



Philosophy, Politics, Economics, and Law (PPEL)

ppel.richmond.edu

What Is the PPEL Program?

The major in Philosophy, Politics, Economics, and Law (PPEL) provides a course of study in normative theory. Normative claims are claims about what people ought to do, and normative theories provide general frameworks for answering such questions. The PPEL program focuses on normative questions relating to public policy and law. For example, how should people respond to climate change? What sort of healthcare system should a society adopt? How ought people to conceive of property rights in ideas? What sort of international law should be put in place to regulate cross-border trade?

To address questions like these, PPEL majors draw on normative theories developed by economists, philosophers, political scientists, and legal theorists, including cost-benefit analysis, utilitarianism, justice as fairness, and natural or human rights. Students also explore and analyze key concepts such as rationality, efficiency, justice, welfare, and virtue. The PPEL major prepares students to offer carefully argued analyses of the ends at which law and public policy ought to aim, as well as the appropriate means to those ends.

Requirements for the Major

Completion of the PPEL major requires a minimum of 14 units, including:

Core Courses:

- ECON 101: Principles of Microeconomics
- PPEL 261: PPEL Seminar in Theory and Public Policy
- PPEL 262: PPEL Seminar in Law and Social Order
- PPEL 363: Rational Choice and Political Theory
- PPEL 401: PPEL Capstone Seminar

Area Courses:

- One course in normative ethics
- One course in normative political theory/political philosophy
- One law-related course

Area requirements can be fulfilled by courses in a variety of departments and schools. Majors should consult the PPEL

website for an up-to-date list of approved courses. Exactly one area course also may count toward the five units within the primary concentration.

Concentration:

A required concentration chosen from economics, politics, or philosophy including:

- Five units selected from within the primary concentration field
- One unit from each of the other two concentration fields

No more than half of the courses satisfying the requirements of the major may be taken in a single department. With the exception of leadership studies, no more than three courses that count toward the completion of another major may also count toward the PPEL major. No more than four courses that count toward the completion of a leadership studies major may also count toward the PPEL major.

A Sampling of Approved Area Courses

Ethics Area Courses:

- ECON 233: Ethics and Economics
- LDST 377: Ethical Decision-Making in Healthcare
- PHIL 120: Contemporary Moral Issues
- PHIL 265: Bioethics
- PHIL 269: Environmental Ethics
- RELG 294: Varieties of Jewish Ethics

Political Theory/Political Philosophy Area Courses:

- ANTH 328: Anthropology of Human Rights
- LDST 210: Justice and Civil Society
- LDST 374: Contemporary Debates in Democratic Theory
- PHIL 369: Economic Justice
- PLSC 311: Classical Political Thought
- PLSC 315: American Political Theory
- RELG 369: Ethics, Religion, and War

Law-Related Area Courses:

- ECON 231: Law and Economics
- PHIL 260: Philosophical Problems in Law and Society
- PHIL 364: Philosophy of Law
- PLSC 331: Constitutional Law
- PLSC 337: The American Legal System
- PLSC 339: Jurisprudence in

- Contemporary American Politics
- PLSC/ENVR 362: Environmental Law and Policy
- RHCS 353: Rhetoric and Law

Speakers Series

Every year, the PPEL program invites distinguished scholars to campus to meet with majors and to give a public lecture. Recent invitees include:

Deirdre McCloskey, University of Illinois at Chicago, Distinguished Professor of Economics, History, English, and Communication, speaking on “Bourgeois Virtues: Ethics for an Age of Commerce”

Steven R. Ratner, Bruno Simma Collegiate Professor of Law at the University of Michigan, speaking on “Ethics and International Law: Integrating the Global Justice Project(s)”

Geoffrey Brennan, Distinguished Research Professor at Duke University and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, speaking on “Climate Change: A Rational Choice Politics View”

The PPEL program has also organized speaker series on topics such as the moral limits of markets, and the ethics and economics of voting.

Summer Internships

PPEL majors have interned for many state and federal legislators (including a former House Majority Leader); state and federal judges; local, national, and international NGOs; law firms; private equity firms; consultancies; insurers; advertising agencies; and public relations firms.

Summer Research Fellowships

PPEL majors have received generous fellowships to support independent research projects carried out in collaboration with a faculty mentor. Past projects include: “Rationalizing Liberalism and Economics Education,” “Intellectual Property Theft in the Internet Age,”

“Self-Interest and Sympathy,” “Economic Growth Without the Legal Enforcement of Contracts: The Case of China,” and “Profitable Prisons: Pragmatic, Ethical, and Classical Liberal Arguments.”

Post-Graduate Opportunities

PPEL majors have gained admission to many of the nation’s finest law schools, including Boston University; The George Washington University; Georgetown University; Indiana University; University of Chicago; University of Miami; University of Georgia; University of Southern California; University of Texas, Austin; University of Virginia; Wake Forest University; Washington and Lee University; Washington University in St. Louis; William and Mary; Yeshiva University; and, of course, the University of Richmond. Many students have received substantial (even full) scholarship offers from these law schools. Some majors have pursued graduate degrees in other fields, such as hospital administration and international development.

PPEL majors have been hired by a wide range of private and public employers, including Amazon, Chamber Hill Strategies, Deloitte, Edelman, FTI Consulting, ING Financial Planners, the Inter-American Development Bank, Kasirer Consulting, M&T Bank, Oxford Global, Skanska, US Department of Agriculture, William Morris Endeavor, Yelp, and the legislative and constituent services offices of members of the U.S. House of Representatives. Several graduates also chose to teach English abroad in places such as China and Malaysia; in the latter case, as a recipient of a prestigious Fulbright Scholarship.



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Jul 2023