The philosopher Wilfred Sellars describes the goal of philosophical inquiry as trying to understand "how things in the broadest possible sense of the term hang together in the broadest possible sense of the term." To this end, philosophy students examine the scope and limits of human knowledge, the nature of human values, and our most basic assumptions about reality in courses on ethics, political theory, aesthetics, the theory of knowledge, metaphysics, logic, and the history of philosophy. Classes are small, allowing for intensive examination of philosophical ideas and a high degree of interaction among students and faculty.

Students who study philosophy develop their ability to analyze problems and evaluate their solutions, to distill complex data, to organize ideas and construct arguments, and to communicate clearly and persuasively. The study of philosophy provides a broad acquaintance with some of the greatest achievements of human civilization, and it is an excellent preparation for a variety of professional careers, especially law, business, teaching, medicine, journalism, and public administration. Recent Mills graduates in philosophy have gone on to postgraduate studies in literature, law, and the fine arts, as well as in philosophy.

Many students may arrive at Mills with little previous exposure to philosophy and are uncertain where to begin exploring the subject. Any lower-division course can serve as an introduction to the discipline, especially courses in the history of philosophy (Ancient Philosophy, Early Modern Philosophy, and Chinese Philosophy) and value theory (Ethics and Political Philosophy). Upper-division courses, too, may be appropriate for students beyond their first year if they have an interest or background in the specific area. For example, many students contemplating a career in law or public service enroll in Philosophy of Law; students in psychology and computer science enroll in Philosophy of Mind; and literature and fine arts students enroll in Aesthetics.

Program Goals

- Possess a critical understanding of the positions taken by major figures in the history of philosophy.
- Possess a critical understanding of major issues in speculative philosophy (metaphysics, epistemology and their sub-divisions.)
- Possess a critical understanding of major issues in value theory (ethics, political philosophy, aesthetics and their sub-divisions.)
- Understand the logical structure of natural language and be able to construct and test arguments using formal proof procedures.
- Be able to use philosophical concepts and theories to construct cogent and well-written defenses of positions taken on contentious issues.

Minors

Philosophy Minor (https://catalog.mills.edu/undergraduate/majors-minors/philosophy/philosophy-minor)