What Do Alums Have to Say about Philosophy at John Jay?

Jillian Shartrand, class of 2015

"Choosing Philosophy as my major during my undergraduate studies at John Jay College of Criminal Justice has helped me become theoretically insightful in my current studies at law school. My classes in philosophy **fostered a thirst for moral, political and legal analysis** which is essential to understanding decisions rendered by the courts as well as understanding the statutes passed by the legislature. In addition to this heightened perception of the rationale underlying law, the study of philosophy engrained in me the ability to make logical arguments and think analytically. A legal education demands a proficiency at defending claims for or against a given proposition, as well as analyzing the structure of an argument and identifying the implications of a given line of reasoning. Being a philosophy major at John Jay has given me the philosophical foundation in which all of these skills are essential, and **now I use these skills on the path to my career as a lawyer**."

Kathlyn Salazar, Class of 2015

"The most important lesson that I've learned from being a Philosophy major is that we need to examine our biases**.** In Philosophy, you learn to discipline yourself not to judge something based on your own interpretation. Rather, you judge or analyze based on the facts provided and with respect to the person whose opinion you're listening to.

I've learned so much in the last 2 years that I've taken Philosophy classes. I learned from professors who are experts in their fields and who are at the same time learning with you and growing with you. **There wasn't a class that was boring or a class where you didn't learn something interesting.** There's always at least one person who's willing to have a conversation about any topic that you can come up with. One of the most gratifying moments that you get in class is that eureka moment when you finally understand what Hume or Kant or Clarke is talking about. It's as if your head just exploded and you've finally seen the light.

I picked Philosophy as my major because it challenges me and it **makes me think and question myself in ways that other disciplines do not.** Also, the professors are amazing and they're just excited to learn as you are. It's a lot of work and it's a lot of information to take in. However, in the end, being able to understand and to find your way out of that maze of information is worth all the caffeine and all the migraines."

Nataniel Arabov, Class of 2016:

"Philosophy is a unique field, in that it **encompasses an individual's ability to understand and examine life's questions**. I had one particular course that activated my ability to think and have conversations in ways that I never knew would be possible. The course, Philosophy 402, Senior Seminar in Metaphysics and Epistemology, enabled me to engage with ideas that challenged life's fundamental questions. We delved into fields of medicine with the split-brain theory, psychology with implicit bias studies, and pure philosophy with the question: Who am I?

One of the topics that I will never forget was the idea of whether we, as persons, in fact, possess free will. This was a true gift to study because it forced me to grapple with ideas that challenged my notion of free will. By methods of creative and analytical thinking, I attempted to engage in a thesis that exposed the problems about reality, knowledge and meaning. In the process, we had conversations with the most influential world thinkers, like Plato, Locke and Hume and many more! By the end of class in Spring 2015, I can safely say that I gained a love for wisdom. Philosophy tapped into unreal pleasures for my mind and soul."

Lucy Delaney, Class of 2014:

"Philosophy is a thing. And yet - what even is a 'thing'? Where do things 'exist'? How are we 'experiencing' them? While I may have left the John Jay Philosophy Department, minor in hand, more confused on these issues than ever - and with more questions than ever before - I am certainly a much better conversationalist and user of quotation marks.

My minor **enriched my educational experience** and has stayed with me long after graduation. While my major in Forensic Science gave me the practical experience I needed to succeed at my career, my classes in philosophy opened my eyes to the layered complexity of our minds, our bodies, our Earth, our ways of perceiving, and how those things are (possibly?) connected. It gave me a foundation on which to place my personal experience in the universe; it informed how I learn, how I think, and how I relate to other humans. **I would not be the person I am today without philosophy**, and I strongly encourage everyone to explore what the Philosophy Department has to offer. It is a perfect complement to the more traditional rote collegiate experience. Out of all 18 credits, I did not have a professor or class that I felt less than wildly enthusiastic about."

Peter Kowalewska, class of 2014:

"I loved studying philosophy because it gave me time to mature and develop a richer understanding of myself. When I first started college, it seemed as if I had to choose whether I liked math or English more and then make a future dedicated to just that. But I was curious about everything and I wanted to **understand things across academic fields.** As a student of philosophy, I learned how to teach myself anything. The basic skills for that are in critical reasoning and logic, which are just introductory classes. More advanced classes **deepened my level of thinking** since they focused on particular ways of interpreting the world, as well as providing more difficult and complex questions that challenged my core values. Many perspectives, ideas, and truths about the world that we have today can be traced to philosophy's ancient and classical roots. That long lineage makes me proud to be a student of philosophy because I feel I am carrying on a human tradition, one that has contributed to making me feel human in the first place."

Visit http://www.jjay.cuny.edu/department-philosophy to learn more about Philosophy at John Jay College of Criminal Justice.