

UMSL Philosophy

Why UMSL?

You don't have to go to the East or West Coast to take classes from professors educated at some of the world's outstanding universities. Philosophers at University of Missouri–St. Louis have earned degrees from the University of Chicago, Columbia University, Cornell, Harvard, Princeton, University of Pennsylvania, as well as Berkeley, UCLA, Rutgers, the University of Michigan and the University of London. Most also held teaching positions at these universities and the same high-caliber instruction they provided to students there, they offer to students at University of Missouri–St. Louis. The faculty's research reputation is international. They have published more than 20 books and 300 articles. They serve on editorial boards of journals, executive committees of professional organizations, reviewing panels for federal agencies and boards of overseeing the ethics of medical research. The department offers BA and MA degrees. The MA is rated by an independent agency, on the basis of faculty quality, as among the top nine MA programs in the nation. The agency points out that a highly rated MA program is likely to be superior to many PhD programs. Such a rating guarantees that an undergraduate program will be of the highest quality. Whatever path you choose, the Department of Philosophy offers you the opportunity to get an Ivy League education at a Missouri university. We invite you to come to class.

Career Outlook

A philosophy BA provides excellent preparation for many different careers. While a few philosophy students go on to a PhD and a career in teaching, most put their degrees to other uses. An undergraduate philosophy major is an ideal choice for students interested in law school. It also provides excellent preparation for medical school, business school and other professional degree programs. Recent statistics compiled by the American Philosophical Association show that undergraduate philosophy majors scored better than any other group on the verbal section of the GRE; their combined scores were among the highest overall.

For students unsure of their career goals, majoring in philosophy helps them develop verbal and analytical skills that will position them well in today's rapidly changing workplace. Completing a philosophy major also equips students with a basic curiosity that can enhance all aspects of their lives.

Undergraduate Studies

Philosophy continues to keep alive the tradition, begun by Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, of critically examining one's most cherished assumptions. The study of philosophy also encourages logical precision, an open-minded attitude toward new and unusual ideas and a commitment to responsible criticism.

Philosophy deals with questions that are common to several areas of inquiry such as art, ethics, the social sciences and the natural sciences. The undergraduate major at University of Missouri–St. Louis allows students to sample courses in these areas and also acquaints them with the history of philosophy and with philosophy's core topics: logic, metaphysics, value theory and the theory of knowledge. Because many students have found it useful to combine a philosophy major with a major in another field, the department has a special program for double majors.

Faculty

University of Missouri–St. Louis has a large and distinguished Department of Philosophy. Its members hold advanced degrees from the nation’s most prestigious graduate programs and are actively engaged in research. They have published numerous articles and books addressing traditional questions of philosophy as well as contemporary controversies. Among the fields represented particularly strongly by the department are moral philosophy, philosophy of mind, philosophy of law, philosophy of medicine and philosophy of art. For their research in some of these areas, members have been awarded a number of national research grants, including fellowships from the American Council of Learned Societies and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

In keeping with their emphasis on diversity, the department is represented by scholars trained in widely different approaches to philosophy, including the analytic tradition, continental philosophy and existentialism, Marxist dialectic, Islamic philosophy and Asian modes of thought.

The Department of Philosophy

The University of Missouri–St. Louis MA program is ranked nationally among the top nine MA only programs. The Philosophical Gourmet says of the top ten programs, that they boast strong faculties and would be excellent choices for MA study. Of the several dozen schools that offer a terminal MA, these schools have the best (largely) “analytic” faculties with strengths in the “core” areas of moral/ political philosophy and/or history of philosophy. They have faculties that compare favorably with existing PhD programs.

The department is highly regarded both nationally and internationally. A prestigious National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Institute, bringing together some of the most respected philosophers in the nation, was held on the campus in 1998. An NEH Summer Seminar was held on the campus in 1999.

The faculty publish in leading academic journals and with major university presses. The department’s special strengths include philosophy of science (including social science and medicine), philosophy of mind, ethical theory, decision analysis, applied ethics and aesthetics.

Degrees and Areas of Concentration

The department offers two options leading to the BA degree in philosophy: one for students intending to enter graduate school in philosophy, seeking a general liberal arts education as their ultimate academic objective, or as preparation for professional degrees such as law; and another for students taking a double major in philosophy and another discipline. Each option offers a balance among training in the techniques of logical analysis, study of philosophical classics and examination of selected problems in philosophy. The department also offers a minor in philosophy for students wishing to pursue a particular interest in philosophy in an organized way.

Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy

The Department of Philosophy offers two options leading to the BA degree in philosophy. The first is for students intending to enter graduate school in philosophy; the second is for students seeking a general liberal arts education as their ultimate academic objective or preparing for professional degrees such as law. Each option offers a balance among training in the techniques of logical analysis, study of philosophical classics and examination of selected problems in philosophy. The department also offers a minor in philosophy for students wishing to pursue a particular interest in philosophy in an organized way.

Students must complete one of the following programs. At least 30, but not more than 45, hours are required for a major. A minimum of 18 hours, including all courses for the major at or above the 3000-level, must be taken in residence in the University of Missouri–St. Louis Department of Philosophy.

For Further Information

Please contact Professor Andrew Black, Director of Undergraduate Studies, for further information. He can be reached by phone at 314-516-6199 or by e-mail at ablack@umsl.edu.

2+3 BA and MA in Philosophy

The Combined BA/MA Program in Philosophy provides an opportunity for students of recognized academic ability and educational maturity to fulfill integrated requirements of undergraduate and master's degree programs in three years from the beginning of the junior year. When all the requirements of the BA/MA program have been completed, students will be awarded both the BA and MA degrees. With a carefully designed program, a student can earn both degrees within as few as ten semesters.

The MA in Philosophy at University of Missouri–St. Louis

The Department of Philosophy of the University of Missouri St. Louis offers a two-year program leading to a Master of Arts in Philosophy degree. The program offers students the opportunity to choose a course of study from a range of options. The options are designed to meet the needs of those preparing to pursue a PhD, those seeking a terminal MA and those lacking substantial undergraduate preparation in philosophy.

The Cooperative Arrangement with Saint Louis University

The strengths of the University of Missouri–St. Louis Department of Philosophy are nicely complemented by those of the Saint Louis University Department of Philosophy, in the history of philosophy as well as in philosophy of religion. To enhance students' opportunities for instruction and expertise, the two departments have worked out a cooperative arrangement that permits graduate philosophy students on each campus to take up to four courses at the partner institution. In any given semester, University of Missouri–St. Louis graduate students must take at least half their courses at their home institution. Students admitted to the MA program on a probationary basis must take all their courses at University of Missouri–St. Louis during their first semester.

Benefits of an MA in Philosophy

Preparing for an MA in philosophy allows students to acquire a range of skills and a breadth of knowledge that are of use and value in a number of professional fields.

- Students with strong preparation in philosophy do extremely well on LSATs, GMATs and GREs.
- The critical and analytical skills developed in philosophical studies are a benefit in making business decisions and a significant number of leading executives have a background in philosophy.
- The growing field of applied ethics has created an opportunity for philosophers to work with professionals in the areas of medicine, engineering and environmental management.
- Teachers in secondary schools find that an understanding of philosophical issues in areas such as history, literature, and the sciences allows them to teach their subjects with more insight and to develop new pedagogical approaches.
- Community colleges generally recruit their philosophy faculty from those who have earned MA degrees.

All people by nature desire to know. Thus, perhaps the most compelling reason to study philosophy is to engage your curiosity and enrich your life. The leading guide to graduate study in

philosophy suggests that some students who plan to pursue a PhD and seek an academic career in a college or university may also benefit from first graduating from a strong MA program.

The University of Missouri–St. Louis program should be of special interest to students of the following sorts: those who did not major in philosophy as undergraduates; those who graduated from institutions with departments outside the mainstream of contemporary philosophy; those who studied philosophy at smaller institutions with limited offerings or with weak academic reputations. (See The Philosophical Gourmet Report at philosophicalgourmet.com.)

Program Requirements

To earn an MA in philosophy, UMSL students must complete at least 36 hours (12 courses) of graduate-level work; six of these hours may be devoted to research and writing. Certain distribution requirements will also be in effect. When appropriate, up to two graduate-level courses offered by other University of Missouri–St. Louis departments can be counted towards the required 36 hours. Students will be encouraged to design a program of study that meets their interests and needs. Those hoping eventually to earn a PhD in philosophy will be counseled to follow a more stringent program than those who seek a terminal MA to explore particular intellectual interests.

Application Procedures

Applicants to the MA Program in Philosophy at University of Missouri–St. Louis are required to present all of the following:

- Official transcripts from all colleges and universities attended
- Graduate Record Examination Scores
- Completed application form obtained from the Graduate School
- A writing sample
- Three letters of recommendation on forms provided in the Graduate School application.

Application forms can be requested by writing to Graduate Admissions, 255 Millennium Student Center, University of Missouri–St. Louis, 1 University Boulevard, St. Louis, MO, 63121. They can also be downloaded from the University's web page: umsl.edu/divisions/graduate/prospective/applying.htm. Completed applications are due by July 1st for admission in the fall and by Dec. 1st for admission in the winter.

Financial Aid

First-year graduate students, once admitted, are eligible for financial aid in the form of federal loans and work/study. At present, there is little support available for second-year graduate students in the department. We hope to be able to fund a few assistantships in the coming years. Graduate courses cost approximately \$322.10 per credit hour for Missouri residents and \$831.60 per credit hour for non-residents.

For Further Information

Please contact Professor Berit Brogaard, Director of Graduate Studies, for further information. She can be reached by phone at 314-516-6195 or by e-mail at brogaardb@gmail.com.