The primary concern of philosophy is to explore ideas that are central to the ways we live and that we commonly use without much reflection, ideas such as truth and justice, the notion of consciousness, and good and evil. In the course of our daily lives, we take the ideas of time, language, knowledge, and our own identity for granted. Philosophy seeks to push our understanding of these ideas deeper. It is the systematic study of ideas fundamental to all the other disciplines taught at the university—the sciences, social sciences, humanities, and the arts.

The skills philosophy helps to develop—critical thinking, sound reasoning, enlightened use of one’s imagination, and the capacity to analyze complex issues—are invaluable in the study of any subject or the pursuit of any vocation. Philosophy is unavoidable: every thoughtful individual is gripped by philosophical questions and is guided by assumptions that the study of philosophy brings explicitly to light and puts into larger perspective.

I. Core Skills

*Philosophy majors learn to...*

1. Develop, defend, and criticize philosophical arguments and theories.
2. Utilize fundamental logical concepts and argumentative tools to analyze arguments.
   - Decide whether an argument is valid or sound;
   - Identify the logical structure of an argument;
   - Draw distinctions and give counterexamples.
3. Interpret historical and contemporary philosophical texts.
4. Develop philosophical creativity, including:
   - Extend theories beyond their original scope;
   - Apply ideas to specific problems;
   - Develop insightful examples, illustrations and thought experiments.

II. Knowledge

*Philosophy majors can expect to...*

1. Gain detailed understanding of at least two central topics in the theory of knowledge, metaphysics, philosophy mind, and the philosophy of language.
2. Gain detailed understanding of a central topic in moral and political philosophy.
3. Gain significant understanding of at least one major movement or figure in the history of philosophy.
4. Investigate philosophy’s connections with, and application to, some other field of study, such as the natural and social sciences, women’s studies, linguistics, cognitive science, law, art, mathematics, and history.
III. Social Justice

*The philosophy major contributes to the University’s goal of learning in the service of justice:*

1. By enabling students to reflect on the nature and requirements of justice.
2. By enabling students to recognize and appreciate a variety of theories about how to be just.
3. By fostering the capacity to critically examine ethical problems and conflicts.

**Upon Graduating:**

Our majors have pursued careers in medicine, law, computer science, business management, public relations, sales and many other arenas. Both the New York Times and the Wall Street Journal have published stories about how employers in a variety of fields are looking for candidates who can solve problems, think and write clearly, organize ideas, question assumptions, sort through a mass of information and identify what’s essential, as well as find—in the midst of heated debate—some common ground. These are all talents that the study of philosophy cultivates and develops.