



School of Humanities
Philosophy



Careers

Our graduates have an excellent record of gaining employment in publishing, teaching, business, administration, information management and the media, where their skills in logical analysis and communication are highly valued. The many transferable skills that philosophy students develop give them a clear advantage in today's job market. At the same time, a humanities education enriches students' understanding and enjoyment of culture.

Why study Philosophy at the University of Hertfordshire?

Our tuition is first-class – in independent national assessments over nine years we have achieved the highest possible grades for Philosophy and high scores in the National Student Survey. Our diverse philosophy curriculum will introduce you to a wide range of philosophical traditions. In your final year, you may write a dissertation on a topic of your choice. At postgraduate level too, we encourage students to develop their own ideas, through our Masters programme and research degrees. All of our teaching is informed and enlivened by the strong research culture among the staff.

Our student-run philosophy society draws distinguished speakers from all over the UK and beyond. It meets most weeks during term-time for an informal philosophical discussion, and once every year we go for an optional residential philosophy weekend.



The Humanities Programme

This flexible programme allows you to vary the subjects you study. We encourage you to broaden your horizons in your first year by taking at least two subjects (the maximum is four). You do not have to do more work if you take more subjects. The modular programme means that, however many subjects you take, you still only study eight modules a year and each requires the same amount of reading and study-time.

Our undergraduate programme gives you a choice of over 150 modules and the chance to specialise as your studies progress. Full-time students have the option of a year's study overseas.

Many of our students branch out in their first year and try something new – like philosophy! Most of our philosophy students take the subject for the first time at university. Even if you have a philosophy A-level, almost all of the material at level one will be new to you

Summary

Philosophy Single Honours V500
Philosophy studied with one of the following:
Acting and screen performance VW54
American Studies VT57
Creative Writing V5W8
Digital Publishing V5GK
English Language & Communication VQ51
English Language Teaching V5X1
English Literature VQ53
Film V5PH
French V5R1
History VV51
Journalism V5P5
Media Cultures V5P3
Spanish V5R4
Philosophy combined with any two subjects V503



Structure of the Humanities Programme

Year 1

You follow a Joint Honours (two subjects), Combined Honours (three subjects) or Humanities Honours (four subjects) programme. Whatever you do, you must study more than one subject in your first year. This provides you with a richer learning experience and an awareness of complementary disciplines which increases your chance of getting the career you want when you graduate.

Year 2

At the end of your first year, you can reduce the number of subjects and/or the proportion of time you spend on them according to what type of degree you want. You can go on to single honours, joint honours or combined honours study, but you will be able to progress to a humanities honours programme in your second year only if you have studied four subjects in your first year. At the end of your second year, you may spend a year studying at a university in North America or Europe.

Final Year

In your final year, you can continue with your programme or revise the number of subjects and the proportion of your study time spent on them. If you have studied a single honours programme in your second year, you must continue to single honours in your final year. All other study patterns offer a choice of award.

Learning Resources

The University of Hertfordshire has two fine Learning Resource Centres. Each is equipped with over 1000 computer work stations, as well as digital sound and media facilities and thousands of books, journals and magazines.

Study Abroad

You can study for a year in North America or Europe through the SOCRATES-ERASMUS exchange programme during the second or third year of your degree. In some cases, you may be able to graduate with a degree from your partner university as well as from Hertfordshire. You may be eligible for a grant if you meet certain conditions.

StudyNet

As a University of Hertfordshire student you have access to one of the UK's most sophisticated on-line learning environments, StudyNet. Every University module has a StudyNet website providing you with access to lecture notes, course guides, news, reading lists, group work and discussion facilities. StudyNet is accessible from any PC in the world with an internet connection.

Part-time Study

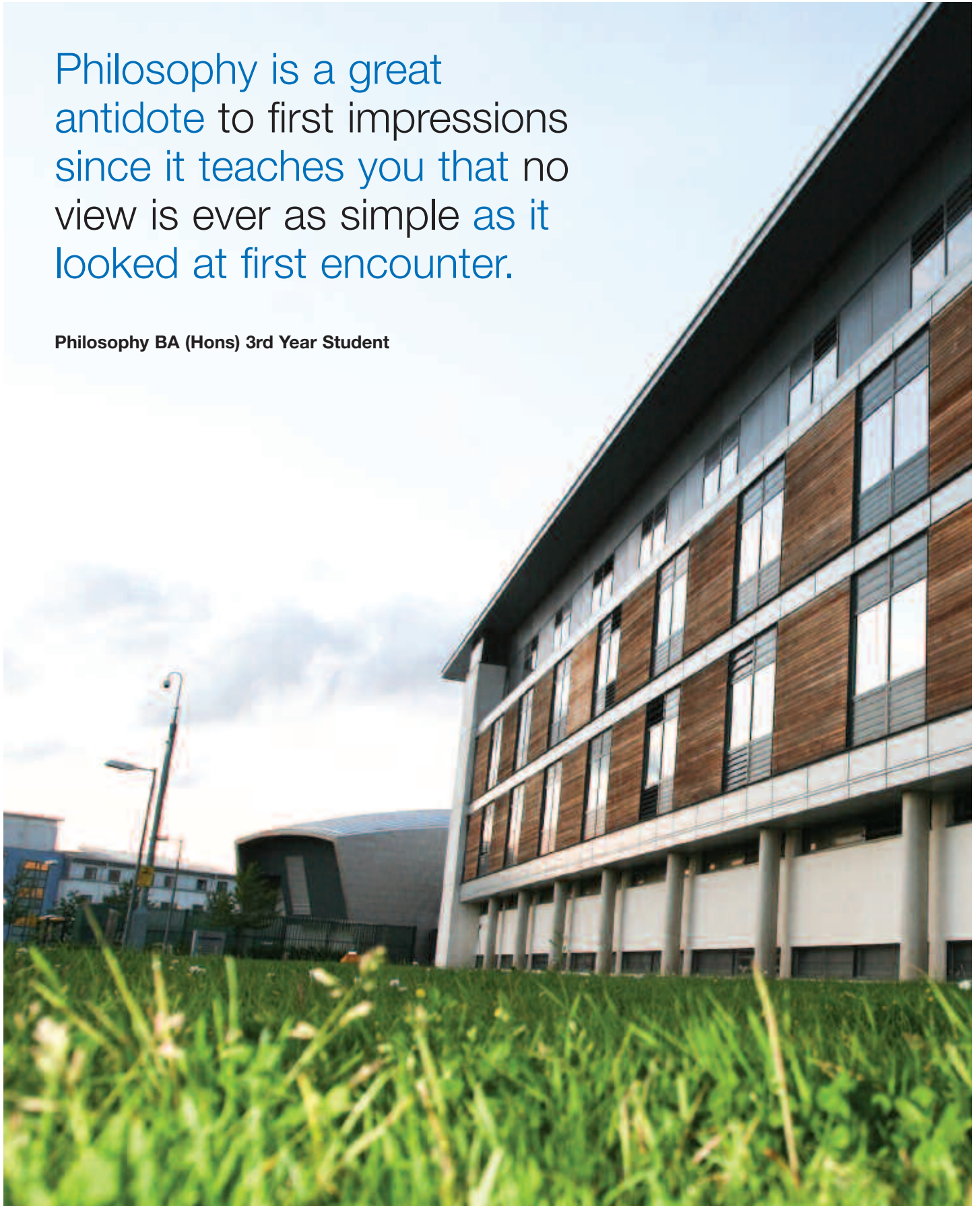
The school of Humanities allows students to study part-time over four years. For further information on this study option, please visit www.herts.ac.uk

Find out more...

Come to an Open Day to meet tutors, students and see the facilities. You will find dates on the website. Do not be shy about emailing staff; they will be happy to help you.

Philosophy is a great
antidote to first impressions
since it teaches you that no
view is ever as simple as it
looked at first encounter.

Philosophy BA (Hons) 3rd Year Student





Year 1 Modules:

Philosophy in Film and Literature

Year: 1 Assessment: 100% coursework

This module aims to introduce and explore some philosophical issues of interest to everyone, comparing their various treatments in philosophy, film and literature. Likely topics include: the meaning of life, friendship, personal identity, free will, and fatalism. Possible films include: *It's a Wonderful Life*; *The Wings of the Dove*; and *The Exterminating Angel*.

Introduction to Philosophy

Year: 1 Assessment: 50% Coursework 50% Exam

You will be given a basic training in how to read and write essays in philosophy, while exploring perennial questions in ethics, epistemology and the meaning of life. The first section of this course is on ethics. The second section considers questions in epistemology such as: What is knowledge? Can we reliably gain it, and if so how? Can we be certain of anything? The third section is on the meaning of life.

Reason and Persuasion

Year: 1 Assessment: 40% Coursework 60% Exam

This module will explore the reasons why some persuasive efforts work while others do not. It will develop your ability to judge when you ought to be persuaded by the arguments of others and to present your own views in a way that increases their persuasive force.



Year 2 Modules:

Themes in Plato's Republic

Year: 2 Assessment: 100% Coursework

This module investigates several major themes in Plato's philosophy. The module will aim to show connections between Plato's metaphysics and theory of knowledge, and his ethics, political thought and philosophy of art and literature. You will develop your skills in reading, assessing and advancing arguments.

Metaphysics

Year: 2 Assessment: 40% Coursework 60% Exam

What is the nature of substance? How should we understand space and time? What is the nature of such basic relations as identity and causation? What are universals and particulars? And, how do the answers to such questions affect our view of persons and selves? This module will involve an in-depth study of a number of these central metaphysical questions. You will be trained in the use of metaphysical terminology and will develop your skills in reading, assessing and advancing arguments.

Philosophy of Mind

Year: 2 Assessment: 40% Coursework 60% Exam

This module explores philosophical approaches to understanding the nature of mind which range from dualism to strong forms of materialism. You will be trained in the use of relevant terminology and will develop your skills in reading, assessing and advancing arguments.

Logic and Language

Year: 2 Assessment: 40% Coursework 60% Exam

In this module we look at informal reasoning before learning some formal techniques and wider issues. Much of modern philosophy (including the philosophy of science and the work of Wittgenstein) is motivated by developments in logical theory. Hence a grounding in logic will help make sense of the recent history of philosophy.



Year 2 Modules continued:

The Right and the Good

Year: 2 Assessment: 100% Coursework

We have duties to assist and also not to harm other human beings. We study two theories by looking at Mill's *Utilitarianism* and Kant's *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Application of these theories to moral dilemmas chosen by students will form the topic of the presentation. For example, is it ever morally right to use violence or terrorism in the pursuit of peace? Should we ever assist anyone to commit suicide?

Knowledge and Discovery

Year: 2 Assessment: 40% coursework 60% examination

What kind of justification is required to be able to say not just that we believe something but that we know it? Must we be able to cite reasons for believing something before we can be said to know it, or is it enough for those beliefs to have been generated in a reliable way? Must knowledge rest on a foundation that is immune from error, or are beliefs justified by being part of a network of mutually supporting beliefs? We shall discuss the extent to which the particular observations we make give us reason to believe (or disbelieve) general claims about the world and, further, what counts as a good explanation for why that thing has happened. We shall consider not just beliefs about those things we can see with our own eyes but whether there is any reason to believe in those things which we cannot observe directly (e.g., the very small and the very distant).

Philosophy of Art

Year: 2 Assessment: 100% Coursework

We go to museums, read novels, listen to music, talk about art. But what is art? In this module, we survey the main theories of art throughout history, observing as we go along, that while each theory has added to our understanding of art, it has not defined it once and for all. At the end of the survey, we shall ask whether a comprehensive definition is possible, or even necessary to our understanding of art. The survey will take us through passages from authors such as Plato, Aristotle, Tolstoy, Hume, Kant, Collingwood, Wittgenstein, Danto, Dickie and Wollheim. We will ask ourselves: Is art a matter of personal taste or are there intersubjective criteria in the determination of art? Where is the boundary between art and craft? How is art related to morality? Is Tracy Emin's *My Bed* art; if so, is it good art? What makes anything art?



**Year 2 Modules
continued:**

Political Philosophy

Year: 2 Assessment: 40% Coursework 60% Exam

This module will focus on the relationship between the state and the citizen. Particular attention will be given to the presuppositions about human nature underlying different views of justice. Attempts by both classic philosophers such as Plato and Locke and contemporary thinkers such as Rawls to provide answers to these questions will be examined.

Year 3 Modules:

Kant's Transcendental Idealism

Year: 3 Assessment: 100% Coursework

What are space and time? What is the metaphysical status of the world that we experience? Is the self that we experience when we introspect the only sort of self that there is? These and other questions are discussed by Kant in *The Critique of Pure Reason* and in his *Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics* and students will study sections of these works.

Aristotle

Year: 3 Assessment: 100% Coursework

Is there a method to philosophy? Are we rational animals? Do all living things have a purpose? What is the good life or is there more than one? Is ethics primarily concerned with virtue? These questions, which are relevant today, will be explored by an examination of Aristotle's central works.

Topics in Philosophy of Hegel

Year: 3 Assessment: 40% Coursework 60% Exam

How can we reconcile our need for freedom with our desire to belong to an orderly society? Is there an order and a purpose to the history of the world? Hegel did not believe that reason dwells safe in Plato's heaven. But in that case is there any rationality to be found anywhere? These and other questions will be discussed in the course of interpreting Hegel's work.



Year 3 Modules:

Language, Thought and Reality

Year: 3 Assessment: 40% Coursework 60% Exam

Is the nature of thought and language, suitably analysed, a reliable indicator of the nature of reality? The early analytic philosophers thought so. You will be introduced to the German and English roots of early analytic philosophy in its historical and ideological context. You will also consider how the connection between language, thought and reality affects our understanding of ourselves, science, ethics and the nature of logic.

Nietzsche, Genealogy and Morality

Year: 3 Assessment: 40% Coursework 60% Exam

Nietzsche famously claimed that 'God is dead'. But what does he mean by this? What ramifications would the 'death of God' have for morality and human flourishing? What would a 'Nietzschean' view of self and world look like? And what religious responses to Nietzsche's challenge are possible? With these questions in mind, this module investigates key aspects of Nietzsche's thought.

Wittgenstein's Investigations

Year: 3 Assessment: 40% Coursework 60% Exam

This module aims to introduce you to some important aspects of Wittgenstein's later philosophy, with particular reference to ideas set out in the *Philosophical Investigations*. Students will explore a range of topics such as: the nature of language and its relation to reality; meaning and use; language games and criteria; understanding and intentionality; following a rule; arguments concerning a private language; thinking, intending, anticipating and other mental concepts; human nature; other minds and behaviorism; the nature of philosophy.

Philosophy Project

Year: 3 Assessment: 100% Coursework

You will have the opportunity to develop your research skills through the largely independent study of a particular topic in philosophy of your choice. No conditions are placed on the choice of topic, so long as it falls within the general discipline of philosophy, and a member of the philosophy staff has the relevant expertise to provide the appropriate supervision.



Year 3 Modules continued:

Kierkegaard, Philosophy and Religion

Year: 3 Assessment: 40% Coursework 60% Exam

This module considers central aspects of Kierkegaard's thought, focusing upon issues related to ethics, religion and philosophical communication. After an introduction to the importance of 'indirect' communication in existential matters, we shall investigate in some detail the 'aesthetic', 'ethical' and 'religious' modes of life. The central texts will be *Either/Or* and *Fear and Trembling*.

Representation and Consciousness

Year: 3 Assessment: 40% Coursework 60% Exam

This module introduces and examines various proposals about how these phenomena might be scientifically understood, at least in principle. It asks such questions as: Is cognition really a form of symbol manipulation? Do these symbols have any representational content? Are they about anything in the world? If so, what accounts for this? Is there any real prospect for a scientific theory of consciousness or do all 'objective' accounts necessarily leave something out?

Philosophy of Language

Assessment: 40% Coursework 60% Exam

Marks, sounds and gestures can all have meaning. But what is it for them to have meaning and how do they manage to have it? Is the meaning of my words to be analysed in terms of my intentions to communicate with another or the conventions I subscribe to when using words? In what way is meaning related to truth and my being warranted in asserting what I say? How do names and descriptions, in particular, manage to pick out objects in the world? Are some things I say true solely in virtue of the meanings of the words I use? Is there anything that fixes what it is that I do mean when I use words, or is meaning, to some extent, indeterminate?



**Year 3 Modules
continued:**

Contemporary Moral Philosophy

Year: 3 Assessment: 100% Coursework

What should be the primary focus of ethics? Should we focus on actions or on the character of agents? You will study different approaches to these questions embodied in contemporary discussions of Kantian Ethics, Consequentialism and Virtue Ethics. This discussion will raise issues such as, do we arrive at moral evaluations by applying principles to particular cases or are moral evaluations more a matter of, for example, a virtuous person's perception of a particular case? What is the relationship between the moral evaluations that we make and the reasons that we give for those evaluations? What are our moral theories based on: shared beliefs about rightness, our moral intuitions, our common sense intuitions about the virtues?