humans ought to live. In this course we will engage with ethics on different levels. We will think about practical moral problems, such as abortion, capital punishment, animal rights, and poverty. To enable critical examination of our own and others’ positions on such moral problems, we will explore various theoretical approaches to ethics, learning the different ways in which individuals and communities justify their moral arguments. Finally, we will consider broader, more theoretical questions regarding the nature and origin of morality itself. This course is 100% online and low-cost. It fulfills the Core Area C-2 requirement and counts toward the Philosophy and Religion minors as well as the Philosophy major.

PHIL 2130-01: Introduction to World Religions
Dr. Rosemary Kellison
May 8-May 26: 100% Online
This course revolves around two central questions: how has the world shaped religion(s), and how have religions shaped the world? As we move through an introductory survey of some of the world’s major religious traditions, including indigenous religious traditions, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaic, Christianity, Islam, and selected new religious movements, we will pay special attention to the ways in which these traditions have been shaped by historical, political, and geographical changes in the world—and will also consider how these traditions and their communities have influenced these changes. Over the course of the semester, we will seek to better understand both the significance and relevance of religion in world history and some of the important philosophical questions addressed within religious communities as well as by those who study them. This course is 100% online and no-cost. It fulfills the Core Area E-4 requirement and counts toward the Religion minor and Philosophy major Religion track.

PHIL 2010-01: Introduction to Philosophy
Dr. John V. Garner
M/W 9:30-10:45
One of the best ways to be initiated into philosophy is to undertake a guided study of key thinkers in the Western and other traditions. Along the way, our readings aim to expose students to major branches of philosophy, including: ontology (the inquiry into reality, as opposed to mere appearances); epistemology (the study of knowledge, the limits of knowing, and how we know); and practical philosophy (the inquiry into value, beauty, and justice). Skills in reading, logic and critical thinking, argument assessment, and cordial but deep discussion are also emphasized. This course is low-cost. Fulfills Core Area C-2. Required for all major Tracks and all minors.

PHIL 2010-03: Introduction to Philosophy
Dr. John V. Garner
M/W 11-12:15
Same description as above.

PHIL 2010-04: Introduction to Philosophy
Dr. Alex Feldman
T/R 9:30-10:45
This course provides an introduction to philosophy. We will cover a broad range of topics from many different subfields of philosophy, including ethics, metaphysics, epistemology, and political philosophy. Students can expect to read classic texts from the history of philosophy, as well as important contemporary contributions. Among others, we will explore the following questions: What is the meaning of life (and death)? What is truly real? What can we know about the world and about ourselves? What is the significance of evil? Are we genuinely free? What does an authentic life look like? How should we understand important social identities, such as race as gender? Fulfills Core Area C-2. Required for all major Tracks and all minors.

PHIL 2010-05: Introduction to Philosophy
Dr. Alex Feldman
T/R 11-12:15
Same description as above.

PHIL 2010-02: Introduction to Philosophy
Dr. Alex Feldman
TBA
A historically framed introduction to philosophy, highlighting major developments that have defined Western philosophical inquiry. Fulfills Core Area C-2. Required for all major Tracks and all minors.

PHIL 2010-06: Introduction to Philosophy
TBA
Same description as above.

PHIL 2010-09: Introduction to Philosophy
TBA
Same description as above.

PHIL 2020-01: Critical Thinking
Dr. Alex Feldman
M/W 9:30-10:45
This course aims to help you develop intellectual autonomy, or the ability to think on your own and decide for yourself, in light of appropriate evidence, what views you should endorse. The core of the course involves learning to identify, produce, and assess arguments. We will begin by discussing the parts of an effective argument and standard techniques for posing objections to arguments. Next, we will look at common mistakes in argumentation (fallacies), as well as some of the subtler ways in which cognitive biases and social conditions can serve to thwart effective inquiry. After that, we will examine the specific kinds of argumentation you might find in different branches of inquiry (scientific, moral, aesthetic, etc.). Throughout, we will apply what we are learning to contemporary social, political, and moral debates. You will write a scaffolded (multi-step) paper on a pressing contemporary issue of your choice. Fulfills Core Area B-1. Required for all major Tracks and the Philosophy minor. Counts toward the Religion minor.
PHIL 2020-02: Critical Thinking  
Same description as above.

PHIL 2020-05: Critical Thinking  
Should we regard non-human animals as “persons”? What does religion tell us about our relationship to animals? Do we have good reason to deny that some animals have natural rights? Is it moral to keep animals in zoos? In this class you will learn to recognize and evaluate different kinds of arguments. You will then apply these skills to assessment of philosophical arguments that deal with our relationships with other animals. This course is no-cost. Fulfills Core Area B-1. Required for all major Tracks and the Philosophy minor. Counts toward the Religion minor:

PHIL 2020-06: Critical Thinking  
Same description as above.

PHIL 2020-03: Critical Thinking  
An investigation of logical fallacies and patterns of valid reasoning in primarily oral by also written discourse. Required for philosophy or religion majors and minors. Fulfills Core Area B-1. Required for all major Tracks and the Philosophy minor. Counts toward the Religion minor:

PHIL 2020-04: Critical Thinking  
Same description as above.

PHIL 2020-01: Introduction to Ethics  
Everyone has beliefs about morality, and to some extent we all agree about what actions are right and wrong; for example, we all agree that murder is wrong and that helping those less fortunate than us is right. But there are many moral questions about which people disagree: Is abortion immoral? What about the death penalty? Is it wrong to spend money on expensive cars and homes when people in other parts of the world are dying from easily preventable diseases? Is it right to cause pain to chickens, cows, and other animals on factory farms in order to create affordable food products? This course will enable you critically to evaluate your own beliefs about concrete ethical issues like these. We will also consider more theoretical questions, such as: Where does morality come from—God, society, or somewhere else? What makes an ethical argument good or bad? What general rules or principles should we live by? No prior experience in philosophy is necessary, so if you want to start thinking critically about morality, this course is a great place to begin. Fulfills Core Area C2. Required for all philosophy majors and minors. Counts toward the Religion minor.

PHIL 2030-02: Introduction to Ethics  
Same description as above.

PHIL 2030-03: Introduction to Ethics  
An introduction to the central concepts in ethics and an exploration of such contemporary ethical issues as abortion, genetic engineering, euthanasia, and capital punishment. Required for the major and minor in philosophy. Fulfills Core Area C2. Required for all philosophy majors and philosophy minors. Counts toward the religion minor.

PHIL 2030-01: Introduction to Ethics  
Same description as above.

PHIL 2130-01: Introduction to World Religions  
This course revolves around two central questions: how has the world shaped religion(s), and how have religions shaped the world? As we move through an introductory survey of some of the world’s major religious traditions, including indigenous religious traditions, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and selected new religious movements, we will pay special attention to the ways in which these traditions have been shaped by historical, political, and geographical changes in the world—and will also consider how these traditions and their communities have influenced these changes. Over the course of the semester, we will seek to better understand both the significance and relevance of religion in world history and some of the important philosophical questions addressed within religious communities as well as by those who study them. This course is no-cost. Fulfills Core Area E-4 and counts toward the Religion minor and Philosophy major Religion track.

XIDS 2300-02: Philosophy of Race & Racism  
In the United States, it seems obvious in many contexts to classify people by race. What are we really talking about, though, when we talk about race? The dominant view of scientists and scholars today is that “there is no biological justification for distinguishing people into races” (Eduard Macherey). How, then, did race come to seem such a self-evident way of understanding ourselves? If races are not real in a biological sense, do they perhaps have reality in a sociohistorical or political sense? Building on recent work in philosophy, history, and the social sciences, we will examine questions about the social construction of race in the first part of the course. In the second part, we will draw from classic works by black philosophers and other thinkers of color to consider competing theories of racism, as well as ethical, political, and existential questions about what antiracist practice and solidarity should involve. Fulfills Core Area E-4.

PHIL 3105-01: Medieval to Early Modern Philosophy  
Early modern philosophers often referred to themselves as “modern” because they believed they were breaking with a tradition. In this class, we will engage with that tradition in order to better understand what makes philosophers modern, on the one hand, versus pre-modern, on the other. Throughout, we will try to pose our questions in the same way the philosophers of these eras asked them. These include: Does philosophy conflict with religion? Can God’s existence be proven? Can we discover laws of nature? Are there laws of human practical life? Are social norms merely customary? Can we be truly certain about anything? Can there be a science of the passions? Counts toward all majors and minors. Fulfills a History requirement, an Area requirement, and a Religion Track requirement.

PHIL 3180-01: Moral Theories  
This course in moral philosophy covers central issues in meta-ethics (e.g., whether moral judgments are all relative to some standpoint, or true or false in any interesting sense) and normative ethics (e.g., what makes objects of moral evaluation right or wrong or good or bad?). We will examine influential works in contemporary moral theory. We will examine some metaethical issues and some developments in our thinking about Utilitarianism, Kantianism, and Virtue Theory, among other views. This course is no-cost. Counts toward all majors and minors. Fulfills an Area requirement and a Law, Justice, and Society Track requirement.

PHIL 3205-01: Theories of Religion  
What is religion? How is it practiced and why? To address these questions, we examine some of the most important developments in the Western academic study of religion from the nineteenth century to the present. Among the topics we will study are: how religion should be defined and whether it is “special” compared to other aspects of human life; whether and how religion scholars can study people’s beliefs and experiences; how religion is used to create community identities—and draw boundaries around those communities; the relationship between religion and violence; and how our concept of religion relates to our concept of secular democracy. Some of the diverse theorists we will study include Catherine Bell, Mary Douglas, Emile Durkheim, Sigmund Freud, William James, Saba Mahmood, and Karl Marx. This course is no-cost. Counts toward all majors and minors. Fulfills an Area requirement and a Religion Track requirement.
Registration is Nearly Here!

Remember, if you are a philosophy major, you are required to meet with your advisor before you will be able to register for classes next spring. You may have already heard from your advisor, but if you haven’t, you may want to email to see if you can sign up for a time for advising. The registration schedule is listed below, so be sure to meet with your advisor before your time to register.

**Summer/Fall 2020 Registration Dates for CURRENTLY* enrolled students:**
- Current Seniors & all Graduate level students – March 30
- Current Juniors Social Security# ending in 50-99 – March 31
- Current Juniors Social Security# ending in 00-49 – April 1
- Current Sophomores Social Security# ending 50-99 – April 2
- Current Sophomores Social Security# ending 00-49 – April 3
- Current Freshmen Social Security# ending 00-49 – April 6
- Current Freshmen Social Security# ending 50-99 – April 7

*Currently enrolled student are those taking courses in the current term –Spring 2020. Open registration begins April 13, 2020. (Students that are active but not currently enrolled, are currently serving a one term suspension, are readmitted, or are admitted as a transient—must wait until Open Registration to register.)

**PHILOSOPHER’S WISDOM**

“[Any] human being, even though practically devoid of natural faculties, can penetrate to the kingdom of truth reserved for genius, if only he longs for truth and perpetually concentrates all his attention upon its attainment.”

–Simone Weil
Have you continued to think about philosophical questions? Have you discovered any new and interesting philosophical ideas since starting law school?

I took an interest my senior year in questions of narrative identity and being a "person." Oddly enough, these ideas are reflected in legal thinking, just without the express titles. For example, laws governing the creation of various kinds of contracts, or with "intent" requirements, focus primarily on the decision making capacity of the individual. Without the mental capacity and understanding of the self as an "actor" or an "agent," these requirements or prerequisites aren't met. This implies various levels of "person- hood," which would mean that even though we are all people, some of us are in some way more "person-y" than others.

What, if anything, are some characteristic differences between legal studies and undergraduate philosophical studies? For example, how do the styles of writing or thinking differ, etc.?

Legal writing and thinking are typically pretty comparable to philosophical writing and thinking. They both involve taking something some person or persons said (a statute, or philosophical writing), contrasting it with outside interpretation (a judicial ruling/subsequent law, or another philosopher's critique), and then applying it to whatever situation you are presented with. I think that the primary difference I have come across is that there are certain things in legal writing or thinking that one just has to accept, regardless of your personal feelings on the matter. For example, a case that got decided contrary to how you think it should have been. Yes, the parties can appeal and maybe get a different decision, but traditionally whatever the highest court the issue is discussed in, is the one that has the final say. Like it or not, you have to live with and abide by that ruling. Whereas in philosophy, things are open for interpretation and discussion, and you don't have to subscribe to any particular thinking.

Do you have advice for current philosophy majors who might be contemplating law school? Is there anything you wish you had known?

If you're contemplating law school, I'd advise reaching out to an attorney that practices in the area of law you have an interest in. Call their office or send them an email asking for an informal or informational interview, explaining that you're thinking about getting into law. They're usually more than willing to help out, and let you pick their brain. Unfortunately, law school is expensive and not for everyone, so it's best to get a feel for what you want to do and if it doesn't seem like the right fit, don't dive in head first. Perhaps work at a law firm as a secretary or an intern to help you decide. Typically, those who excel in law school are those with a genuine passion for it, and that passion is what is going to carry you through the "awake 'til 6 am" study sessions, four hour finals, and massive workload designed to make you think like an attorney. Don't get me wrong, I'm not trying to discourage anyone. If you have a passion for law, it is some of the most rewarding and interesting work you'll do; but it is hard work, and you need to have that drive. That being said, there isn't a minute of it that I would trade away. If any of the philosophy majors have any questions they'd like to ask me directly about law or law school, they're more than welcome to reach out to me.