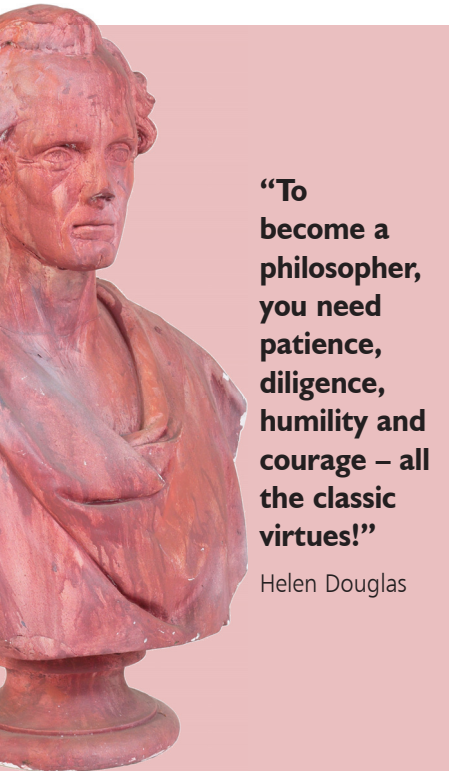


Philosopher

"The unexamined life is not worth living, but the un-lived life is not worth examining!"

Philosophy is indeed very difficult to define, as there are many different disciplines. Helen Douglas is a philosopher and says, "The discipline of philosophy broadly involves two things: practically, you learn how to think about things; and theoretically, you study the historical development of ideas and concepts. Although there are many areas of specialisation, this kind of training can be applied in any field of endeavour. Studies have shown that philosophy graduates are valuable employees, as they are able to understand underlying processes and to respond creatively in dynamic situations. Many people who study philosophy to a PhD level enter into academic careers as university teachers and researchers."



"To become a philosopher, you need patience, diligence, humility and courage – all the classic virtues!"

Helen Douglas

"I first heard about it (philosophical counselling) while I was doing my Master's degree at the University of Stellenbosch. I loved doing philosophy, but I didn't see myself as a lecturer." Being a philosophical counsellor, Helen can keep doing philosophy and also work with other people. Helen's dream is to publish more writing. She told us about this philosophical career.

Basics

A philosopher is also known as a philosophical counsellor. According to Helen, the salary of a philosopher varies. "Socrates, who lived in the fifth century BC, and whose philosophy marks the beginning of Western democracy in Greece, never took money for his work. He claimed that philosophers who did were 'sophists' or con artists. There are people now who still think that it is unethical to charge money for practising philosophy with others. I appreciate that position, but I still need to pay my rent, so I charge as little as I can

afford to. There is certainly a lot of money to be made as a consultant, coach, teacher or lecturer, but I don't know the figures. It's a funny business. If you study philosophy, you'll gain the skills necessary to make good money, but you might also discover that you don't need to."

Job description

"I work as a philosophical counsellor, which means that I work with individuals who are having problems that they would like to understand and resolve, who want to make some change, or who have lost a sense of meaning in their life. I also write essays for various journals and conferences. I am particularly interested in ethics and socio-political questions."

Pros and cons

"Many people tell me that it's difficult for them to slow down and really reflect on what they're doing and how, or they say that they feel like they're stuck or going in circles. It's lovely to be able to provide an opportunity for them to engage with their lives more consciously. Talking with them also brings more meaning to my own life. There's also a lot of laughter and discovery," says Helen.

"On the down side, most people don't know about philosophical counselling or they think that philosophy is very elitist or abstract and has nothing to offer them. The funny thing is that we all have some guiding philosophy of our own (our beliefs and values), so doesn't it make sense



that we should become more aware of how we're thinking and acting?" asks Helen.

Required studies and experience

To become a philosophical counsellor, you would need to complete a Master's degree in Philosophy. "I believe the University of the Free State offers some courses, and there are training programmes available in the UK and America. It's also good to read widely, both to increase one's own understanding of the ways of the world and to have resources to offer clients. Life experience is also important, and I think it's crucial that one should have wrestled philosophically with one's own questions and issues. If you haven't struggled to find your own way, how will you help others to find theirs?"



UNISA
Tel: 012 429 4111
Bachelor of Arts (Human and Social Studies) with specialisation in Philosophy, Politics and Economics
3 year's study

Requirements:
• Matric Certificate with university exemption

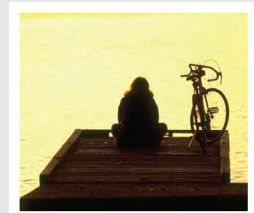
University of KwaZulu Natal
Tel: 031 260 2212
B A Philosophy, Politics & Law
3 year's full-time study

Requirements:
• Matriculation Exemption

University of Stellenbosch
Tel: 021 808 4840
BA in Political, Philosophical and Economic Studies (PPE)
3 year's full-time study

Requirements:
• Matric Certificate with Matriculation Exemption
• An aggregate of at least 50% for matric Math HG E or SG C

Places of employment:
Universities



Personality types

"To become a philosopher," says Helen, "you need patience, diligence, humility and courage – all the classic virtues!"

An average day

"If I am seeing a guest (client), I will look over my notes from previous sessions and settle myself to meet them. I depend on them to determine what needs to be done, so I don't plan anything. After each session, I take time to write down what we spoke about. I usually have at least a couple of writing projects on the go as well, and I also spend time in online discussion forums with other professionals in the field. And there are always a few books needing to be read," smiles Helen.

The best thing about the job

"It doesn't feel like a job, it feels like my life. That's pretty wonderful. I enjoy both the demands and rewards," says Helen.

The worst thing about the job

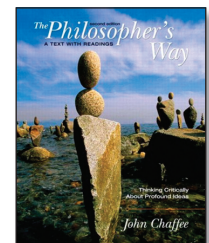
"Like any kind of self-employment, there's not a lot of security. But at least I can be philosophical about that!" smiles Helen. ■

Gabrielle Venter

THE PHILOSOPHER'S WAY: THINKING CRITICALLY ABOUT PROFOUND IDEAS

Author: John Chaffee

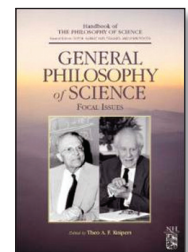
This dynamic volume is designed to teach readers to become critical thinkers as they explore the influential thinkers and central themes of Philosophy from ancient times to the present. In addition to the conceptual and language subject matter, this presentation ignites readers' sense of wonder through an innovative design, substantive readings, innovative writing assignments and thinking activities that provide readers with the opportunity to learn and practise the conceptual abilities needed to think philosophically.



GENERAL PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE: FOCAL ISSUES

Editor: Theo A. F. Kuipers

Scientists use concepts and principles that are partly specific for their subject matter, but they also share part of them with colleagues working in different fields. This title includes comprehensive coverage of the philosophy of science written by leading philosophers in this field.



Reviews by Kalahari.net

Websites of interest:

www.philosophynow.org

For more information go to
www.sacareerfocus.co.za