Division of Humanities

Philosophy

The Greek word philosophia ('philosophy') is a compound term which derives from the roots philein ('to love') and sophia ('wisdom') and is commonly translated 'love of wisdom.' For Socrates, and those who followed his example, the love of wisdom took the form of a disciplined reflection about human life and conduct. Though philosophical practice has taken many different forms over the centuries, the conception of philosophy as a process of critical inquiry aimed at a deeper understanding of self and world remains the dominant one.

THE PROGRAM

The study of philosophy promotes the development of analytical, critical and interpretive abilities that are important for life in general. The program in philosophy at Virginia Wesleyan is designed to provide students with a coherent intellectual structure of study, while acquainting them with the broad diversity of ideas and approaches within the Western philosophical tradition and beyond.

THE MAJOR

A student majoring in philosophy at Virginia Wesleyan is required to complete a minimum of 32 hours in specified coursework. Students may also choose to increase their opportunities in the workforce and graduate study by double-majoring or minoring. Properly pursued, philosophical study cultivates the appetite and capacity for self-examination and reflection, for the open exchange and debate of ideas, for responsible and intelligent participation in community affairs, and for lifelong learning.

THE COURSES

Classes at Virginia Wesleyan are small and interactive. Some of the courses within the philosophy program include: Individual and Society, Contemporary Moral Issues, Critical Reasoning, The Human Condition, The Examined Life, and Practical Ethics. The curriculum covers significant periods and prominent figures in the history of intellectual thought, as well as the central subfields of philosophy and their distinctive problem sets.

INTERNSHIPS/UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH

As the culmination of the major, each philosophy major completes a senior capstone project based on an in-depth study of the work of a single major philosopher. This extensive independent research project allows each of our students to demonstrate their mastery of the skills needed to succeed after college. Students may elect to complement the classroom experience with an internship opportunity. Internships provide students a "competitive edge" in the job market or when applying for admission in postgraduate degree programs

BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

Though the department recognizes that the philosophy major is a valuable preparation for careers in many fields, its approach to teaching reflects a basic commitment to the idea that philosophy is best thought of as a practice and way of life. Students earning a degree in philosophy will encompass skills that employers seek in an array of fields such as law, medicine, business, social work and religion. The study of philosophy also provides graduates with an understanding of the role and responsibility of the individual to use moral reasoning as a tool for conflict resolution and consensus building in an increasingly interconnected world.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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