

Graduate Philosophy at UKZN – Howard College

What is Philosophy?

Students of philosophy explore ideas about our world, and ourselves, examining them systematically and critically, in order to work out what we should believe. Philosophy means the love of wisdom. It is a critical examination of reality characterised by rational inquiry that aims at the truth for the sake of attaining wisdom.

Traditionally, philosophy has been driven by such fundamental questions as:

- How should we live?
- What is real?
- What can we know?
- How do minds and bodies interact?

Why study Philosophy?

Philosophy gives you the opportunity to carefully question, think about, write about and discuss fundamental aspects of our existence.

Not only is the subject matter of philosophy interesting in itself, but philosophy gives you essential skills whatever your degree or career plans are: Philosophers work in industry, finance, government, education, science, and as lawyers, doctors, teachers, diplomats, bankers and managers.

Philosophy has for centuries been concerned with critically formulating and attempting to solve complex problems. In doing so, philosophers have developed analytic and verbal skills applicable to almost every problem:

Analytic Skills: Philosophy teaches you how to analyse information, issues, cases, and situations; to break these down into component parts; to understand how the parts fit together to make the whole; and to sort out what is important from what is not.

Communication Skills: Philosophy teaches you how to make your point clearly, and concisely; and how to reason and argue logically and convincingly.

So, philosophy can make you into a more independent, analytical thinker who is good at solving problems and making decisions!

Graduate study in Philosophy

Honours study in philosophy at UKZN involves taking a selection of senior courses, almost always in seminar format, in which relatively advanced philosophical topics (in the sense of presupposing a major in philosophy) are covered in detail. Topics range across contemporary and historical themes, and a variety of philosophical traditions. Masters study can involve a number of combinations of further courses and work on a dissertation. Doctorate is available by thesis only. Students enrolling for a dissertation or thesis need to establish a working relationship with an appropriate supervisor.

Philosophy Graduate modules

The content of senior courses can be influenced by the interests of participating students. Versions of some of these modules are also available at Masters level. Not all of these courses are offered every year, and not every module is offered at each centre (Howard College and Pietermaritzburg). Interested students should contact the centre or centres at which they are considering studying for more information.

PHIL701 - Political Philosophy

Aim: Exploration of selected themes in political philosophy.

Content: Likely topics include, but are not restricted to, social contract theory, liberalism and multiculturalism, game theoretical

approaches to politics, utopianism and utopias, justice and development, democracy and deliberation.

PHIL702 - Contemporary Continental Philosophy

Aim: Exploration of selected themes in contemporary continental philosophy. **Content:** Likely topics include, but are not limited to, themes in the work of Hegel, Heidegger, Derrida, Foucault, Levinas, Bataille and others.

PHIL703 - Meta-Ethics

Aim: To introduce learners to recent theories and arguments in meta-ethics so that they are able to engage with these debates at graduate level. We examine competing theories about the nature of moral judgements and the role of reason in action and in relation to moral judgements.

PHIL704 - Metaphysics

Aim: Advanced critical investigation of a central field of analytic metaphysics to enable learners to engage with contemporary debates at graduate level. **Content:** The precise content of the module will vary from year to year. Likely topics include persons and personal identity or causation. The course will focus on a recent major text in the area.

PHIL705 - Advanced Study of a Philosophical Problem

Aim: Advanced critical investigation of a single issue that is recognised to be of major importance in philosophy. **Content:** The selected issue will vary from year to year. The course will usually focus on a recent major text.

PHIL706 - Directed Study in Philosophy

Aim: Directed study in philosophical topics of interest to philosophy postgraduate students. The content of the module will reflect current postgraduate research interests and will be taught by various members of the Philosophy staff in tandem, using a seminar format.

PHIL707 - Topics in Distributed Cognition

Aim: Exploration of key problems in cognitive science.

Content: Topics include cognitive processes; central and distributed models; cognitive architectures; strengths and weaknesses of serial and parallel distributed models; distributed cognition in locomotion; distributed cognition in the solution of computational problems, navigation; language and distributed cognition; evolution.

PHIL708 - Directed Research in Cognitive Science

Aim: Supervised research in theoretical or empirical cognitive science. **Content:** The seminar component of this course will be negotiated by students and staff. Students will pursue a partly independent course of research culminating in a theoretical paper or research report, under the direction of experienced researchers.

PHIL7RP - Honours Research Project: Philosophy

Aim: To undertake and complete a competent research project. **Content:** Research portfolio over one semester.



For more information about what philosophy is, about philosophy courses at UKZN, and the value of philosophy in the workplace, please visit:

<http://ukznphilosophy.wordpress.com/>
(2D Barcode URL on the right.)

