

Advising Frequently Asked Questions: ISU Department of Philosophy

(Updated Fall 2017)

General (2)

- How do I sign up for an advising meeting?
- Where can I access my grades and other information?
- How many hours can I take maximum per semester?
- I want to graduate in August but also walk in the Commencement ceremony. What do I do?
- I need an override to get into a course. What do I do?
- My parents gave me a strange look when they found out I wanted to study philosophy.

Graduation requirements, general (3-5)

- Does it matter which version of the undergraduate catalog I use? What one should I use?
- What are the graduation requirements in summary? Give me a checklist.
- I heard that you need 150 hours to graduate!
- What are senior hours, and how many do I need? Do transfer courses count for senior hours?
- What is the first/second major distinction? Does it matter? Can I switch them, and when should I?
- How many majors/minors can I have?
- How does the Language requirement work? What is CAP credit, and why is it amazing?
- What Philosophy courses also count as gen eds?
- Do Philosophy courses that count towards my major/minor double-count as gen eds?

Graduation requirements, Philosophy major/minor (5-6)

- Which required courses are not offered every semester? When are they offered?
- Is there tutoring specific to the Philosophy major/minor or certain Philosophy courses?
- I can't sign up for PHI 112, it says I don't meet the prereqs!
- I can't sign up for PHI 202/224/238/251, it says I don't meet the prereqs!
- Q. How do 300-level courses work? I heard I could take the same one multiple times—true or false?
- I'm in the 16-17 or later catalog, where 300-level Philosophy courses have prereqs, and I want to sign up for a 300-level course. I haven't taken all the prereqs for the course, but I think I've taken the relevant ones. (E.g., it's a PHI 350 seminar on Plato and you've taken 254 but not 255.) What can I do?

Transfer information/taking courses elsewhere (6-7)

- I'm a transfer student. What is the IAI (Illinois Articulation Initiative)?
- I have an Associate's degree. Does that exempt me from gen eds?
- I'm not a transfer student, but can I take courses from elsewhere to count towards my ISU degree?
- How do transfer courses affect my GPA?
- My transfer courses/AP credit didn't transfer over! Why not?
- How do I find out what transfer courses count towards the PHI major/minor?
- What if I think a transfer course should count as a specific course here, but it doesn't?
- I'm thinking about/planning study abroad. How do courses transfer from other countries?

Graduate school and careers (8-9)

- I don't know what to do with my life! Help me!
- I don't know what a Philosophy major is good for!
- I'm thinking about graduate school. Where do I start?
- I'm thinking about preparing for my career. Where do I start?

Campus Resources (9)

- Visor Academic Center
- Milner Library
- Career Center
- Student Counseling Services

Philosophy department contacts (10)

General

Q. How do I sign up for an advising meeting?

A. Use Appointment Manager. The link can be found in the signature of my emails, or go to <https://appointments.illinoisstate.edu/amonline/default.aspx?AG=940>.

Q. Where can I access my grades and other information?

A. At <https://my.illinoisstate.edu>. The 'Academics' and 'Student' tabs will have most information. (If you're a new or incoming student, note that you have to have set up your ULID and password in order to log in.) The 'Student Center' will tell you about grades and GPA, let you enroll in courses, etc. There is also a link to the override form, which lets you request overrides into classes that are full, etc.

Q. How many hours can I take maximum per semester?

A. 17 in the fall and spring, 12 in the summer.

- You can get permission to go over, but it requires consent of the department chair for your home department (first major). You also need a form you can get from the department advisor.
- Courses taken elsewhere simultaneously don't count towards the cap—e.g., you could take 12 hours here and 3 at Heartland during the summer without special permission.

Q. I want to graduate in August but also walk in the Commencement ceremony. What do I do?

A. Graduation and commencement (the ceremony where you get your diploma) are not the same thing. Commencement is just a ceremony, whereas graduation is the real binding receipt of degree. There is no August commencement; August grads walk in May Commencement.

- To graduate in August but walk in May, apply for August graduation but do so early enough to sign up for, and take part in, May commencement. (I.e., apply early in the spring semester.) For more information, contact Graduation Services.

Q. I need an override to get into a course. What do I do?

A. In <https://my.illinoisstate.edu>, under Academics, Course Permit Request, you'll find an override form.

- In Philosophy, the policy is that overrides are decided by the section instructor. Different instructors have different policies—it ultimately depends on the situation. For this reason, make sure you explain in the "Override reason" section of the form exactly why you want/need to enroll. (And I highly suggest using proper spelling and grammar!)

Q. My parents gave me a concerned/doubtful look when they found out I want to study Philosophy.

A. It happens. Your parents may buy into the view that Philosophy is a useless major, that it sets you up to be an unemployed vagabond. They're wrong, and the statistics bear it out. If you want more information on why that's the case, talk to me—I've worked with my share of parents, and have all the propaganda educational information you'll need to counter the many myths about Philosophy that are out there.

Graduation requirements, general

Q. Does it matter which version of the undergraduate catalog I use? What one should I use?

A. Yes, very much—your catalog determines what your graduation requirements are. As requirements change over the years, with rare exceptions your requirements stay the same, since they are almost always tied to *the catalog that was in effect when you first entered ISU*.

- Example: starting Fall 2016, the PHI major requirements changed substantially. If you entered before F16, you are under the old requirements and that won't change. If you enrolled F16 or later, you are probably (but not necessarily) under new requirements. There are exceptions, some discussed below, but what matters is that you know what requirements are yours.
 - The catalog version that applies to you can change, but it only happens very rarely, such as in some cases of reinstatement to the university or other special exception.
 - Sometimes particular requirements change, but rarely, and only in cases like, e.g., when a course is altogether eliminated. For instance, PHI 199 was totally removed from the university, so people for whom it was required must do something else in its place.
- You can find the undergrad catalogs online at <http://illinoisstate.edu/catalog/>. Catalogs before the most recent one can be found there under "Archive."
- You can find your catalog year in the Student Center—Go to the "Academics" tab and look at the "Requirement Term"—that is your catalog year. You can also go into your Student Center and select "Academic Requirements" in the drop-down menu—your requirements there will be matched up to the correct catalog year.

Q. What are the graduation requirements? Give me a checklist.

A. To graduate, you must:

- Complete requirements for all your majors/minors.
- Complete 120 hours total, 150 if you're applying for two degrees (see below)
- Reach a certain GPA—2.0 minimum, but some majors and minors have higher requirements.
- Complete 42 senior (200-level or higher) hours
- Complete 30 resident hours—that is, 30 of your last 60 course hours have to be in ISU courses
- Complete your Gen eds, or IAI if you are a transfer student
- Complete the AMALI/World Cultures requirement
- Complete your BA/BS-specific requirement. If your degree is a Bachelor of Arts (i.e., if Philosophy or another humanities major is your first major) you have to complete a language at the 115 level (SPA 115, FRE 115, etc.) If your degree is a Bachelor of Science (if your first major is Geology, Secondary Ed, etc.) you have to do an extra SMT course and the QR requirement
 - For BS students, note that the QR requirement is met by PHI 112!
 - Those whose first major is in the College of Arts and Sciences, even if their degree is a BS, must complete a language at the 112 level

Q. I heard that you need 150 hours to graduate!

A. No. If you are graduating with two simultaneous bachelor's degrees, you need 150, *but only then*.

Bonus answer: no, you probably don't need to graduate with two simultaneous bachelor's degrees.

- Note that this is different from double-majoring. A double major is one degree, so only needs 120 hours. And it's usually just as good as getting simultaneous degrees.

Q. What are senior hours, and how many do I need? Do transfer courses count for senior hours?

A. Senior hours are 200-level courses and up in any program or major. You need 42 senior hours.

- When it comes to transfer hours, community colleges won't count as senior hours, period. Courses from 4-year schools that transfer over as major elective and non-major elective do not generally count as senior hours without a special exception.

Q. What is the first/second major distinction? Does it matter? Can I switch them, and when should I?

A. Your first major shows up first in the list and is the 'primary' major. The second is an 'additional plan'.

- Generally, it doesn't matter which is first. Employers, for instance, usually care (if they care about majors) that you completed the major, not which one was first.
 - The BA versus BS distinction also isn't *usually* important, though in some special cases and careers it can be. Be aware of that.
- It *can* make a difference if your majors are from different ISU colleges (CAS, CST, COB, etc.), or if one is BA and one BS. The first major sets the priority, and thus determines some of your graduation requirements. For instance: If you are a CJS first major and PHI second, then you're a BS student and do the extra SMT and the QR gen eds; if it is the other way around, you're a BA student and do the LAN 115 requirement. Likewise for college-specific requirements such as the College of Arts and Sciences language requirement.
- You can switch them simply by talking to your advisor(s) and asking to switch major primacy.

Q. How many majors/minors can I have?

A. The sky's the limit. Just make sure you actually complete them.

Q. How does the Language requirement work? What is CAP credit, and why is it amazing?

A. If your first major is in the College of Arts and Sciences (Philosophy, Psychology, English, etc.), you need to pass LAN (i.e., a language such as SPA, FRE, or JAP) 112. If you are graduating with a Bachelor of Arts (all Philosophy first majors are BA), LAN 115.

- If your requirement is 112, you are exempt from the requirement if you took three years of high-school courses in a qualifying language and submit the transcript. If it's 115, you'll still have to take a LAN 115 course, regardless of how many years of a language you took in high school.
- You can meet the requirement with any language from the catalog that has a 111-112-115 sequence, such as Spanish, French, Italian, Latin, Japanese, etc.
- It's wise to take care of this sooner rather than later, unless you're planning to pursue a language as part of your education. If you last took Spanish in high school and wait until Junior year to start it again, you'll probably start from square one.
- If you're not a Philosophy first major, that doesn't mean you get off easy; you have to do other additional requirements (such as Quantitative Reasoning and/or a second Science, Math, and Technology course) instead.
 - Note that these are *not* met by completing IAI or getting an Associate's degree.
- This is a proficiency requirement, not a sequence requirement. That is, to meet the requirement all you have to do is complete a course at or above the level required for your program. For example: If you are getting a BA you can just start at LAN 115 and be done with the requirement, without having to take anything below 115. Speaking of which:
- **CAP Credit:** If you can pass a course above LAN 111 with a C or higher without taking the LAN courses below it, do so. Why? Because you can petition the Languages, Literatures, and Cultures department to receive credit for those courses. Example: If you start at SPA 115 and get a C, you can get credit for SPA 111 and 112 as though you took them. That means you'd get eight free(!) hours of credit. You can only get up to eight hours (two LAN courses) this way, in the LAN 111-116 sequence. You cannot use this if you took the previous course, since you already received

credit for those hours. But if, say, you got credit for SPA 111 elsewhere, then jumped to 115 here and got a C, you could petition for four hours from SPA 112.

Q. What Philosophy courses also count as gen eds?

A. First, note that the Philosophy major exempts you from the Humanities requirement. Beyond that:

- Humanities: PHI 101, 150, 202, 224, 238, 251
- Individuals and Civic Life: PHI 104
- Quantitative Reasoning: PHI 112 (if you're getting a BS)
- AMALI/World Cultures: PHI 207, 208

Q. Do Philosophy courses that count towards my major/minor double-count as gen eds?

A. Yes.

Graduation requirements, Philosophy major/minor

Q. Which required courses are not offered every semester? When are they offered?

A. PHI 232 and PHI 254 are offered every fall. PHI 201 and PHI 255 are offered every spring. This isn't an iron law; it could change for various reasons, so generally take these courses when you have the chance.

Q. Is there tutoring specific to the Philosophy major/minor or certain Philosophy courses?

A. There is department tutoring offered for PHI 112, our logic course. Speak to the instructor if you need tutoring for that course. There is no departmental tutoring for any other courses. If you need assistance, consider going to the Julia M. Visor Center, more information about which is below.

Q. I can't sign up for PHI 112, it says I don't meet the prereqs!

A. PHI 112 is a Quantitative Reasoning (QR) gen ed for BS degrees. While BA students (like Philosophy first majors) don't do QR, PHI 112, like all QR courses, has a prereq: the ISU math gen ed requirement. If you completed the math gen ed in another way (for example, if you're a transfer student and complete the IAI math requirement), you shouldn't have to take the ISU math courses. Here's what to do:

- If you've completed the math gen ed through IAI or other means, request an override for PHI 112 and state that you have met your math requirement. You will receive an override.
- If you haven't completed the math gen ed but want to take PHI 112 now, you can. Request the override, making sure to mention that you are a PHI major/minor, and you will be allowed in.
 - **NB:** it's highly suggested that you complete your math gen ed first. People who take PHI 112 without taking their math gen ed often struggle, because in many ways PHI 112 is similar to a math course. (There's a reason it counts for the QR gen ed!)

Q. I can't sign up for PHI 202/224/238/251, it says I don't meet the prereqs!

A. Those all have COM 110 and ENG 101 as prereqs, meaning you have to have completed those courses before you can enroll in the ones above. Instructors sometimes allow exceptions to that requirement, so if you want or need to take one of the above you could consider making an override request.

Q. How do 300-level courses work? I heard I could take the same one multiple times—true or false?

A. True, mostly. 300-level PHI courses are topics courses. They don't have a constant content like other courses do—they're in-depth studies of topics in the field covered by the course title. E.g., PHI 330 could be about any topic in moral theory—Kant's moral theory, moral responsibility, metaethics, and so on.

- This means the course is different each time it's taught. For that reason, if it's a different topic, you can take the same course number as many times as you like. That's *if* the topic is different—if a professor teaches the same topic twice, it won't be counted twice for obvious reasons.

Q. I'm in the 16-17 or later catalog, where 300-level Philosophy courses have prereqs, and I want to sign up for a 300-level course. I haven't taken all the prereqs for the course, but I think I've taken the relevant ones. (E.g., it's a PHI 350 seminar on Plato and I've taken 254 but not 255.) What can I do?

A. This is a good time to submit an override request. In the form, explain how the courses you've taken are sufficient given the content of the 300-level course. (You should talk to the instructor beforehand to make sure that this is the case.) If the instructor gives the okay, the override will be granted.

Transfer information/taking courses elsewhere

Q. I'm a transfer student. What is the IAI (Illinois Articulation Initiative)?

A. The IAI is the Illinois-wide gen ed system for transfer students. It's accepted across most public colleges and universities in Illinois, meaning that something which counts towards an IAI requirement elsewhere will be accepted for here as well, no matter what it was (and vice versa), and if you complete the IAI elsewhere, your gen eds are counted as done here. If you are transferring from another Illinois college or university to here, you are probably using it. It's quite different from ISU's native student gen ed program, so it's important to know whether it applies to you.

- You can switch from IAI to ISU's gen eds or the reverse, but it's a complicated process that should only be undertaken for very good reason
- **NB:** Completing the IAI in this way does *not* exempt you from AMALI, BS/BA-only, and college-specific requirements—you still have to meet those separately

Q. I have an Associate's degree. Does that exempt me from gen eds?

A. If it's an Associate of Arts (AA) degree, yes. Associate of Science (AS) used to count, but no longer does because of changes at the state level.

- **NB:** Completing your gen eds in this way does *not* exempt you from AMALI, BS/BA-only, and college-specific requirements—you still have to meet those separately

Q. I'm not a transfer student, but can I take courses from elsewhere to count towards my ISU degree?

A. Absolutely! Many students take concurrent courses at Heartland or summer courses at a school near their home to meet ISU requirements while they're current ISU students.

- Schools are not all equally easy to take concurrent courses at if you're not pursuing a degree there. As a rule, community colleges are a lot more flexible than 4-year schools. Heartland, being right in town, is of course very flexible in working with ISU students.
- Keep in mind the residency requirement: 30 of your last 60 hours have to be here at ISU.

Q. How do transfer courses affect my ISU GPA?

A. They don't. They are recorded as 'TR' or 'TRD' (If you got a D), which have zero impact on your ISU GPA. If you transfer here from another school, you're essentially starting with a Lockean *tabula rasa*.

- The 'TRD' distinction is there for requirements where you need at least a 'C', such as IAI Writing courses and some major courses. Since for those you do need a certain grade, 'TRD' would indicate that you didn't meet the requirement. It only matters for those particular cases, though, and it still doesn't affect your GPA.

Q. My transfer courses/AP credit didn't transfer over! Why not?

A. It depends on the situation:

- Sometimes it takes time. Make sure that your transcripts were sent from wherever they are from, and that ISU got them. Even after ISU has received them, it takes time to process them. If weeks pass after ISU received your transcripts and no progress has been made, contact the Registrar's office. They may just be busy, or there may have been an error in transit.
- *If you went to multiple schools prior to ISU*, make sure each school sent an official transcript to ISU. Transcripts don't 'piggyback'—If you went to school A, then B, then ISU, just because B accepted something doesn't mean ISU will. Both A and B have to send transcripts to ISU.
- *If your AP credit isn't being counted, or is not being counted as you thought*: See above. Make sure it was sent, and know that not every school will count things the same.

Q. How do I find out what transfer courses count towards the PHI major/minor?

A. Some courses have direct equivalents: for instance, PHIL 101 at Heartland is equivalent to PHI 101 here. Many do not, however—they may count as MJEL or NMEL. MJEL (major elective credit) counts towards the major but not as a specific course, and only counts as 100-level elective hours (of which only three hours are allowed towards the PHI major or minor). NMEL (non-major elective credit) does not count towards a major, though it does count towards total hours for graduation. Even if the course was Philosophy elsewhere, if it transfers as NMEL it won't count as such.

- Find more info in the Registrar's transfer page (<http://registrar.illinoisstate.edu/transfer/>--under "Course Articulation" are pages for many Illinois community colleges) and Transferology (<https://www.transferology.com/school/ilstu>--you need to register, but it's free; it also includes information on 4-year schools). These are good guides, but don't necessarily have every answer.
- Note that 300-level courses virtually never have equivalents, since they're topics courses that vary each time they're taught. Expect to take them here. If you want something from elsewhere to count as 300-level, it'll have to be a special exception; speak to me.

Q. What if I think a transfer course should count as a specific course here, but it doesn't?

A. If you believe a course should count for a specific ISU course but it doesn't, or should count for Philosophy elective credit but it doesn't, you can petition count it. Discuss it with me, and we'll go from there. At a minimum you'll probably need the syllabus from that course (ideally, for the exact section and semester you took it) to have a chance of success.

Q. I'm thinking about/planning study abroad. How do courses transfer from other countries?

A. Your first resource should be the Study Abroad office—they'll help you determine what transfers from where, and what we might transfer over if there's not a rule on it.

- Some foreign institutions already have agreements with us on what counts as what. Again, your study abroad advisor has more information.
- As with all transfer cases, if there's a course you think should transfer over as something but doesn't, talk to me with a copy of the syllabus on hand. Without the syllabus, don't expect much chance of success.

Graduate school and careers

Q. I don't know what to do with my life! Help me!

A. There's only so much I can do. But that's not nothing—set up a meeting and we can discuss it. I myself moved from Philosophy to a non-academic career (of sorts), so I know the experience and the process firsthand. Also go to the Career Center, as they have plenty of resources, some mentioned below, for helping you find a path, whether it involves graduate school or jumping straight into a career.

Q. I don't know what a Philosophy major is good for!

A. Anything you want. This is a skills-based program. It won't set you up for a single career like, say, Nursing, so don't expect that; you still have to do the work of finding a career and convincing prospective employers that they should want you. But the skills gained here, including critical thinking, written and oral communication, and complex problem solving and analysis, are extremely useful, broadly applicable, and rare. They're not the sort of thing that more technical programs typically teach you. Therefore, they help to set you apart—if you make proper use of them.

- Perhaps the main concern for a Philosophy major in finding jobs is that the major itself doesn't demonstrate specific interest, i.e., that a person is serious about a particular job/career. But you can work around this: If possible, pair your Philosophy major with internships or other majors/minors that point more directly to your future path. This helps establish your interest in a specific career, which demonstrates seriousness to prospective employers.
- That said, there are fields that a Philosophy major is particularly well suited to. Those include:
 - Law: If you want to be a lawyer/attorney/judge, consider Philosophy non-optional.
 - Technical writing and communication: A large part of philosophy is, to borrow from J.L. Austin, learning how to do things with words. You'll get good at it.
 - Government, non-profits, NGOs: See the reasons above.
 - Religion/Ministry: Philosophy is the best choice outside Religious Studies. Maybe better.
 - Applied ethicist: A growing field, particularly when it comes to the biomedical ethics.

Q. I'm thinking about graduate school. Where do I start?

A. I lead an info session on grad school school in philosophy every fall, discussing things like admissions, grad life, and academic careers. It is announced early in the semester, and usually held around the middle. More in-depth information can also be found in the "Applying to Graduate School" document, which I hand out during the session and which you can get from me at any time. Beyond that:

- Start learning about graduate programs. The Philosophical Gourmet Report and APA's guide to graduate school in philosophy can help. More information for these is available in the "Philosophy Resources" document, which you can also get from me.
- Prepare for the GRE, if you're thinking about Philosophy or other academically-oriented graduate programs. Application deadlines are usually very early spring, so don't wait!
- If you're looking at some other form of post-undergrad (law school, med school, etc.), follow the respective guidelines and standards. Your first steps are the same as above: investigating programs and preparing for the respective entry exam.
- The Career Center has information and sessions on graduate school.

Q. I'm thinking about preparing for my career. Where do I start?

A. That's what the Career Center is for! There is contact information for them below, including a way to reach the advisor, Debbie Ungson-Walbert, who works with Philosophy majors. Many of their services

are listed below; they can help with choosing a career, resume and interview prep, and more. In addition, I invite Debbie every spring to give a “Careers for PHI Majors” talk. Beyond that:

- PLAN AHEAD. I cannot emphasize this strongly enough. If it’s your last year and you’re only now thinking about what you want to do after graduation, you’re behind. Fix that.
- Internships. They are a major path forward these days almost no matter your career path. Even if they’re not linked to your career, internships are an important way to show seriousness and determination, as well as providing real work experience.
- If you have electives remaining, pick courses that lead into your chosen career field. Expand it to a minor or even major if possible. That can help to show specific interest, as noted above.

Campus Resources

Visor Academic Center: <http://universitycollege.illinoisstate.edu/about/visor/>

- Tutoring
- Writing assistance
- Workshops
- Academic coaching

Milner Library: <http://library.illinoisstate.edu/>

- Does the things that libraries do—has books and journals, can help you locate resources, can help you with bibliographies and citations, etc.
- Has access to Philosopher’s Index, a database of articles: Find more info at <http://library.illinoisstate.edu/library-materials/find-materials/subject.php?id=42>

Career Center: <http://careercenter.illinoisstate.edu/>

- Career exploration, including STRONG inventory and other tests
- Career fairs and internship fairs
- Hire-A-Redbird system for finding employment opportunities
- Resume and cover letter assistance
- Mock interview practice
- Information about graduate and professional school

The Philosophy major liaison is Debbie Ungson-Walbert. She can be reached via email at dungson@ilstu.edu. Let her know that you’re coming from Philosophy, and that I sent you—they try to track who’s coming in and how.

Student Counseling Services: <http://counseling.illinoisstate.edu/>

- Group and individual counseling appointments (Individual appointments are limited in how many you can have per semester; group appointments are unlimited.)
- Psychological emergency services
- Self-help and assessments
- Sexual assault survivor services
- Workshops

Philosophy Department Contacts

Department office:

- Location: STV 412
- Email: philosophy@ilstu.edu
- Phone: (309) 438-7665

Department Chair: Chris Horvath

- Office: STV 412A
- Email: chorvath@ilstu.edu
- Phone: (309) 438-7298

Secretary: Crystal Scheiman

- Office: STV 412
- Email: cjschei@ilstu.edu
- Phone: (309) 438-7665

Academic Advisor: Derek O'Connell

- Office: STV 339
- Email: drocon1@ilstu.edu
- Phone: (309) 438-7795