PHILOSOPHY DEPARTMENT

Student Handbook
Why major or minor in Philosophy?

• Philosophy focuses on questions that have fascinated humankind for thousands of years, including: what is beauty, freedom, or justice? Does God exist? Is life ultimately meaningless? Is morality relative? What is knowledge, and do we have any of it? When, if ever, should we stop asking so many questions?

• Many academic disciplines happen to sharpen your critical reasoning, but Philosophy specializes in it.

• The Philosophy major at UWO requires only 34 credits (11 courses), making it easy to finish a degree in 4 years, or to double-major.

• UWO Philosophy majors have been accepted by some of the best graduate programs in the world.

• Philosophy majors regularly have among the highest average GRE (verbal & analytical writing), LSAT, and GMAT scores of any major!

• Payscale.com, which reports on the salary growth potential of Bachelor degrees, finds that philosophy majors are in the top 25% by mid-career: the highest among the humanities.

Come visit us on the 3rd floor of Radford Hall, or on the web at http://www.uwosh.edu/philosophy/
THE PURPOSE OF THIS HANDBOOK...

...is to provide general information about philosophy and more detailed and current information about Philosophy Department offerings than is available in the University Catalog and Schedule of Classes. Information contained here is accurate as of January 2017 but some changes may occur. Updated information will be available from the Philosophy Department. If you have questions concerning the Department, its programs, or its course offerings, feel free to direct them to any member of the Philosophy faculty.
WHAT IS PHILOSOPHY?

Philosophy is a very ancient subject, over 2,500 years old. It is the subject that has always dealt with the most fundamental questions that people have asked: What do we know? What is real? Do we have control over our own lives? How are our minds related to our bodies? Is there a God? Is there a purpose to the universe? How does one determine what actions are right and wrong? These are questions that strike everyone at one time or another, but most people quickly dismiss them when they realize that they are so difficult to answer. How does one begin even to think about a question like what is real?

Philosophers, however, are more stubborn than most people, and they have tried to address these questions in a thoughtful way. Many people have opinions about these questions, but in philosophy, it is not enough to just express one’s views. All of the major philosophers have tried to think carefully about these matters, and present their own views in a way that will convince others.

Philosophy is also a critical subject—one that considers various aspects of life, and questions them to see whether they make sense. For example, the philosophy of science examines the methods and goals of science to determine whether science itself is a rational enterprise. The philosophy of religion does the same with religion. The philosophical perspective is one of standing back, reflecting, and examining. When one takes this perspective, one finds that what has been taken for granted often is confused, unclear, and not very well established.

Philosophy is thus a very wide-ranging subject that concerns every aspect of human experience—religion, science, art, values, history, mathematics, literature and love. Philosophy is also a basic subject that aims to penetrate to the core of every area that it examines. It is the field that deals with fundamental assumptions and basic outlooks. It deals with what is really important, and tries to find out what makes anything else important, too.

The study of philosophy should enhance a person’s appreciation of what human life is all about, and should also provide people with some new ideas to consider. Studying philosophy will increase a person’s ability to reason carefully, to think and write clearly, to consider new approaches and outlooks, to question the way we live, and hopefully to deepen one’s understanding. Finally, in studying philosophy, an individual will be exposed to the works of some of the most thoughtful and brilliant people of the past and present: Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Kant, Russell, Sartre, Wittgenstein and others. These thinkers have not only been important in the history of philosophy, but have formed many of the major concepts on which our civilization is built.
WHAT CAN ONE DO WITH PHILOSOPHY?

Philosophy may be an important and fascinating subject to study, but does it have any practical value? In particular, what benefit is an undergraduate degree in philosophy to a person’s future? What careers can it lead to?

ADVANCED DEGREES IN PHILOSOPHY - Some philosophy majors at UW Oshkosh have pursued advanced degrees in the subject. Our graduates have been accepted at the University of Rochester, University of California-Berkeley, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Tufts, Brandeis, University of Illinois, Ohio State, University of Pittsburgh, Marquette University, Virginia Tech, and others. Students who pursue advanced degrees usually intend to teach philosophy at the college level and conduct research in the field. This is a noble career to undertake; however, it should be noted that employment prospects in this area have not been very good for several years, and it is uncertain how much they will improve in the coming years.

Nevertheless, if one is interested in graduate school in a philosophy program, one should begin planning it in one’s junior year. One of the first things to do is to discuss one’s plans with a member of the Department. There are several things to consider: what particular schools to apply to, taking the GRE exam, preparing a writing sample, and thinking of finances.

Applications for graduate schools usually have to be in by the January following the Fall semester of one’s final year, and so it is extremely important to begin the process by preparing to apply as soon as possible.
CAREERS IN BUSINESS—An undergraduate degree in philosophy is a “liberal arts” degree, and it is becoming clearer and clearer that businesses are becoming more interested in hiring people with such degrees. Consider the following quotations from an article in the Wall Street Journal, June 1, 2016 written by David Kalt, a founder, owner, and former CEO of several major companies including Reverb.com, Chicago Music Exchange, and optionsXpress:

“...individuals with liberal arts degrees are by far the sharpest, best-performing software developers and technology leaders.”

“A well-rounded liberal arts degree establishes a foundation of critical thinking. Critical thinkers can accomplish anything...A critical thinker is a self-learning machine...”

“...we don’t need qualified, formally trained engineers with university degrees. Rather, I’m suggesting that if more tech hires held a philosophy or English degree with some programming on the side, we might in the end create better leaders in technology and life.”

In another article from the September 2016 Wall Street Journal, George Anders discusses how liberal-arts majors are increasingly earning more and more. He writes, “...liberal-arts majors often pursue graduate degrees and gravitate into high-paying fields...according to an analysis by the Association of American Colleges & Universities.”

“I love hiring liberal-arts graduates. They think broadly and communicate effectively...They can challenge ideas.” -Dave Elkington, founder and chief executive of InsideSales.com

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How Pay Stacks Up</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Median annual earnings for select liberal-arts and other degrees, based on years of experience.</td>
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<tr>
<td>LIBERAL-ARTS MAJORS</td>
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<tr>
<td>English lang. &amp; literature</td>
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<tr>
<td>History</td>
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<tr>
<td>International relations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Philosophy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Political science</td>
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<tr>
<td>Psychology</td>
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<tr>
<td>OTHER MAJORS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accounting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business management</td>
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<tr>
<td>Civil engineering</td>
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<tr>
<td>Computer science</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hospitality management</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nursing</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note: Data is for bachelor’s degree  
Source: PayScale

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.
CAREERS IN HIGH TECHNOLOGY- Throughout its history, philosophy has generated new ideas and methods that have become useful in other areas. For this reason, philosophy is one traditional area that has found a new role in the high-tech world. Philosophy emphasizes a skill that is needed in every technical area, which is the ability to take a vaguely formed problem and find precise ways to deal with it. Philosophers are playing a major role in artificial intelligence, computer program development, and industrial applications of computational linguistics and teaching.

DEGREES IN LAW AND OTHER FIELDS- Many undergraduate philosophy majors are interested in going to law school, or in getting a graduate degree in another academic area. In applying to programs of these kinds, students are almost always required to take the LSAT (Law School Admissions Test) or the GRE (Graduate Record Exam). In general, philosophy majors have done very well on these tests. On the next two pages are tables showing the mean score that various majors receive in two of three parts on the GRE test (Verbal Reasoning and Analytical Writing), as well as their typical results on the LSAT and the GMAT.

OTHER POSSIBILITIES- As the list of famous former philosophy majors near the end of this Handbook shows, people who pursued degrees in Philosophy have gone into and flourished in a variety of fields. It is difficult to really guess what sorts of jobs will be in high demand in the future—even the near future. LinkedIn co-founder Reid Hoffman and Flickr founder Stewart Butterfield claim their experience in studying philosophy was the secret key to their success as the digital entrepreneurs they are, according to a 2014 article from the Huffington Post. Atlantic contributor Edward Tenner has stated that he views philosophy as the “most practical major.” It seems that there will always be places for people who are skilled at developing logical arguments and who have the ability to consider issues from a variety of perspectives. Plato might not have said anything about the features of our economy, government and art forms, but those who are making contributions in these areas have often been influenced by what Plato said.

“[Philosophy] keeps alive our sense of wonder by showing familiar things in an unfamiliar aspect.”

-Bertrand Russell
STANDARDIZED TESTS AND PHILOSOPHY

The Graduate Record Examination (GRE) is a test that is taken by thousands of college seniors who are interested in professional or graduate study beyond a bachelor’s degree. Most graduate and professional programs require that applicants take this test, and the results are often a critical factor in being accepted into a particular program. The examination consists of three parts: Verbal, Quantitative and Analytical Writing. The Verbal section is designed to test language skills—vocabulary and reading comprehension. The Quantitative section is designed to test basic mathematical competence and the ability to interpret data. Finally, the Analytical Writing section is designed to test analytical and critical reasoning abilities, in addition to writing abilities.

The Law School Admission Test (LSAT) is a very similar test that many law schools require their applicants to take in their senior year. Like the GRE, the results that an applicant achieves on the LSAT can be very important in determining whether the applicant is admitted to a law school. Below is a chart of a variety of majors, comparing their mean LSAT scores to the LSAT scores of philosophy majors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2014–15 Majors &amp; LSAT Scores</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Major</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECONOMICS</td>
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<tr>
<td>PHILOSOPHY</td>
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<tr>
<td>HISTORY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENGLISH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POLITICAL SCIENCE</td>
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<tr>
<td>PSYCHOLOGY</td>
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<tr>
<td>COMMUNICATIONS</td>
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<tr>
<td>SOCIOLOGY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BUSINESS MANAGEMENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRIMINAL JUSTICE</td>
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</table>

Source: lsac.org
### 2012–2015 Majors & GRE Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major</th>
<th>Verbal</th>
<th>Analytical Writing Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PHILOSOPHY</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARTS &amp; HUMANITIES</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOCIAL SCIENCES</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIFE SCIENCES</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHYSICAL SCIENCES</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENGINEERING</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUCATION</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BUSINESS</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOCIAL WORK</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### 2012–2015 Majors & GMAT Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>GMAT Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PHILOSOPHY</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>574</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECONOMICS</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>564</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMPUTER SCIENCE</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>562</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENGLISH</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>554</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FINANCE</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>533</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSYCHOLOGY</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>521</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDUCATION</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>491</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MANAGEMENT</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>485</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: [http://dx.doi.org/10.3200/JECE.39.3.269-272](http://dx.doi.org/10.3200/JECE.39.3.269-272)
So what do these standardized test results mean? One should not quickly infer that if one majors in philosophy, one will then do very well on the GRE or LSAT exams. To make this inference would be to commit the fallacy of “false cause”, and no one with a philosophy background would ever reason so mistakenly. (The fallacy of false cause is the mistake of thinking that just because A is correlated with B, A causes B. So, just because philosophy majors do well on the GRE and the LSAT, it does not follow that the cause of their excellent performance was what they majored in. There could be other explanations—maybe philosophy majors are gifted test-takers, or maybe those who decide to major in philosophy are just extraordinarily intelligent.

Nevertheless, even taking the fallacy of false cause into account, one can still think that there may be some connection between what one learns in one’s major and the results on this test. Philosophy, maybe more than any other subject, requires students to read difficult material, to think carefully and logically, to look for criticisms, to develop arguments, to assess evidence, and generally to analyze views and ideas. Philosophy also emphasizes rigorous methods of thinking and sometimes uses the techniques of formal logic to evaluate the validity or soundness of arguments. If one were to consider what course in the university would be one of the best for preparing for something like the GRE or LSAT, which are designed to test general reasoning skills, the field of philosophy would be one of the first that one would think of.

Thus, while one should always keep the fallacy of false cause in mind, and admit that these results do not, by themselves, prove that taking philosophy courses will improve one’s performance on the GRE or LSAT, it is also true that these results are probably not a mere coincidence. Taking philosophy courses may well contribute to doing well on these tests.

“A philosopher is never concerned which side of the bread the butter is on because he eats both sides.”
-William James

“Philosophy asks the simple question: What is it all about?” -Alfred North Whitehead
“All are lunatics, but he who can analyze his delusion is called a philosopher.” -Ambrose Bierce
THE PHILOSOPHY
MAJOR AND MINOR

The Philosophy Department at the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh views as equally important its two major functions at the undergraduate level: providing training in philosophy to those who elect our discipline as a major, and providing high-quality instruction in philosophy to those who take our courses as electives or to fulfill University requirements. Our courses tend to be demanding, but the result is an increased level of competence in communicating ideas, logical rigor, critical thinking, articulateness, and analytical skill.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS FOR PHILOSOPHY MAJORS

Philosophy at UW-Oshkosh is a 34-credit major. Because a major in philosophy is not weighted down with requirements, it can be taken in conjunction with another major and/or minor. 13 credits (4 courses) are required, including PHIL 101 (Elementary Logic) or 202 (Symbolic Logic), PHIL 104, or 105, or 106 (Ethics, often taken as a Quest II class), PHIL 301 (History of Ancient Philosophy), PHIL 305 (History of Modern Philosophy), and PHIL 475 (our 1-credit Philosophy Capstone course, which you take in combination with an elective upper-level philosophy course in order to write an independent research paper). 21 additional credits (7 courses) are taken as electives, and you can choose from any of the other courses we offer. The only restriction is that at least one course has to be taken from each of the categories below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY A</th>
<th>CATEGORY B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PHIL 306: Philosophy of Emotion</td>
<td>PHIL 205: Ethical Issues in a Diverse Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHIL 309: Contemporary Philosophy</td>
<td>PHIL 215: Philosophy of Art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHIL 315: Philosophy of Science</td>
<td>PHIL 225: Philosophy of Love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHIL 316: Introduction to Cognitive Science</td>
<td>PHIL 250: Environmental Ethics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHIL 319: Theory of Knowledge</td>
<td>PHIL 251: Biomedical Ethics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHIL 327: Philosophy of Mind</td>
<td>PHIL 325: Social and Political Philosophy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHIL 322: Philosophy of Language</td>
<td>PHIL 329: Contemporary Ethical Problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHIL 331: American Philosophy</td>
<td>PHIL 330: Business and Ethics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PHIL 345: Philosophy of Law</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For all course descriptions, please visit Titan Web. Select “Self-Service” from the menu on the left and click “Browse Course Catalog.” Then, select “P” and scroll down to “Philosophy” for a full list of courses offered in the department along with course descriptions.
## Other Elective Courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Course</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PHIL 109: Introduction to Philosophy</td>
<td>PHIL 312: Existentialism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHIL 110: Honors: Intro to Philosophy</td>
<td>PHIL 320: Metaphysics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHIL 202: Symbolic Logic</td>
<td>PHIL 340: Climate Justice (GS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHIL 207: Philosophy of Religion</td>
<td>PHIL 350: Computing Ethics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHIL 210: Ethics and Community</td>
<td>PHIL 426: Selected Topics in Philosophy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHIL 211: Philosophy in India</td>
<td>PHIL 446: Independent Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHIL 307: Philosophy in Literature</td>
<td>PHIL 456: Related Readings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Course Requirements for Philosophy Minors

The minor in Philosophy consists of only 21 credits. 9 credits (3 courses) are required: PHIL 101 (Elementary Logic) or 202 (Symbolic Logic), PHIL 104, 105, or 106 (Ethics, often taken as a Quest II class), and PHIL 301 (History of Ancient Philosophy) or PHIL 305 (History of Modern Philosophy). 12 additional credits (4 courses) are taken as electives, and, just as in the major, you can choose from any of the other courses we offer, as long as one is from Category A and one from Category B above.
Members of the Philosophy Department regularly host study abroad programs. These programs provide excellent opportunities for students to study philosophy in a different cultural setting chosen for its relation to course content. In recent years, the Department hosted trips to Edinburgh, Scotland, as well as Cambridge and London, England.
ADVISING

To become a philosopher, a student should fill out a Change of Major Card in the Advising/Scheduling Center in the Undergraduate Advising Resources Center in Suite 202 of the Student Success Center. Students should see the Chairman of the Department, Larry Herzberg, for advising before scheduling their classes.

THE SOCRATIC AWARD

The Socratic Award is given to the graduating major (or majors) whose student career demonstrates great achievement in philosophy. While a variety of measures are considered, philosophy GPA is the primary consideration. The award, which has been in effect since 1971, consists of a certificate honoring the recipient and a gift.
The Philosophy Club is not a typical club. There are no officers, no dues and no rules of order. It is a gathering place to discuss, argue, and explore questions in an informal setting. The club sometimes receives a small budget from the Student Allocations Committee, which has been used to obtain speakers from other campuses. There have also been a number of speakers from the UWO Philosophy Department, as well as from other UWO departments (such as Dr. Feldman from English, pictured below), who have given talks at programs sponsored by the Philosophy Club. Anyone interested is invited to join and participate. For further information contact Professor Robert Wagoner (920-424-7311) or email wagonerr@uwosh.edu. You can also join the Philosophy Club e-mail list at: http://lists.uwosh.edu/mailman/listinfo/philclub
“What if... a demon came to you in your loneliest solitude and said: ‘This life, as you live it now and as you have lived it, you will have to live again and again countless times...!’ Would you throw yourself down and gnash your teeth...? Or have you experienced a tremendous moment when you could have answered: ‘...I have never heard anything more wonderful!’ If the idea got power over you, ... ‘would you want this again and again countless times?’ would be the greatest weight upon your actions.”

-Friedrich Nietzsche
“The aspects of things that are most important for us are hidden because of their simplicity and familiarity. (One is unable to notice something — because it is always before one’s eyes.)” - Ludwig Wittgenstein
FAMOUS PHILOSOPHY MAJORS

WES ANDERSON  
Director of The Grand Budapest Hotel

ETHAN COEN  
Co-filmmaker of Hail, Caesar!, No Country for Old Men, True Grit, Fargo, The Big Lebowski

STEPHEN COLBERT  
Comedy Central’s The Colbert Report

WES CRAVEN  
Director of A Nightmare on Elm Street, Scream, The Hills Have Eyes

HARRISON FORD  
Actor

RICHARD GERE  
Actor

RICKY GERVAIS  
Comic Actor from The Office

MATT GROENING  
Creator of The Simpsons and Futurama

CHRIS HARDWICK  
MTV Host

RASHIDA JONES  
Actress from The Office, Parks & Recreation

BRUCE LEE  
Martial Artist, Actor

STEVE MARTIN  
Comedian, Actor

SUSAN SARANDON  
Actress

KERMIT SCOTT  
Inspiration for Kermit the Frog

FRED THOMPSON  
Actor from Law & Order

ALEX TREBEK  
TV show Jeopardy host

MATTHIAS WEINER  
Creator of the TV show Mad Men

YOKO ONO  
Artist/Musician

CHRIS HAYES  
Editor of The Nation, MSNBC Host

CARLY FIORINA  
Former CEO of Hewlett-Packard

REID HOFFMAN  
Founder of LinkedIn.com

GERARD LEVIN  
Former CEO of Time-Warner, Inc.

JOHN MACKEY  
CEO of Whole Foods

LARRY SANGER  
Co-founder of Wikipedia

POPE JOHN PAUL II  
Leader of the Catholic Church
PETER THIEL
Co-founder & Former CEO of PayPal

TERRENCE MALICK
Film Director

MYLES BRAND
Former Head of NCAA

RICHARD HOFSTADTER
Historian

ARIAN FOSTER
Former Runningback of Houston Texans

JUAN WILLIAMS
Fox News Host

PHIL JACKSON
Former Coach of L.A. Lakers

GENE SISKEL
Film Critic

ARTHUR GONZALEZ
Wide Receiver-2006 Ohio State

KWAME TURE (STOKELY CARMICHAEL)
Black Nationalist

MICHAEL MCKASKEY
Owner of Chicago Bears

ELIE WIESEL
Writer

THOMAS JEFFERSON
U.S. President

PHILIP GLASS
Composer

BILL CLINTON
U.S. President

ROBERT McNAMARA
Former Secretary of Defense
Formoer Head of the World Bank

DAVID SOUTER
Former Supreme Court Justice

IRIS MURDOCH
Novelist

RAHM EMANUEL
Mayor of Chicago

GEORGE SOROS
Financier

STEVE REICH
Composer

CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS
Journalist

SUSAN SONTAG
Author

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Writer
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Email: williame@uwosh.edu