



Purchase College

STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

**Philosophy Board of Study
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What Can I Do With a Philosophy Major?

There's an ancient stereotype of philosophers as geeks who are so preoccupied with abstract questions that they can't deal with the realities of the practical world, including the reality of making a good living. In the twenty-first century world, this is false!

It is true that many students initially major in philosophy because they are interested in (or obsessed with) certain questions for reasons that have nothing to do with job security. (That kind of obsession is a sign of intelligence, suggesting a mind that takes complexity seriously and seeks to process multiple perspectives before deciding what to believe and do.)

But recent statistics show that in this country philosophy majors, equipped with critical thinking and cultural literacy skills, go on to become the highest salary earners in the Humanities, with GRE and GMAT scores among the highest in all disciplines.

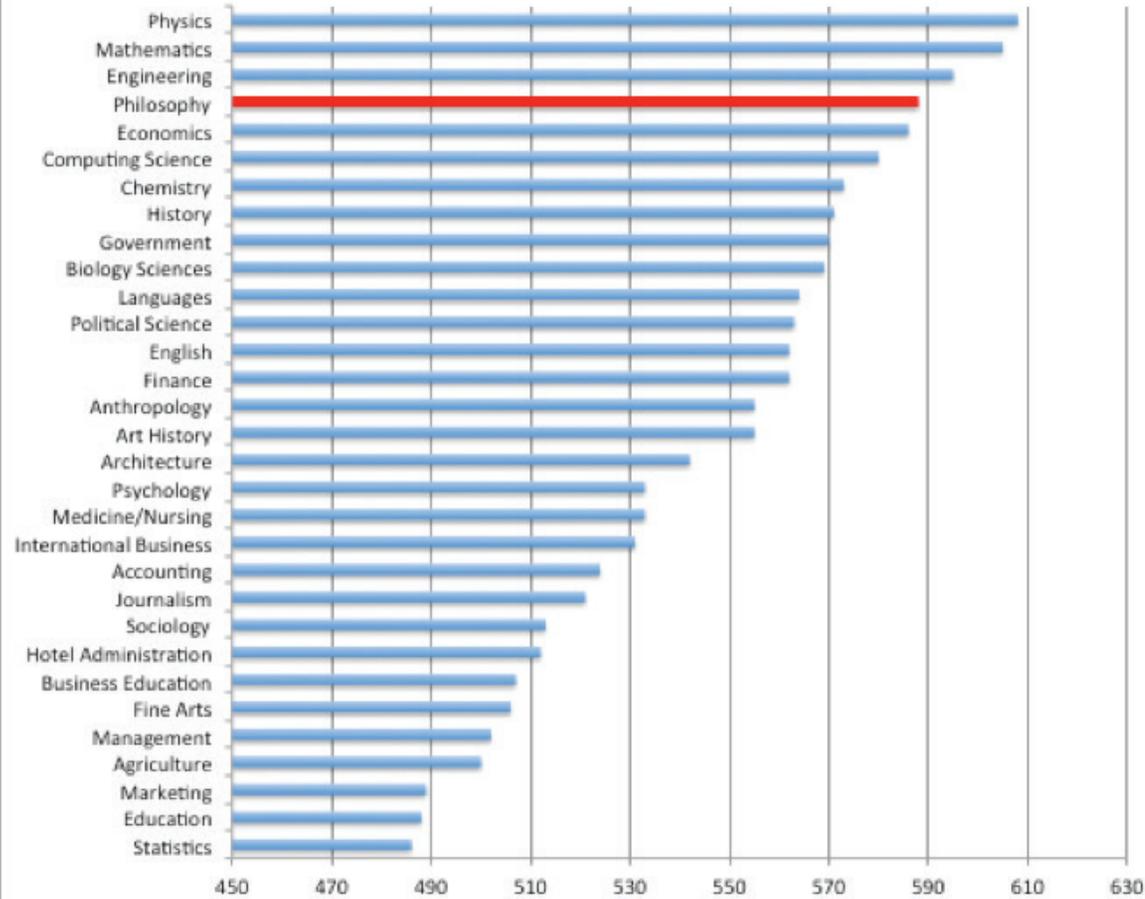
The vast majority of philosophy majors don't stay in philosophy, even while they overwhelmingly report being glad they chose that major because of the skills in reasoning and writing and the larger perspective on human knowledge and the world it affords.

Distinguished former majors include (a short list) George Soros, David Foster Wallace, Susan Sarandon, Martin Luther King, Aung San Suu Kyi, Carly Fiorino, Moby (Purchase philosophy major!), Susan Sontag, and David Souter.

If you consider the different kinds of valuable work these individuals have done, it becomes clear that, "What can I do with a Philosophy major?" is as much an existential as a practical question. This becomes even clearer if you flip the question around, "What wouldn't I be able to do without a Philosophy major?"

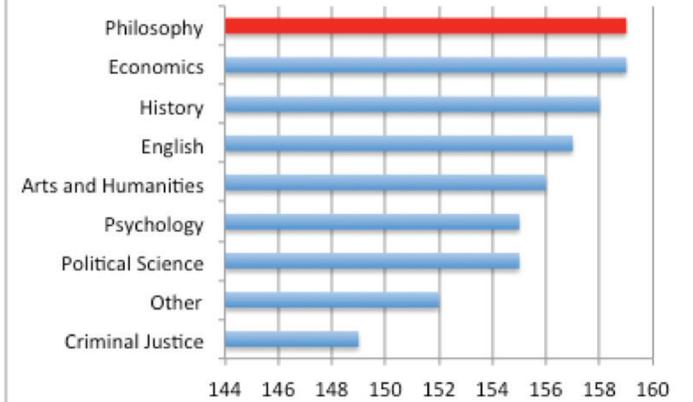
Following are some key statistics:

Mean GMAT Scores by Major



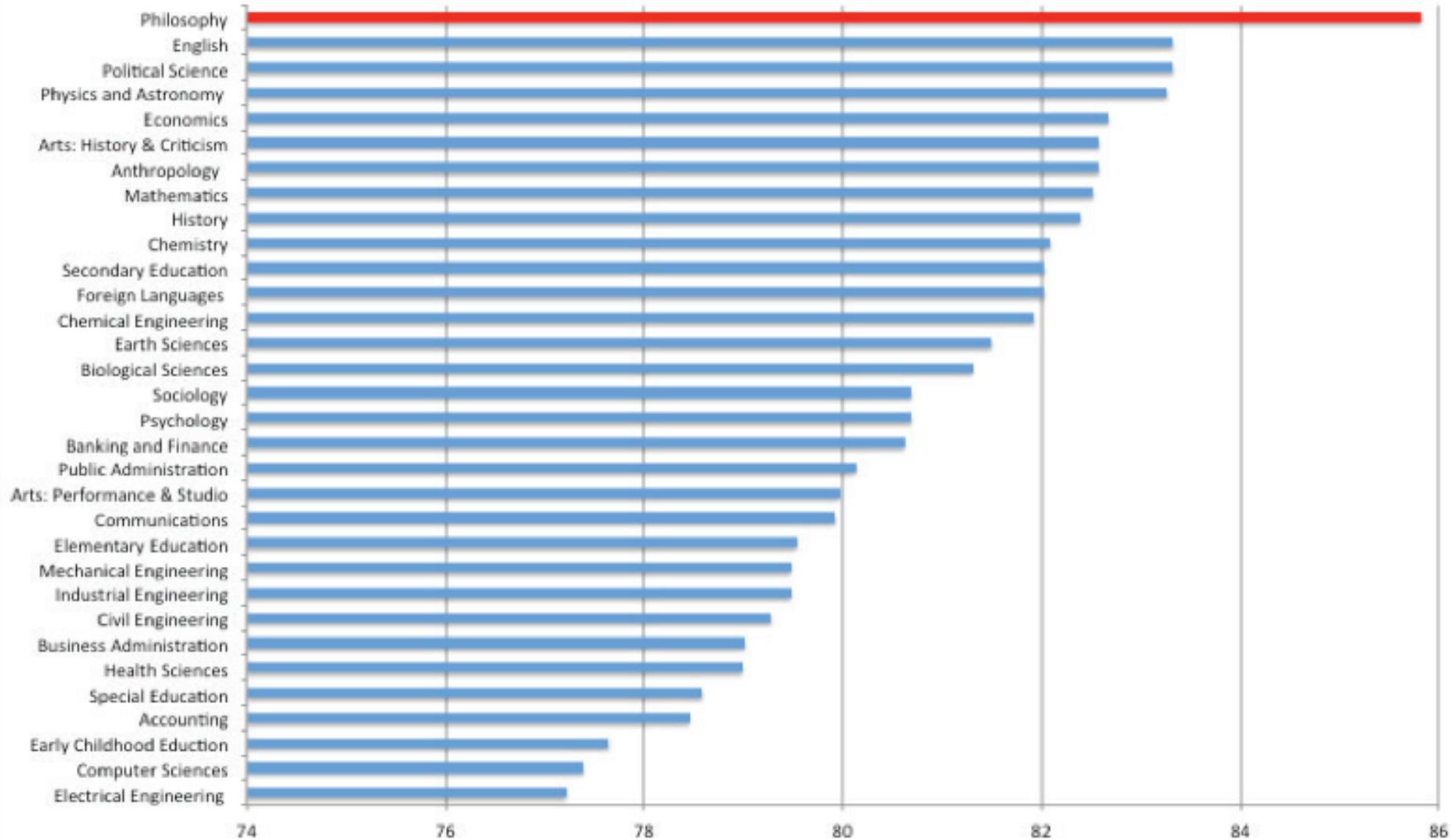
Data ©2014, Profile of GMAT Candidates, 2007-2012. Chart ©2015, philosophy@uno.edu.

Average LSAT Score



Data ©2014, Law School Admission Council, Inc., based on >1000 test takers.
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Composite GRE Score



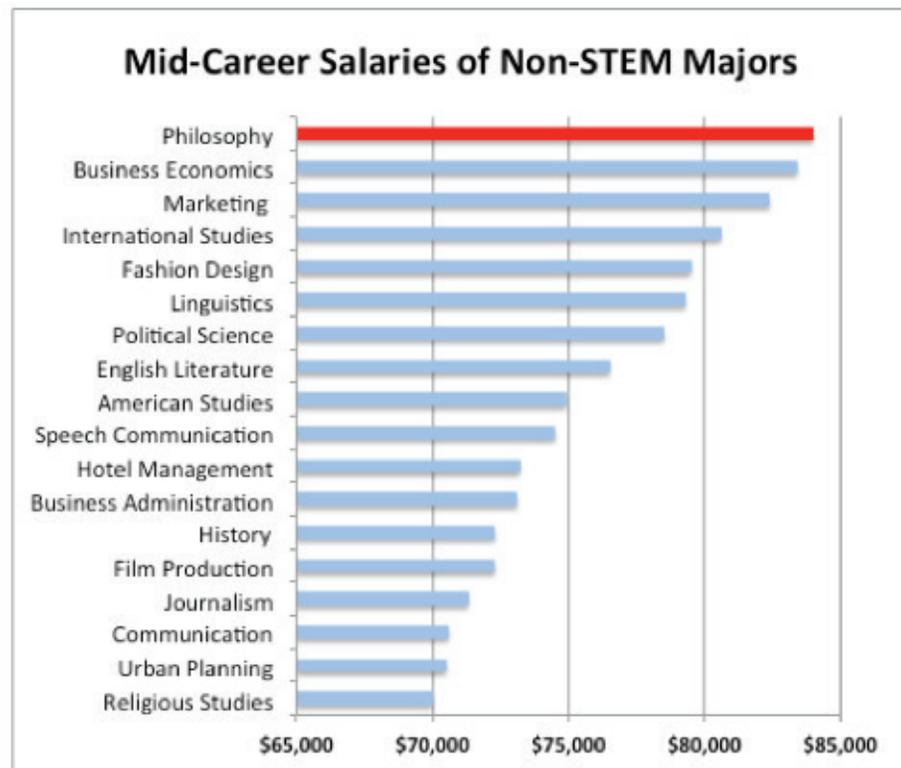
Data ©2014, Educational Testing Service, based on college graduates who tested between August 1, 2011 - April 30, 2014.

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THE EXTRA EARNINGS THAT GRADUATES IN HUMANITIES MAJORS CAN EXPECT OVER THEIR LIFETIMES

Major	Early Career Salary	Mid Career Salary	Lifetime Earnings Gain
Art	\$36,100	\$57,100	\$315,500
Drama	\$35,600	\$56,300	\$302,400
English	\$38,700	\$65,200	\$444,700
French	\$40,900	\$66,700	\$470,900
History	\$39,700	\$71,000	\$537,800
Philosophy	\$41,700	\$78,300	\$658,900

From "Surprise: Humanities Degrees Provide Great Return on Investment" by Jeffrey Dorfman at Forbes.com, November 20, 2014, based on data from Payscale.com.



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Further Links

Charts from [The Daily Nous](#): News For and About the Philosophy Profession (a comprehensive online source of information about philosophy job statistics).

[The Earning Power of Philosophy Majors](#): A recent article in Atlantic magazine about philosophy majors

[Why Study Philosophy](#): From Harvard University Philosophy Department website