

## Philosophy and Formal Education

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### 1. My Background:

- I did a BA in Bible at Manhattan Christian College, and a BS in Philosophy at Kansas State University.
- I took a year off (did ministry and worked) and applied to grad schools.
- I applied to 12ish places, but Notre Dame had always been my top choice. When I was accepted there, I did visit some other schools, but it was a pretty easy decision.
- I was enrolled in the PhD philosophy program at ND from 2014–2019.
- I went on the job market in 2018–2019, and got a post doc (ANU) and a TT job at Ryerson.

### 2. Majoring in Philosophy (for a Bachelor's degree): I recommend it!

- If you're interested in other grad schools (med school, law school, etc.) philosophy prepares you well. Philosophy majors do very well on the GRE/LSAT.
- Philosophy majors also do quite well salary-wise, over time. It teaches you logic and critical thinking which helps you in almost any job (with writing, speaking, reasoning, problem solving, etc.)
- Philosophy is great prep for ministry.
- Bonus: philosophy is interesting! You get to think about moral dilemmas, God, free will, personal identity, and so forth.

### 3. Graduate School in Philosophy: I don't recommend it.

- Grad school is very demanding, competitive, and low paying (though normally you get paid ~\$25k/year).
- The job market is BAD (especially post-COVID). Pre-COVID, ~40% of philosophy PhDs got a permanent academic job.
- Your preferences may change in grad school. (Often, your desire for an academic job gets stronger.)
- It is probably not worth going to a PhD program that is unaccredited or unranked. It's also probably not worth going to any program in philosophy (MA or PhD) if it is going to saddle you with debt. (Many MA programs and most PhD programs have funding.)
- You should go to grad school if only you love philosophy enough that you would see your time in a demanding philosophy program as worth pursuing for its own sake, and not merely as something of instrumental value. (But this is only a necessary, not a sufficient, condition.)
- You can learn quite a bit on your own. However, it is definitely not the same as the rigorous training you receive in grad school.

### 3. The Application Process:

- Where should I apply?
  - Google "Philosophical Gourmet Report" for a ranking of PhD programs.
  - Many people apply to a range of schools at various rankings. I'd recommend applying to *at least* 10 schools, and several in the top 20.
  - In many cases, it makes sense to do an MA first.
- Parts of the application process
  - Writing sample: most important.
  - Letters of recommendation: second most important.
  - Statement of purpose: 1-2 pg. statement about why you want to go to grad school.
  - Transcripts: only philosophy grades really matter.
  - GRE: less schools are requiring it now.
  - Application fee: most schools offer fee waivers.
- Choosing a grad program
  - Visit if you can (visits are funded if you're accepted).
  - Look at the stipend/cost of living ratio, not just the stipend.
  - Ask pointed, specific questions about the grad student community, specific advisor(s) you are considering working with, and most importantly, PLACEMENT.

#### 4. What is Grad School Like?

- Year 1-2:
  - Taking classes (normally 3 per semester), working as a teaching assistant (TA).
  - If you're in an MA program, normally they last 2 years, and are mostly coursework, but could include a thesis or big paper at the end. And TAing.
- Year 3:
  - Often some kind of exam—history exam, area exam, oral exam, qualifying paper
  - Maybe a few classes; TAing.
- Year 4:
  - Dissertation proposal
  - Teaching your own class?
- Years 5-6:
  - Writing your dissertation
  - Teaching
  - Going on the job market (which takes a lot of time!)
  - Defending your dissertation

Note that—depending on the school—many, if not most, people take more than 6 years to finish.

Great things about grad school: getting paid to do philosophy, so much fun stuff to learn, social opportunities, free time/flexible schedule, summers off, free food.

Hard things about grad school: finances are tight, little accountability/time management, competitive, imposter syndrome, mental health.

#### 5. The Academic Job Market

My experience: I applied for 99 jobs, got 10ish interviews, 2 offers. Everything I interviewed for was either (i) an epistemology-specific job or (ii) philosophy of religion/a religious school.

You should *not* go on the market unless you have at least one publication in a good journal and you're almost done with your dissertation (again necessary, not sufficient). Here's the process:

- You submit an application consisting of: a CV, writing sample, 3-5 letters of recommendation, teaching statement, teaching dossier, cover letter, research statement/dissertation summary, transcripts, diversity statement. (Notice that this is *a lot*. It's a ton of work to get together.)
- Approx. 150–800 applications are received per job. Who you'll be competing against: (i) other graduate students and postdocs, (ii) tenure-track faculty looking to switch positions, and occasionally (iii) senior faculty in an open-rank search.
- First-round interview online or at Eastern APA. Approx. 8-12 people are interviewed.
- Flyout. Generally, about 2-4 people are flown out.
- Offer. Generally, one candidate gets an offer; if that offer is turned down, the next candidate in line may get an offer (dean permitting).

Honest take: Going on the job market is a ton of work, brutal, extremely stressful (high stakes), and often discouraging. Many go on year after year. Some apply to dozens and dozens of jobs and get no interviews at all. I say this not to be overly pessimistic, but to let you know what you're in for.

#### 6. Resources

- *The Professor Is In* (Karen Kelsky)
- *Good Work If You Can Get It* (Jason Brennan)
- My video with Justin Mooney on TAC: <https://youtu.be/Wn2c6X9IRfA>

Find links to these and more at: <http://liz-jackson.com/teach-service/philosophy-graduate-school-resources/>