Resources for Philosophy Students, with a focus on Queens College Undergraduates

Welcome to the study of philosophy.

Over the centuries, philosophers have offered different definitions of philosophy; many of these definitions conflict. According to almost all accounts, however, philosophy consists in a certain capacity for understanding. Traditionally, philosophy is concerned with fundamental questions of being, knowledge, and value -- value both ethical and aesthetic; and, it should be noted, even the most rebellious philosophers were thoroughly educated in the problems of whatever was taken to be the philosophical tradition, in the context in which they thought. But this is not the final account of philosophy to be had.

Philosophy is capable of questioning not only what is ‘not’ philosophy -- the status of empirical, scientific cognition, or the representational conditions of mathematics, for example; but also, philosophy is capable of questioning its own concept, or at least of establishing its concept by way of reasoned argument. Thus, philosophy is self-aware and radically open-ended as an intellectual practice, to the extent that its very subject matter is matter for inquiry.

Mindful of the thought of philosophers such as Plato, Spinoza, and Simone Weil, we might venture to say that philosophy is a true good for human beings. It is a true good that admits no jealousy, but only joy; it is a joy we are made to share in common. Yet philosophy is concrete and down to earth. Equally, philosophy is borne in terrestrial pain. Philosophy is a response to the futility of things that we imagine will remedy the lack in our lives. Philosophy is not a surrogate satisfaction, however, but rather the holding open of our dissatisfaction, of our longing; the longing of philosophy is a universal longing, the longing of all nature.

We might continue to venture: philosophy is useless, in that it yields no external good. For that, moreover, philosophy is not itself a good of the kind that can be ‘possessed,’ in the way we imagine ourselves possessed of everyday things, like our name and our social identity; philosophy cannot show you the way to make more money, or to obtain the things that make for what appears to be a happy life (although some of the articles listed below do argue that the pursuit of philosophy is compatible with making money, and can even enhance your financial situation); and yet, neither is philosophy a substitute for these things.

Philosophy is no guarantor of finite existence. And yet, precisely for its uselessness, philosophy is the most useful of all, and the most beautiful. It can lead us to a better understanding and love, of the nature of things, and of our own nature; of our capacities and our limits. It shows us the way to a consolation beyond consolation, not only in times of despair, but also in these times.

In that spirit, you are very welcome to the study of philosophy, and for making use of it, no matter if you are not a philosophy major; and no matter if you are not convinced of philosophy’s purpose, which is, perhaps, a strange and paradoxical one.
Below, please avail yourselves of a list of resources that can help you find your own route into philosophy, whether it is by joining a Philosophy Club, by submitting your writing to an undergraduate publication (a good thing to have on your CV, if you are minding such things), or by learning about the philosophical contributions of women and people of color that have been excluded from the canons and the institutions of philosophy, as well as the efforts to change things for the better. You may email the Queens College Philosophy Department (see the first entry, below), for more information and guidance, or to make suggestions about this list of resources.

I. General Information for Philosophy Majors : Requirements and Careers

Just as there are many different ways to conceive philosophy, so there are different ways to conceive and achieve a degree in Philosophy. Below, you can find information about the Philosophy major at Queens College, as well as the American Philosophical Association’s account of the major, and more.

1. The Queens College Philosophy Department website, with information about the major and the minor. Take special note of the information about our combined BA/MA program, which allows you to graduate with your Masters in Philosophy in four years:

   https://www.qc.cuny.edu/academics/degrees/dss/philosophy/Pages/default.aspx

2. The American Philosophical Association’s official statement on the philosophy major:

   https://www.apaonline.org/page/major

3. An article about majoring in Philosophy from U.S. News and World Report:

   https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/philosophy-major-overview

4. From the Daily Nous blog (‘nous’ means ‘mind’ in Ancient Greek), an article about the variety of careers that can follow from a degree in Philosophy:

   http://dailynous.com/2019/05/13/varied-careers-philosophy-majors/

5. Here is a link to the APA’s guide for non-academic careers in Philosophy, with or without a PhD:

   https://www.apaonline.org/group/nonacademic

6. If you are serious already about pursuing an academic career in Philosophy, or at least obtaining a PhD, here is the American Philosophical Association’s guide to graduate schools in Philosophy. It is also important to begin ongoing conversations with your philosophy professors and other academic advisors about your interest in pursuing Philosophy at the PhD level.

   https://www.apaonline.org/page/gradguide
7. Stanford University’s advice on succeeding in graduate school not only provides an excellent example of what graduate-level studiousness involves; but also, you can apply this advice to your undergraduate study of philosophy, as well as to your work in other subjects.

https://philosophy.stanford.edu/degree-programs/graduate-degree/graduate-life/advice-succeeding-grad-school

8. Here is the American Philosophical Association’s list of resources for undergraduates. It is very thorough, and even includes links to articles that will help you have a conversation with your family about pursuing a philosophy degree, and also about financial aid for your studies. Be sure to comb through the APA list with care:

https://www.apaonline.org/page/undergrad_resources

II. Publication and Social Opportunities for Undergraduate Philosophy Students, High School Students, and Children

Participating in Philosophy clubs, competitions, activities, and publications is an outstanding way to bolster your CV, no matter what your career. It can also be an opportunity to make new friends and to serve younger students in their own philosophical education.

1. Here you can find a fairly comprehensive list and description of publications for undergraduate philosophy students, many of them featuring the work of undergraduates themselves. Consider revising one or more of your philosophy term papers for submission to a peer-reviewed journal.

https://unl.libguides.com/c.php?g=51642&p=333917

2. The American Philosophical Association’s Directory of Undergraduate Philosophy Clubs:

https://www.apaonline.org/page/clubdirectory

3. For information about virtual sessions of the Queens College Philosophy Club during quarantine, and to help organize these sessions, please email your fellow students, Philosophy majors Johana Souvenance (Johana.Souvenance24@qmail.cuny.edu) and William Perez (WILLIAM.PEREZ16@qmail.cuny.edu).

4. The National High School Ethics Bowl is a competition that rewards and promotes teamwork and collaboration in the address of concrete ethical issues. If you are a high school student, consider joining an Ethics Bowl team. If you are further along in your study of philosophy, consider coaching or assistant-coaching for a local team.
5. Philosophy Slam is a series of competitions for children and high school students. Philosophy Slam allows young people to develop their critical thinking skills and to express themselves creatively in response to philosophical questions such as ‘What is the meaning of life?’.

http://www.philosophyslam.org/

6. A Night of Philosophy and Ideas is an annual all-night philosophy festival open to the public, hosted by the Brooklyn Library. https://nightofphilosophyandideas.com/

III. Philosophy Programs and Other Resources for Underrepresented Groups

Philosophers of color, women in philosophy, and philosophers from LGBTQIA+ communities are working to make philosophy more inclusive. Below, please find a collection of programs and projects that seek to change the constitution of the field and the concept of philosophy to reflect better the diversity of philosophical participants. You are sure to be guided to further resources and events, by signing up for the corresponding mailing lists.

1. Here is the American Philosophical Association’s Guide to Undergraduate Diversity Initiatives in Philosophy. There are several programs, so be sure to take a look.

http://apa.informz.net/z/cjuucD9taT0zMDk4MDgwJnA9MSZ1PTM4MzMyODczMSZsaT0yNTg5NzA5Mg/index.html

2. Minorities and Philosophy (MAP) is an international working group with autonomously working chapters, dedicated to creating opportunities for underprivileged philosophy students and scholars:

http://www.mapforthegap.com/

3. This New York Times article includes a discussion of black women’s advancement in philosophy, with Dr. Anita Allen. Of special note is its mention of the Collegium of Black Women Philosophers:

4. The New Narratives in Philosophy project includes ongoing efforts of outreach, education, research, and conferences that together strive to change the ways we understand the history of philosophy: New Narratives seeks to rethink and revise philosophical canons and teaching practices in accordance with the contributions to philosophy of women and minorities. You are sure to discover here philosophers whose work you will be pleased to discover, most likely for the first time:

https://www.newnarrativesinphilosophy.net/

5. What is it like being a Woman in Philosophy? is a credible blog run by a university academic that collects anonymous stories from women in philosophy about their experiences struggling with sexual harassment and assault, racism, homophobia, and countless other prejudices in insitutional philosophy. The blog is not fun to read, although there are sections of the blog dedicated to making positive changes and stories of persistence and achievement by women in the field. The blog is included in this list of resources because, while it is important for young women to be encouraged in every possible way along the path of their philosophical education, it is also wise for them to look candidly, as early on as possible, at the state of the field. Young women in philosophy are thus encouraged to learn from the experiences of women who have been there before.

https://beingawomaninphilosophy.wordpress.com/

6. The McNair scholarship program is a federally funded program to help prepare first-generation college students and students from underrepresented groups, for academic and career success at the level of doctorate study.

https://mcnairscholars.com/about/

IV. Readings in Philosophy

*If you like to be thorough and methodical in your approach to reading, the following reading lists can serve as foundations for your extracurricular education in philosophy, or for your preparation for graduate school.*

1. This graduate level comprehensive exam reading list in the history of philosophy from Southern Illinois University provides an excellent summary of essential texts in Western philosophy:

https://cola.siu.edu/philosophy/graduate/readings/

2. Here is a far more detailed graduate level comprehensive exam list in the history of philosophy, this one from the Catholic University of America:
3. Gathered by the American Philosophical Association, these articles address the causes and define the contours of the problem of underrepresentation in philosophy, by race, class, and gender:

http://apa.informz.net/z/cjUucD9taT0zMDk4MDgwJnA9MSZ1PTM4MzMyODczMSZsaT0yNTg5NzEwMQ/index.html

4. Women in Philosophy reading list, by Oxford University Press:

https://blog.oup.com/2019/04/12-most-important-books-women-philosophy/

5. Also by Oxford University Press, a Philosophy and Race reading list:


6. Diversity Reading List collects hundreds of texts for the purpose of constructing more inclusive philosophy syllabuses. You can search by time period or topic within philosophy:

https://diversityreadinglist.org/

V. Philosophy References and Writing Guides

There are countless ‘philosophy’ resources online, most of which are not credible. Below, you can find two credible online encyclopedias of philosophy, as well as resources for writing philosophy papers. Always remember to cite your sources to avoid plagiarism. It is a matter of integrity.

1. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy:

https://plato.stanford.edu/

2. Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy:

https://iep.utm.edu/home/about/

3. UC Davis Department of Philosophy has compiled a three-tiered list of resources for writing philosophy papers:

https://philosophy.ucdavis.edu/undergraduate/resources/writing-philosophy-papers
4. Simone Fraser University’s guide to writing philosophy papers helps you avoid some common mistakes, in addition to offering a lucid summary of writing approach:

http://www.sfu.ca/philosophy/resources/writing.html

5. Harvard University has a series of guides for writing according to discipline, including a guide to writing philosophy papers, in the form of a nifty handout:

https://writingcenter.fas.harvard.edu/pages/brief-guides-writing-disciplines

6. Here is an article by a Princeton University student, with her tips for writing philosophy papers as a non-major:

https://pcur.princeton.edu/2020/03/tips-on-writing-a-philosophy-paper-for-non-philosophy-majors/