

## Stern College for Women

**Department/Program Name: Philosophy**

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### **Mission Statement:**

The mission of the philosophy department is to foster students' familiarity with a significant range of philosophical problems, concepts, arguments, and figures, and to prepare students for a variety of careers, ranging from law to teaching to writing to finance to medicine. The department provides this preparation by teaching transferable skills such as analyzing and appraising arguments, constructing original arguments, and writing clearly about complex material. In addition, some courses enable students to understand the relevance of philosophy to social problems, especially issues in ethics and public policy.

**Goal 1:** Students will be able to critically evaluate philosophical arguments and to construct their own. Students will demonstrate attainment of this goal by being able to:

- Express arguments in rigorous form, with numbered premises and conclusions.
- Critically evaluate arguments by finding faulty premises or dubious inferences between steps.
- Present arguments not only in numbered form, but in rigorous yet clear prose.
- Identify the many categories of both valid inferences and logical fallacies (whether formal or informal) that philosophers identify and label—for examples, modus ponens, modus tollens, transposition, ad hominem, affirming the consequent, and begging the question.

**Goal 2:** Students will be able to clearly communicate philosophical ideas, both orally and in writing. Students will demonstrate attainment of this goal by being able to:

Students will demonstrate attainment of this goal by being able to:

- Orally communicate complex ideas in a clear and systematic manner
- Clearly and systematically present logical arguments in written assignments

**Goal 3:** Students will be able to comprehend a wide, diverse range of philosophical texts.

Students will demonstrate attainment of this goal by being able to:

- Interpret philosophical texts that come from different eras and locales, and therefore encompass different styles (e.g., dialogue, dialectical, formalistic,) and contain specialized vocabularies (as in the case of medieval texts).
- Explain the ways in which these texts “conversed” with each other historically.

**Goal 4:** Students will be able to understand main arguments and figures in the history of philosophy. Students will demonstrate attainment of this goal by being able to:

- Articulate the different positions associated with different philosophers and school of thought
- Articulate the specific arguments used by each philosopher or school of thought
- Compare and contrast the positions and arguments in detail.

**Goal 5:** Students will be able to understand alternative ways of viewing subject matters, be they issues in metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, or any other subfield of philosophy. Students will demonstrate attainment of this goal by being able to:

- Develop arguments for each side of a philosophical issue.
- Develop counter-arguments to their own position
- Assess these counter-arguments to their own position

**Goal 6:** Students will be able to apply philosophical knowledge and skills to analyze relevant social problems. Students will demonstrate attainment of this goal by being able to:

- Apply ethical and political theories to concrete social problems in areas like medical ethics and the ethics of war.
- Identify the assumptions and arguments about ethical and political issues that are made in both philosophical writings and genres intended for popular consumption.
- Critically assess these assumptions and arguments.