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

- Physics
- Mathematics
- Engineering
- Philosophy
- Economics
- Computing Science
- Chemistry
- History
- Government
- Biology Sciences
- Languages
- Political Science
- English
- Finance
- Anthropology
- Art History
- Architecture
- Psychology
- Medicine/Nursing
- International Business
- Accounting
- Journalism
- Sociology
- Hotel Administration
- Business Education
- Fine Arts
- Management
- Agriculture
- Marketing
- Education
- Statistics

Average LSAT Score

- Philosophy
- Economics
- History
- English
- Arts and Humanities
- Psychology
- Political Science
- Other
- Criminal Justice

Composite GRE Score

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### The Extra Earnings That Graduates in Humanities Majors Can Expect Over Their Lifetimes

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


### Mid-Career Salaries of Non-STEM Majors

- Philosophy
- Business Economics
- Marketing
- International Studies
- Fashion Design
- Linguistics
- Political Science
- English Literature
- American Studies
- Speech Communication
- Hotel Management
- Business Administration
- History
- Film Production
- Journalism
- Communication
- Urban Planning
- Religious Studies


### Further Links

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

[The Earning Power of Philosophy Majors](https://www.atlanticmag.com): A recent article in Atlantic magazine about philosophy majors

[Why Study Philosophy](https://philosophy@uno.edu): From Harvard University Philosophy Department website