

# Philosophy

## at Centre College

**A primary goal of the philosophy program is to teach students to think, write, and speak clearly and precisely. These skills are invaluable in everyday life as well as in any occupation that demands leadership and administrative ability. Another complementary goal of the philosophy program is to teach students to cultivate a critical attitude toward their own beliefs and values. Being able to put our own beliefs and values into question is essential to deepening our knowledge of the world and to getting along with others. To further these goals, courses in philosophy typically involve a great deal of class discussion and numerous writing assignments that focus on the careful analysis of texts and the presentation and evaluation of arguments.**

### The Study of Philosophy

Because the academic study of philosophy focuses on the development of the capacity to think clearly and critically, a philosophy degree is excellent preparation for a wide variety of careers. For instance, many philosophy students have gone on to law school and to careers as attorneys, and often have the highest graduate acceptance rates for other professions including medical school. Our program also provides a solid foundation for graduate work in philosophy. Finally, because philosophy deals with so many questions that overlap with other disciplines, a major or minor in philosophy works very well when coupled with a major or minor in another program.

The Western philosophical tradition begins with the work of figures such as Socrates and Plato in Athens in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.E. In ancient Greek, the word 'philosophy' literally means "love of wisdom," and the ancient Greeks practiced this love as a critical, disciplined inquiry into basic questions of human conduct and knowledge such as: How should we live? What is happiness? How does knowledge differ from mere opinion? Is the soul distinct from the body? What is justice? Is the world really as it appears to the senses? What is beauty?

Philosophers continue to deal with such questions today because they remain important and are raised but not answered by specialized disciplines in the sciences and humanities. Moreover, engaging such questions responsibly requires an investigation of how they were answered in the past, and of how the questions themselves have changed over time. Therefore, in addition to reading the work of contemporary philosophers, every philosophy minor and major studies texts from a number of different historical periods, including ancient Greece and medieval and early modern Europe. Students thus bear witness to the ways in which traditional questions are often reformulated to reflect concerns specific to a particular age. For instance, instead of talking about "souls," today's philosophers typically talk about "mental events," such as the experience of seeing a red tomato or of feeling a pain, and ask how such events relate to the body, especially the brain. And given the prominent role of science in determining how we see the world today, some philosophers ask about the scientific approach to reality and how it relates to other approaches, such as those of art and religion.

Other questions raised by contemporary philosophers include: What is language? What is the relationship between language and thought? What is truth? Is all reality physical? What is the relationship between virtual reality and physical reality? Can computers think? Is free will compatible with the scientific worldview? Is it possible to be morally good and yet live an unfulfilled life? Is it permissible to kill? Can we justify claims about what is morally right or wrong without appeal to divine authority? And so on...



**Gregory Chery**  
Centre Class of 2011  
Philosophy Major

**"If you love to talk, debate, think, and read, then philosophy is the major for you. It's not about being right or wrong but understanding your argument or someone else's in a new light."**

## Internships

Centre philosophy majors have taken advantage of opportunities to intern with places such as Capital Link and Ephraim McDowell Regional Medical Center, where students can serve as healthcare/medical ethics interns. Such experiences allow students to develop their analytical and problem-solving skills further and to learn to apply ethical principles in challenging real-life situations.

## The Philosophy Faculty

EVA M. CADAVID (B.A., B.S., Florida International University; Ph.D. candidate, University of Rochester), Assistant Professor of Philosophy. Teaches ancient Greek philosophy and 20th-century analytic philosophy. Research interests include ancient Greek philosophy, metaphysics, epistemology, and conceptions of happiness.

BRIAN COONEY (B.A., Saint Louis University; M.A., Ph.D., McGill University), Stodghill Professor of Philosophy. Teaches philosophy of mind, ethics, and history of philosophy. His book, *A Hylomorphic Theory of Mind*, was published in 1991, and he was the editor of *The Place of Mind*, published in 1999. His most recent book is *Posthumanity*, published in 2004. He is the author of several addresses and articles in the history of philosophy and philosophy of mind.

W. DAVID HALL (B.A., California State University-Sacramento; M.Div., Ph.D., University of Chicago), Associate Professor of Religion and Philosophy. Dr. Hall's primary research interest is 19th- and 20th-century European thought. He is co-editor of and contributor to a recent volume of essays, *Paul Ricoeur and Contemporary Moral Thought*, and author of *Paul Ricoeur and the Poetic Imperative*. He has written on a variety of theological and philosophical topics including the doctrine of creation, the religious significance of the idea of the gift, and the question of individual identity. His course "Basketball as Religion" has garnered national media attention on NPR and Paul Harvey's radio program.

DANIEL KIRCHNER (B.A., Johns Hopkins University; M.T.S., Harvard University; Ph.D. candidate, Indiana University), Visiting Instructor of Philosophy. He teaches humanities, ethics, and 19th-century philosophy. His research interests include biomedical ethics, political philosophy, Hegel, Hellenistic philosophy, and the self.

ANDREW ROCHE (B.A., Amherst College; Ph.D., Harvard University), Assistant Professor of Philosophy. He teaches modern philosophy, philosophy of the mind, and logic. His research interests include Kant, the philosophy of perception, and theories of self-knowledge.

## Emeritus Faculty

MILTON SCARBOROUGH (B.A., University of Mississippi; B.D., New Orleans Baptist Seminary; Ph.D., Duke University), Professor of Philosophy and Religion. Teaches philosophy of religion, philosophy of science, and phenomenology. His book, *Myth and Modernity: Postcritical Reflections*, was published in 1994. He has also published articles on Buddhist-Christian dialogue and about the phenomenological interpretation of myth.

For additional faculty information, see the Centre Web site at [www.centre.edu/web/academic/faculty/faculty.html](http://www.centre.edu/web/academic/faculty/faculty.html)

## Visit Centre

The best way to judge Centre is to tour the campus, attend a class, talk to the professors and students, and spend the night in a residence hall. We invite you to visit and encourage you to contact the Admission Office if you have any questions.

### For further information about philosophy at Centre, write, call, or e-mail

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### Philosophy Web page

[www.centre.edu/web/academic/majors/philosophy.html](http://www.centre.edu/web/academic/majors/philosophy.html)

### To communicate directly with a Centre student majoring in philosophy, e-mail

[kyla.schneiders@centre.edu](mailto:kyla.schneiders@centre.edu)

### For general information about Centre, contact

Admission Office  
**1-800-423-6236**  
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[www.centre.edu](http://www.centre.edu)

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