



The Lantern

Graduate School: Is it for You?

Deciding whether to go to graduate school is not easy. No one can make the decision for you, but there are a few things to think through that might help with the decision. What does it really mean to go to graduate school? Why do people do it? How do people decide where to go once they've determined it is something they want to do? How do you apply for admittance into a graduate program?

Graduate school involves the intensive study of a particular aspect of a field. So, if you really enjoy a subject and would like to delve more deeply into it, then graduate school may be a good option. Most students who pursue graduate degrees in philosophy choose to obtain a doctorate as it creates many more professional opportunities than a Master's degree.

If your goal is to teach philosophy at an American college or university, you must have a graduate degree in philosophy. And if you want a permanent position as a philosophy professor, you must have a Ph.D. However, having a Ph.D. does not guarantee you a permanent job as a professor. The job market in philosophy is extremely competitive, with many more job applicants than job openings. Many job seekers teach part-time for a number of years before they land their first tenure-track position. However, being a professor of philosophy can be extremely rewarding, and many professional philosophers find their careers fulfilling enough to be worth such sacrifices.

Although many people pursue graduate degrees so that they can become professors, graduate school is not just preparation for a life in academe. It can lead to a variety of careers including publishing, law, and politics. (For more on what careers one can pursue with a degree in philosophy, ask your philosophy professor for a copy of the handout about those careers). Ultimately, graduate school is about the love of learning and scholarship. While it is possible to get a Master's degree in philosophy, one thing to keep

in mind is that most graduate programs that offer only the Master's degree require students to pay full tuition and fees, while most programs that also offer the Ph.D. waive tuition costs and often pay students to work as research or teaching assistant. This is just a generalization, though, so be sure to check the program materials carefully to see what their policy is regarding tuition waivers and graduate student stipends.

Once you've decided to go to graduate school in philosophy, how do you figure out where to apply? One factor is the overall quality of the program. Some programs are extremely competitive and will admit only students with high GPAs and GRE scores, extremely positive letters of recommendation, and high-quality writing samples (see below). But competitiveness of a program does not necessarily mean that it is the right program for you. You must consider which specific area(s) of philosophy interest you. Not all graduate programs have faculty members teaching and doing research in all areas of philosophy. If you want to take courses and do research in, say, ancient philosophy, you shouldn't bother applying to programs that don't cover that area. Decisions about where to apply are made even trickier by the fact that some programs identify themselves as belonging to the "analytic" tradition of philosophy, while others self-identify as representing the "Continental" tradition.

Today, "analytic philosophy" does not refer to a set of philosophical doctrines or to the work of specific historical figures. Rather, in the words

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of Brian Leiter, it refers to “a style of doing philosophy... Analytic philosophers, crudely speaking, aim for argumentative clarity and precision; draw freely on the tools of logic; and often identify, professionally and intellectually, more closely with the sciences and mathematics, than with the humanities.” Many of the respected figures in this tradition, including Russell, Moore, Strawson, Quine, and Davidson, were either American or British. But other “giants” of analytic philosophy, including Frege, Carnap, and Wittgenstein, hailed from continental Europe. Analytic philosophy is sometimes called “Anglo-American” philosophy because it has been the predominant form of philosophy practiced in Britain and America over the last century. Indeed, the majority of graduate programs in the United States self-identify as analytic. Central areas of concern within the analytic tradition include philosophy of language, epistemology, metaphysics, philosophy of mind, ethics, and many others. For a ranking of analytic programs, see *The Philosophical Gourmet*, compiled by Brian Leiter (a philosophy and law professor at the University of Texas) based on a survey of professional philosophers (available at philosophicalgourmet.com). Dr. Lane is able to advise students on what analytic programs might be best for them.

The Continental tradition, on the other hand, focuses primarily on the thought of French and German philosophers and involves a more textually-based approach to philosophy. It is engaged with questions of phenomenology, existentialism, and ontology (the study of Being). The important philosophers that are inevitably studied in a Continental program include such figures as Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre, Nietzsche, Camus, Foucault, and Derrida. Fewer programs in the United States promote the Continental tradition, but there is growth in this area and most analytic programs recognize the need for having a Continentally-trained faculty member on their staff. For information about Continental programs in the United States, see the Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy’s web site at www.spep.org and click on Ranking Graduate Programs in Continental Philosophy, or see Dr. Donohoe.

Once you have identified some programs that interest you, the rest is a matter of paper work. About a year and a half before you would like to begin graduate school you need to begin the process of collecting information and application materials. The internet is helpful in this process as most schools have their information and applications available on line. You need to take the Graduate Record Exam (GRE; see www.gre.org) early enough that the scores can be sent to schools in time to meet the usual December/January application deadlines. It is important to do well on the GRE, as this will help determine the quality of the programs that will consider accepting you (and you can improve your score by studying). Letters of recommendation are also important. As you begin thinking about graduate school, you should plan your courses here at West Georgia so that you will have developed a rapport with at least three faculty members (at least two of whom should be within the Philosophy Program) who you will be able to ask to write letters of recommendation for you. You will also need to submit a writing sample along with your application. This should be the best philosophy paper you’ve written, perhaps expanded and polished beyond the original work you did in class. The point is to demonstrate to the programs to which you are applying that you are capable of doing solid graduate-level work in philosophy. Finally, plan on applying to multiple programs, to increase your chances of being admitted to a program that will be a good fit for you. You may want to visit the campuses of the two or three schools in which you are the most interested in order to meet the faculty, talk to other graduate students, and see whether you are comfortable on the campus.

While the prospect of graduate school may seem far away, it is never too early to begin thinking about it. It can seem like a daunting process, but if you love philosophy, and love learning, graduate school can be a very rewarding and enriching experience.

Philosopher’s Wisdom

“Philosophy can be said to consist of three activities: to see the common sense answer, to get yourself so deeply into the problem that the common sense answer is unbearable, and to get from that situation back to the common sense answer.”

Ludwig Wittgenstein,
The Blue and Brown Books,
1958

Spring 2004 Courses in Philosophy

Philosophy 2100-01 Introduction to Philosophy

Dr. Joel Auble

MWF 9:00-9:50 a.m. (HUM 227)

Required for Philosophy Majors. Required for the Minor in Religion. May count for credit in Core Area C.

Using James L. Christian's text, this course is an excellent introduction to the subject matter and methods of philosophy. A synoptic approach to doing philosophy is taken, which means that information from all relevant areas is to some extent considered when attempting to make headway on any philosophical problem. Freedom/determinism, ethics, philosophy of religion, metaphysics, and epistemology are among the areas covered.

Text: James L. Christian, *Philosophy—An Introduction to the Art of Wondering*, 7th edition, Harcourt Brace Publishers.

Philosophy 2100-02 Introduction to Philosophy

Dr. Joel Auble

MWF 11:00-11:50 a.m. (HUM 227)

Required for Philosophy Majors. Required for the Minor in Religion. May count for credit in Core Area C.

Description same as above.

Philosophy 2100-03 Introduction to Philosophy

Dr. Joel Auble

MW 7:00-8:15 p.m. (HUM 227)

Required for Philosophy Majors. Required for the Minor in Religion. May count for credit in Core Area C.

Description same as above.

XIDS 2100-01 Postmodernism

Dr. Janet Donohoe

MWF 10:00-10:50 a.m. (HUM 312)

In this course we will examine postmodernism in its cultural forms, looking at how its chaos arose from the order of modernism, and how it is a visible and influential element in our own society. Discussions will focus on how alterations of the human landscape have affected our understanding of ourselves with respect to others and to our surroundings. Other themes include how popular culture has changed from plot-based fiction and action-driven films to such fractured media as the fiction of Toni Morrison or the bizarre scene of "Bladerunner." Through discussions of short readings by artists and critics alike, we will work towards our own understanding of postmodernism and how we fit into our postmodern world. We will focus on postmodern architecture, philosophy, literature, film, and social structure.

Philosophy 2110-03 Critical Thinking

Dr. Dennis Dugan

TR 11:00 a.m.-12:15 p.m. (HUM 312)

Required for Philosophy Majors. Required for the Minor in Religion. May count for credit in Core Area C.

This course addresses the basics of how to think critically and how to evaluate arguments. By looking at the fundamentals of logic, and addressing contemporary cultural debates, we will focus on how to argue well and how to identify the fallacies of weak arguments.

Philosophy 2110-04 Critical Thinking

Dr. Dennis Dugan

TR 2:00-3:15 p.m. (HUM 227)

Required for Philosophy Majors. Required for the Minor in Religion. May count for credit in Core Area C.

Description same as above.

Philosophy 2110-05 Critical Thinking

Dr. Dennis Dugan

TR 3:30-4:45 p.m. (HUM 227)

Required for Philosophy Majors. Required for the Minor in Religion. May count for credit in Core Area C.

Description same as above.

Philosophy 2120-01 Introduction to Ethics (Learning Community)

Dr. Robert Lane

MWF 10:00-10:50 a.m. (HUM 227)

Required for Philosophy Majors. Required for the minor in Religion. May count for credit in Core Area C.

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 human cloning? homosexuality? is it wrong to spend money on expensive cars and homes when people in other parts of the world are dying from malnutri-

tion? This course will enable you critically to evaluate your own beliefs about concrete ethical issues like these. We'll be dealing with more theoretical questions, such as: where does morality come from? (God? society? or somewhere else?); what makes an ethical argument good or bad?; and what general rules or principles ought we to 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.

Philosophy 2120-02H Introduction to Ethics

Dr. Robert Lane

MWF 12:00-12:50 p.m. (Honors House)

Required for Philosophy Majors. Required for the minor in Religion. May count for credit in Core Area C.

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 euthanasia immoral? what about causing non-human animals pain? is it wrong to spend money on expensive cars and homes when people in other parts of the world are dying from malnutrition? This course will enable you critically to evaluate your own beliefs about concrete ethical issues like these. We'll also be dealing with more theoretical questions, such as: where does morality come from?; what makes an ethical argument good or bad?; and what general rules or principles ought we to live by? We will be paying special attention to the issue of morality in our post-Darwinian society: if humanity evolved from other animal species, what does this imply about human dignity and morality?

Philosophy 2130-01 Introduction to Religion

Dr. Jennifer Manlowe

TR 11:00 a.m.-12:15 p.m. (HUM 227)

This course will investigate what thinking about "religion" entails today. The focus will be on how religion is thought, both in the broad sense of how it is estimated and why, and in the narrow sense of what the structure or method of such thinking is and where the place of religion in thinking is taken to be. The course will be an exercise in careful, critical, yet sympathetic reading. This course will prepare you well for taking PHIL 3240: World Religions.

Philosophy 4100-01 Phenomenology

Dr. Janet Donohoe

MWF 1:00-1:50 p.m. (HUM 312)

Phenomenology is a philosophical movement of the twentieth century that focuses on descriptive investigations of the ways in which the world appears to consciousness. In this course we will examine the development of the phenomenological method through primary texts of major phenomenologists including Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Levinas, Derrida, and Ricoeur. We will address such issues as how the phenomenological method attempts to overcome the subject/object dichotomy, and how it lays the groundwork for such contemporary movements as hermeneutics and deconstruction.

Philosophy 4110-01 Philosophical Issues in Criminal Justice

Dr. Joel Auble

MWF 2:00-2:50 p.m. (HUM 226)

This course will examine the relationship between legal practice and the ethical justifications for that practice, as well as a number of applied ethical issues that relate to the law: just how far should lawyer/client confidentiality go? Should convicted sex offenders be required to notify the members of the community in which they live of their record? Should the insanity defense be abolished?

Philosophy 4140-01W Existentialism

Dr. Janet Donohoe

MWF 11:00-11:50 a.m. (Pafford 306)

The "W" designation after the section number signifies that the course is a Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) course.

This course examines both atheist and religious existentialism through the texts of major existential thinkers such as Dostoevsky, Nietzsche, Sartre, Camus, and DeBeauvoir. Students are encouraged to think through the big questions existentialists raise about the meaning of human existence and to analyze theories in terms of the ramifications for the way we live our lives.

Philosophy 4150-01 Analytic Philosophy

Dr. Robert Lane

MW 2:00-3:15 p.m. (HUM 312)

This course is an historical overview of analytic philosophy, the most widespread and influential movement among Anglo-American philosophers during the 20th century. We will consider how the most important members of this tradition, including Gottlob Frege, Bertrand Russell, G. E. Moore, Ludwig Wittgenstein, and W. V. O. Quine, attempted to answer questions within metaphysics, epistemology (the philosophical theory of knowledge), ethics, and the philosophy of language.

Focus on a Student: Jennifer McPherson

So often, people ask me, "Why philosophy?" I find it incredible that I, at the very least, have to explain and more often than not, defend my choice to study philosophy. I feel I must have heard it all: "it's a dead art," "what good is that going to get you?" or "what do you think you are going to do with that?" The list goes on and on. My initial, and unspoken response is "What else is there?" But I know that many don't feel as strongly about it as I do, and so I just glibly reply, "why not?" Yet, when I feel it is appropriate, I will try to explain my passion for such a subject, to convert the "non-believers," so to speak.

These questions are usually raised by those who think that philosophy is nothing more than a bunch of people who might sit around in a coffee house just trying to think those "really deep thoughts." Well, I don't deny that I do enjoy a cup of coffee every now and again. But with or without the coffee, the textbook definition of philosophy poses it to be something

like the love or study of knowledge, the pursuit of wisdom. From my perspective, it is the study of the human being in a world. It doesn't really matter if you take philosophy up analytically, continentally, religiously or secularly. It won't make a difference if you are speaking of theories and essences or of the practical here-and-now. Philosophies may be

vastly different, but the bottom line for me is the same connector: the human being. It is the human being that can experience, discuss and share whatever dogma, belief, knowledge or uncertainty they have. And it is the world around us which provides a setting or a context for these interactions. What human being lives alone, in the vacuum of space, untouched, unmoved and unknowing? What human being doesn't experience life?

Those philosophic pursuits which focus on universals such as religion, theories of pure essence and knowledge, even science and mathematics, can only be accessed as a human being. The human connection is still there and applies universally. The experience of living, and I believe the experience of having a body and being in a world amongst others, pertains to everyone. It applies to everything and gives me cause to think, "what else is there beside philosophy?"

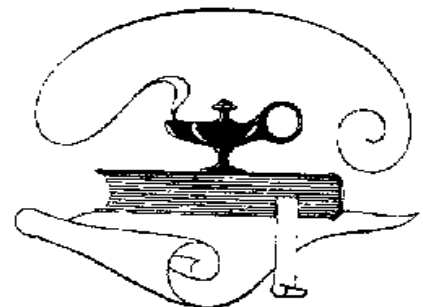
I do not mean to suggest that philosophy is the only thing to study. Science, humanities, the arts, and practical vocations are all worthwhile. They are even vital to the world in which I find myself living. But to suggest that these things are so different from philosophy, to suggest that philosophy no longer applies to our modern world is to suggest that the experience of the human is no longer relevant. I am human. And I certainly find myself, and even you, relevant. What else is there?

--Jennifer McPherson
Graduating class of 2002

"To suggest that philosophy no longer applies to our modern world is to suggest that the experience of the human is no longer relevant."

The Philosophical Society at West Georgia

The Philosophical Society of West Georgia is a group of students and faculty who gather every other week for philosophical discussion and social interaction. Meetings involve open discussions of philosophical topics. Students can also present work they have completed, or work in progress, to the group to get feedback from their peers and from faculty. It is a good opportunity to get to know other students interested in philosophy and to interact with faculty in a relaxed and informal atmosphere. All students, regardless of philosophical background, are invited to attend. This semester the society meets on Wednesdays at a time to be announced in Humanities 211. During the spring semester the philosophical society will be hosting a meeting of the minds colloquium where students will be representing some of the major philosophers in a debate on a philosophical topic. Keep an eye on the philosophy bulletin board, outside Humanities 154, for meeting dates, times, and place. If you have any questions or want more information about the philosophical society, contact either Dr. Robert Lane, Humanities 150, 770-838-3039, email rlane@westga.edu, or Dr. Jennifer Manlowe, Humanities 147, 770-838-3038, email jmanlowe@westga.edu



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**Philosophy 4220-01 Hermeneutics
TR 2:00-3:15 p.m. (HUM 312)**

Dr. Jennifer Manlowe

This course will investigate important ideas and issues raised by the German writers of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century hermeneutic tradition. The focus will be on how the hermeneutical tradition is itself fraught with debate: is it the domain of philosophy or theology?

**Philosophy 4230-01 Philosophy of Religion
TR 3:30-4:45 p.m. (HUM 312)**

Dr. Jennifer Manlowe

This course offers a challenging survey of a few of the most important philosophical debates about religion from ancient times to the beginning of the twenty-first century. Among the main topics discussed will be: the problem of defining “religion” as a philosophical and a cultural phenomenon; arguments for the existence of God(s); the problem of reconciling scientific and religious worldviews; the rationality of religious belief; and the question of whether a religious outlook remains a genuine option for educated inhabitants of our multicultural and “postmodern” age. Historical and sociological observations will regularly enter our discussion, but this is in the end a philosophy course.

**Philosophy 4385-01 Philosophy of Mind
TR 9:30-10:45 a.m. (HUM 226) Prerequisite: Phil 2110 Critical Thinking**

Dr. Dennis Dugan

Philosophy of Mind is at the forefront of contemporary analytic metaphysics. After looking at some alternatives—i.e., Cartesian dualism and behaviorism—we will focus in this course on the reigning paradigm in philosophy of mind today—naturalism—and examine its strong points as well as some of the problems it faces. We will consider such questions as the following: What is the relation between minds and the physical bodies that serve as their basis? Is the mind, as many seem to believe, best thought of as a kind of software program run on “the hardware” of the brain? How can mental states have physical effects, as seems to be the case when I deliberately raise my arm? Are minds entirely knowable objectively, using the methods of the natural sciences? Or is there an inescapably-subjective side to our mental life? If the mind is nothing but the physical brain, how is it that the purely physical states of the brain can be about something beyond themselves? How can physical states have a content? How do I know about my own mental states? About the mental states of others?

Note: Philosophy 2100 is a prerequisite for courses Philosophy 3100 through 4385 except Philosophy 4120.

Philosophical Birthdays

October 14, 1906 Hannah Arendt,
German political theorist who
fled to America in 1941.

October 15, 1926 Michel Foucault,
20th C. French Post-structuralist.

October 20, 1859 John Dewey,
19th C. American philosopher &
educator.

November 8, 1848 Gottlob Frege,
19th C. German mathematician &
logician.

November 10, 1483 Martin Luther,
15th C. Protestant theologian and
reformer.

Department of Philosophy

Department Office:

Humanities 154

Telephone: 770-836-6848

Department Office Hours: M-F, 8 am-1 pm

Fax: 770-830-2322

Website: www.westga.edu/~phil/

Philosophy Faculty Offices

(all offices are located in Humanities)

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Please direct any questions or comments about this newsletter to Dr. Janet Donohoe, 770-838-3012.

