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Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences Programs

Philosophy Honours (BA)

Location Offered:

Nanaimo

Credential:

Bachelor Degree

Program Length:

4 Years

The Program

Philosophy is all about reasoning. It's about analyzing core issues and concepts, even basic assumptions, defending a position with arguments. Students develop many important skills in studying philosophy, including an ability:

- to think critically,
- to express ideas clearly and logically,
- to interpret and evaluate concepts and arguments, and
- to reflect carefully and deeply on important issues.

Philosophy majors have been able to use their skills in various fields, including law, business, and writing. They also achieve high scores on graduate entrance exams (GRE, GMAT, and LSAT).

An honours program will offer students more breadth in the field of philosophy, and will further strengthen the philosophical skills that the major already promotes. PHIL 490: Supervised Honours Thesis will tend to foster deeper analysis and greater engagement with a philosophical question in a longer, supervised paper.

The honours program is especially recommended for students going on to graduate school. Some graduate programs require an honours or equivalent of their applicants. Even where they do not, an honours designation gives students an edge in competing for limited spots. Furthermore, PHIL 490 is good preparation for graduate studies where students will write long course papers and theses. PHIL 490 gets students to explore a philosophical question in more depth, delving more into the research and analysis, and taking direction from a supervisor.

For students not going on to graduate studies, the honours designation still stands out on a resume, demonstrating high levels of achievement, as well as independent study and perseverance. The more in-depth approach of PHIL 490 can prepare students for tackling professional analytic reports, especially where they need to incorporate critical feedback or present work in draft stages.

Program Outline

Requirements for an Honours

To obtain an honours philosophy degree, students must complete all the Institutional B.A. degree requirements, including Degree English Requirements, and the courses

listed below. They also need to have an average GPA of 3.33 ("B+") on all third and fourth year courses in philosophy by the time they graduate. For the rotation of required courses, students should see the Tentative Course Scheduling.

Lower-Level Course Requirements

Students should take a minimum of eight courses (24 credits) in lower-level* philosophy, which must include:

- all three core introductory courses
 - PHIL 100 - (Rhetoric and Reasoning)
 - PHIL 111 - (Knowledge and Reality)
 - PHIL 112 - (Intro to Philosophy: Ethics)
- at least two historical philosophy courses (at least one of the two must be in history of modern philosophy: PHIL 200, 205, 210, or, as per "Alternatives," 358):
 - PHIL 200 - (Early Modern Theories of Knowledge and Reality)
 - PHIL 205 - (Early Modern Social and Political Philosophy)
 - PHIL 210 - (Nineteenth Century Social and Political Philosophy)
 - PHIL 240 - (Ancient Philosophy I: The Pre-Socratics to Plato)
 - PHIL 241 - (Ancient Philosophy II: Plato and Aristotle to the Roman Period)
 - PHIL 242 - (Greco-Roman Philosophy)
 - PHIL 243 - (Medieval Philosophy)
- both second year logic/reasoning courses:
 - PHIL 251 - (Formal Logic)
 - PHIL 252 - (Understanding Scientific Reasoning)

** Lower-level courses are 100- and 200-level courses.*

Recommendations:

- Students take LBST 111 and LBST 112 as electives.

Alternatives:

In partially fulfilling the requirements of two lower-level courses in the history of philosophy (and eight lower-level courses in philosophy overall), students can use:

- PHIL 340 - (Issues in Medieval Philosophy) in place of PHIL 243 - (Medieval Philosophy) *and/or*
- PHIL 358 - (Nineteenth Century Idealism and Its Criticism).

Upper-Level Course Requirements

Students should take a minimum of twelve courses (36 credits) in upper-level* philosophy, which must include:

- PHIL 361 - (The Philosophy of Mind) or PHIL 362 - (Special Topics in the Philosophy of Mind),
- PHIL 363 - (Epistemology),
- PHIL 364 - (Metaphysics),
- PHIL 443 - (Moral Theory), and
- PHIL 490 - (Supervised Honours Thesis).

** Upper-level courses are 300- and 400-level courses.*

Note: PHIL 310 and PHIL 399 cannot be used to meet the requirement of twelve upper-level philosophy courses.

Alternatives:

In partially fulfilling the requirements of 36 upper-level credits in philosophy, students can make some substitutions for philosophy credits. As substitutes, they can use three credits from each course below to a maximum total of six credits:

- LBST 360 - (New Worlds and New Heavens),
- LBST 370 - (Revolutions of the Modern World), or
- POLI 440 - (Contemporary Themes in Political Thought).

In other words, students can use a maximum of two courses from this list in partially fulfilling the requirements of twelve upper-level philosophy courses.

Note: all PHIL courses are three credits each, but the above LBST courses are six credits each. However, only three credits of any of the above LBST courses can be counted towards the upper-level PHIL requirement; the other three credits will count towards upper-level general electives. The above POLI course (POLI 440) is, like the PHIL courses, worth three credits.

Completion Requirements

To graduate with an honours philosophy degree, students need to have completed all above-listed requirements. They also need a GPA of 3.33 ("B+") or higher on all third and fourth year philosophy courses. Students who do not meet the "B+" average requirement, or fall short of any other honours requirement, can still graduate with a philosophy major.

Residency Requirement

Students are expected to complete *at least half* of their 36 upper level credits (12 courses) in philosophy at Vancouver Island University, including PHIL 490, PHIL 363, and PHIL 364.

Admission Requirements

To apply to the honours program, students must fill out the Honours Application Form and submit it to the chair at a scheduled appointment. To enter the honours program, students need to have:

- declared philosophy as their major
- completed at least 45 credits of academic study (3 full-time semesters)
- completed at least 15 credits (5 courses) in philosophy
- completed at least 6 credits (2 courses) in philosophy at the 200-level or above.

Note: the same courses can count towards different, overlapping requirements. Meeting all above criteria does not guarantee admission, which is also subject to the availability of supervisors for PHIL 490.

Start Date and Application Deadline

There are no application deadlines. Students can apply to the Department Chair at any time by submitting an application and setting up an appointment.

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