

PHILOSOPHY

General Major

I. Depth and Breadth of Knowledge

By the end of this program, successful students....

- A. Will be able to recall what a worldview is and recognize that we all possess one.
- B. Should recognize that philosophy is most broadly an activity of “thinking hard” or an activity of rational inquiry into all reality. It is the critical reflection that can develop out of one’s worldview, but isn’t necessarily limited by it. It is a human enterprise, and not merely a western, educated, or masculine activity.
- C. Should have enough exposure to critical thinking and logic to be able to carefully and justly critique other worldviews and philosophies, and, just as importantly, recognize the need to critically reflect upon one’s own worldview and philosophy to make one’s own worldview and philosophy more rational, consistent, etc.
- D. Should, whether they be Christian or not, be able to reflect upon the major philosophical themes in the (Reformed) Christian worldview, in particular, creation, fall and redemption, and give a rational account of these, and, in keeping with the biblical injunction to “give *reasons* for the hope within,” be able to rationally defend the Christian worldview.
 - More specifically, students should know enough of the philosophy of religion to illustrate both how negative apologetics and positive apologetics are important to Christian philosophy. Students should be able to construct and accurately answer major philosophical objections to Christianity, such as the Problem of Evil and the Problem of Other Religions (negative apologetics), and students should be able to positively construct plausible explanations for major Christian philosophical and theological themes, such as the cultural mandate, the nature of God, our knowledge of God, free will, the logic of God incarnate, the final cause of creation and so on (positive apologetics).
- E. Should differentiate between various Christian approaches to philosophy, in particular students should be conversant with the two approaches to Reformed philosophy: Reformed Epistemology (analytic) and Reformational Philosophy (continental). Familiarity with major Reformed philosophers, such as Alvin Plantinga, Nicholas Wolterstorff and Herman Dooyeweerd, is expected.
- F. Are expected to be able to explain the origins of western philosophy, showing particular awareness of the thought of Plato and Aristotle, and how these were developed by the first Christian philosophers, namely, Augustine and Aquinas. Students should also be to explain how Christian philosophy develops out of the Middle Ages, was critiqued by the Enlightenment, and subsequently diverged into analytic and continental philosophies.
- G. Should recognize some ways that philosophy has developed outside of the western context. Some exposure to Hindu, Buddhist and Confucian philosophies, for example, is to be expected.
- H. Should be able to identify the major branches of philosophy as a first order discipline, that is, they should be able to identify and explain what metaphysics, epistemology, logic and ethics are.
 - More specific to logic, students should be able to identify topics and issues, construct arguments and recognize how arguments work within varying traditions. They should be aware of the major differences between deduction and induction, recall different kinds of definitions, construct propositions, recall the Square of Opposition, build categorical syllogisms from ordinary texts (including the Bible) and test these for fallacies against Venn diagrams. Students should be able to identify other types of syllogisms, be able to test these for fallacies, explain Mill’s Five Cannons, and classify a few dozen informal fallacies.
 - More specific to metaphysics, students should recognize the major themes, such as the question of existence, the question of identity reductionism, substances and properties, and mind-body dualism.

- More specific to epistemology, students should recognize the major themes, such as reason and rationality, skepticism, the nature of faith, theories of truth, foundationalism, postmodernism, and coherentism.
 - More specific to ethics, the capstone course, students should be able to identify major moral branches such as Ethical Relativism and Deontology, and also their various children, such as Divine Command Theory, Utilitarianism, Conventionalism, Natural Law and Virtue Ethics. Students should have some awareness of the nature of virtues and vices, rights, duties and happiness. Additionally, some familiarity with contemporary moral issues, such as intellectual property ethics, gender ethics, censorship, cloning, abortion, euthanasia, animal ethics, capital punishment, torture, war, and drugs is to be expected.
- I. By the end of this program, students should be able to explain the nature of philosophy as a second order discipline. Students should recognize the importance of philosophy to every academic program—hence the need for “philosophy of...” courses.
 - J. Should know the difference between a primary and secondary source, and know how to gather evidence of both sorts.
 - K. Should be able to construct a philosophical essay.

II. Knowledge of Methodologies

By the end of this program, successful students...

- A. Should have the tools and confidence to able to critique worldviews, especially the dominate worldviews in our culture such as metaphysical naturalism, metaphysical anti-realism (including postmodernism), and, of course, their own particular Christian worldview. Students should be able to recognize the difference between objective and subjective truths, and articulate the distinction between impossibility, possibility, probability and certainty.
- B. Should be able to identify topics and issues, and construct and evaluate arguments. Particular emphasis should be on testing non-Christian arguments to see how they agree and also disagree with basic Christian beliefs.
- C. Should be comfortable thinking about whether a given thing is pre-fallen, fallen or redeemed, and recognize the importance between these.
- D. Will be able to develop constructive Christian philosophical arguments for their positions.

III. Application of Knowledge

By the end of this program, successful students...

- A. Should be able to review, present, interpret, and, to some measure recognize as valuable, different evidence sets, especially those presented by the major philosophical thinkers such as Plato, Aristotle, the Buddha, Confucius, Augustine, Aquinas, Descartes, Kant, Kierkegaard, Plantinga, and some major metaphysical naturalist thinkers, such as Dennett.
 - More specifically, students should be able to identify problematic assertions in these thinkers, and either reject or refine these assertions. For instance, Plato’s theory of the Forms and Aristotle’s theory of virtue should be carefully analyzed and students should try to see how these either fit or don’t fit within their own Christian worldview. Students should not be afraid of challenging paradigms, principles, and assumptions, especially non-Christian ones, which dominate and influence our culture.
- B. Should be able to articulate arguments in defence of their own worldview, hopefully a robust Christian one, and be able to intellectually defend it. Students, moreover, should recognize the need to fully integrate new insights into practice to make themselves more developed human beings, which both glorifies God and results in greater happiness for the individual.

- C. Should be able to read for context and meaning, and not simply dwell on the words spoken. An appreciation of the difference between metaphorical and literal ways of speaking, and a recognition that in philosophy the literal is favored is to be expected. Should be able to research both ancient and modern philosophical writings. This means, some awareness of how to use the library and online journals is to be expected.

IV. Communication Skills

By the end of this program, successful students...

- A. Should be able to write a philosophical essay and engage in philosophical debate, wherein victory isn't the goal, but truth. Thus, justice in all things is central to both philosophical writing and speech.
- B. Should have some confidence in presenting complex philosophical ideas, and be accustomed to leading groups of their peers from time to time.
- C. Should demonstrate good listening skills and an ability to accurately and justly summarize an opposing view.
- D. Should be able to construct analogies and creative examples to illustrate major philosophical points.
- E. Should be able to point to some sources behind their own ideas, and identify themselves as students in a tradition, either loosely or narrowly.

V. Awareness of Limits of Knowledge

By the end of this program, successful students...

- A. Should recognize both their ability to know, due to being created in the image of the Rational God, and yet appreciate that their ability to know is also limited not only by nature limitations imposed by God, but also by the fall and sin.
- B. Should be able to judge what truths are known with certainty, what are known with probability and possibility, and what are impossible.
- C. Should recognize that the desire for knowledge is good in and of itself, and should have a healthy desire and boldness to know, all while being humble before God and His infinite nature, full of genuine mysteries.

VI. Maturity and Professional Capacity

By the end of this program, successful students...

- A. Should be able to demonstrate good work habits, such as careful class scheduling, adequate presentation and essay preparation, and industrious study habits for tests and exams. Students are expected to be fairly self-reliant and should have some ability as autodidacts.
- B. Should be able to demonstrate some competency at working with others.
- C. Should feel confident and comfortable asking questions and voicing opposition, though in all things with love, respect and courtesy.
- D. Should recognize they are still limited creatures, and demonstrate an awareness of the need to continue to educate themselves, in some fashion or another, throughout their lives.
- E. Should be able to see how philosophy transfers over not only to life in general but also to a particular job. They should have a certain confidence and competency to fit themselves and their training into relevant job areas, such as the law profession, politics, the pastorate, social work, journalism and so on.
- F. Should see how their training fits into the mission of the Christian church and God's kingdom work, and should demonstrate some sense of how Christian philosophy can serve the world at large.

Minor

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