

Philosophy

at the University of Redlands

Department of Philosophy

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What is Philosophy?

Philosophy tackles fundamental questions about human life – questions about the meaning of life, the nature of reality, the possibility of knowledge, and the best way to live. These are questions that cannot be answered solely with empirical studies; they require deep reflection, reasoning, and conversation.

Philosophy classes engage with big philosophical ideas that have profoundly affected human life and culture. At Redlands, students consider these both in the Western tradition and through nonwestern lenses (especially in classes on Chinese philosophy). They consider ideas such as human rights, the social contract, skepticism, the relation between mind and body, the significance of family and human relations (a central concern of Confucianism), the natural way of life (Daoism), the path to enlightenment (Buddhism), and many more. At the same time we grapple with contemporary issues that matter to ethics and public policy: Do we have free will? How should we punish criminals? Do animals have rights? What are the moral constraints on medical practice and the implications of medical technologies?

The study of philosophy can enrich our lives, enhancing our capacities for self-reflection, creative and analytical thinking, and responsible citizenship. The skills and habits of mind developed in studying philosophy are also useful in many professional and career pursuits. For example, they are particularly useful to those who intend to study law or medicine: philosophy graduates consistently rank among the top scores of any discipline on the LSAT and the MCAT. But they also flourish in a variety of careers in both the public and private sectors: you will find philosophy graduates working in every field from high tech to business, education, and the world of non-profit organizations.

Distinctive Features of Our Program

- Redlands offers a wide range of Philosophy courses emphasizing the Western philosophical tradition (e.g., Epistemology, Philosophy of Mind, Greek Philosophy), Chinese Philosophy (e.g., Daoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism), and a rich selection of Applied Philosophy (e.g., Contemporary Moral Issues; Environmental Ethics; Ethics and Law; Bioethics; Philosophy, Science and Medicine; and Humans and Other Animals).
- Students at Redlands have many opportunities to engage in off-campus study, both for a semester and for our special May Term. May Term courses include a number of travel opportunities led by Philosophy faculty to such places as Swaziland, Cambodia, China or even off-campus here in Southern California. Most of these courses integrate study of another tradition, discussion of philosophical issues and community service.
- Majoring in Philosophy offers opportunities for students to craft a program according to their own interests by selecting from numerous courses that fulfill the major requirements. Faculty advisors help students define their own path.
- Philosophy majors typically enjoy small classes with lots of conversation, personal attention and opportunities to interact with Philosophy faculty both in and out of classes.
- The department offers both a B.A in Philosophy and a Minor in Philosophy

Why Philosophy?

Study Philosophy to:

- Hone your analytical and logical skills
- Learn how to convincingly argue for a position
- Develop critical listening skills
- Open your mind to diverse human thought and experience
- Cultivate empathy
- Strengthen your problem-solving skills
- Become a thoughtful and rigorous writer
- Learn how to facilitate conflict resolution
- Learn how to communicate complex ideas
- Reflect on life and our place in the world

Recent Graduate School Acceptances

Recent graduates have been accepted into many well regarded institutions including:

Law School

University of California, Berkeley
University of San Diego
University of Wisconsin
Seattle University
Lewis & Clark University

Graduate School

State University of New York, Buffalo
Claremont Graduate University
University of California, Irvine
Western University of Health Sciences

Recent Student Research Projects

In recent years, students have written Honors theses in Philosophy on a variety of topics, such as:

“Contemporary Divine Command Theories”

“There’s Something Wrong With Mary – A Critique of Frank Jackson’s Argument Against Physicalism”

“Applying Rehabilitation to Mass Incarceration in America: A Just and Effective Approach”

“Perceiving Musical Expression: John Cage and 4’33””

“Universal Jurisdiction and the Enforcement of Human Rights”

Recent First Jobs and Companies

Philosophy majors work in every sector of the economy, from major corporations, professions such as law and teaching, government service and a variety of self-created opportunities. Some of our recent grads have gone on to work in companies such as Amazon, Informatica, Northrop Grumman, REI. A number work in universities, such as UC Irvine, and many work in the legal profession.

Philosophy Faculty

Kathie Jenni, Professor, Ph.D., University of California, Irvine: teaches courses in human-animal ethics, environmental philosophy, moral psychology, philosophy of law, and a May Term community service course working with animals in Southern California.

Xinyan Jiang, Professor, Ph.D., University of Cincinnati: teaches courses in Chinese Philosophy, early modern Western philosophy, and Philosophy of Sex and Gender. She occasionally takes students on a May Term travel course to China.

James Krueger, Professor, Ph.D., University of Notre Dame: teaches courses in philosophy of medicine, philosophy of biology, medical ethics, and a May Term travel course to Eswatini.

Lawrence Finsen, Professor Emeritus, Ph.D., State University of New York at Buffalo: teaches courses in contemporary epistemology, philosophy of mind, logic, early modern Western philosophy, as well as a May Term travel course to Cambodia.

Kevin O’Neill, Professor Emeritus, Ph.D., Yale University: teaches courses in Greek philosophy, Continental philosophy, and 19th century philosophy.