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**12.36 North American Studies Program (NAST)**

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The purpose of North American Studies is to provide a compre-



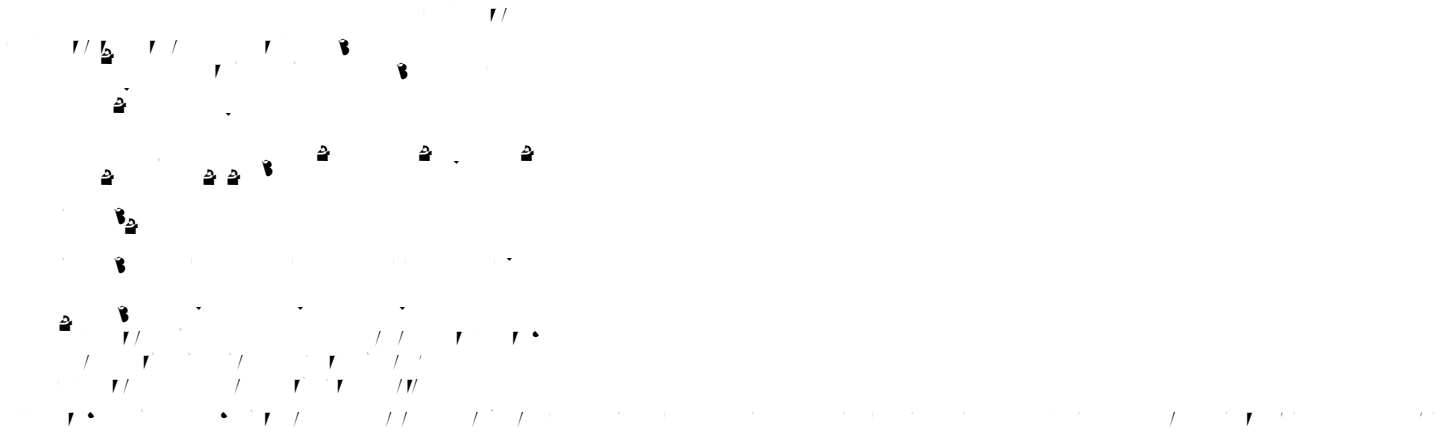
*Associate Members*Richard Hayes (*Religious Studies*)Lawrence Kaplan (*Jewish Studies*)Alan Patten (*Political Science*)*Visiting Professors*G.A. Cohen (*Chair Professor of Social and Political Theory*,*University of Oxford*)

Broadly speaking, the principal aim of philosophy is to increase our understanding of ourselves, the world, and our place in it. Philosophy differs from the empirical and social sciences in important respects. We may characterise different areas of philosophy by (a) the sorts of questions it seeks to answer, and (b) the ways in which it seeks to answer them. Different areas of philosophy are characterised by the questions they address. For example, Epistemology inquires into the nature of knowledge; Metaphysics is concerned with the fundamental nature of the world and of the types of things that it contains; Ethics investigates the nature of moral judgment and moral reasoning, while Political Philosophy examines such matters as justice, freedom, rights, democracy, and power; and Logic is broadly the analysis of the structure of correct reasoning. In addition, there are the various "Philosophies of...". The Philosophy of Science, for instance, is concerned with the nature of scientific method and the structure of scientific explanations.

Some of the courses in the Department are explicitly devoted to these specific areas of philosophy, each exploring one or several ways of construing and answering the questions it poses. Other courses explore some period or individual figure in the history of philosophy, approaching philosophical questions through the work of past thinkers, and often exploring connections between the different areas of philosophy.

The discipline of Philosophy, as a particular way of thinking, emphasizes clarity in expression, both written and oral, and rigour in argument. Philosophical questions are intriguing and hard, and so philosophical method stresses thoroughness and intellectual generosity – the willingness and ability to grasp another's arguments and respond to them. The Department requires of all (and only) Honours and Joint Honours students that they take a special 3-credit course (PHIL 301) the principal aim of which is to equip students with the distinctively philosophical skills required for advanced work in the field.

The B.A. in philosophy is not a professional qualification. It prepares students for graduate work in philosophy and for study in other disciplines, e.g. Law. As the interdisciplinary discipline par excellence, philosophy also maintains and encourages ties with



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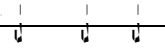
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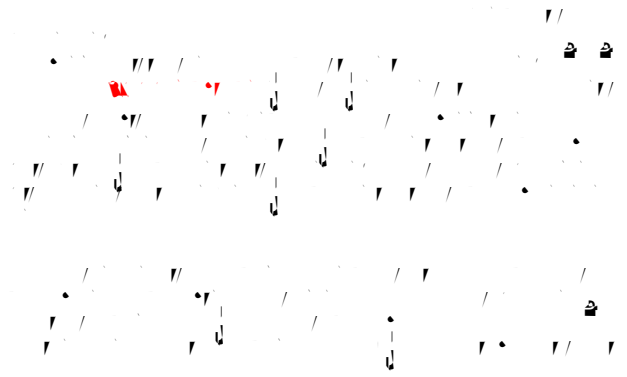
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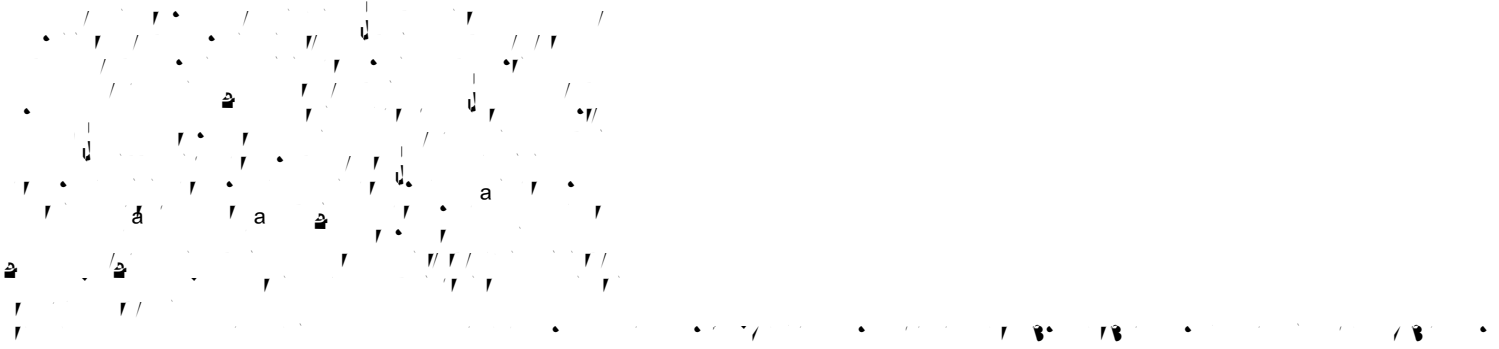
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The diagram consists of several distinct sections:

- Left Column:** A vertical sequence of symbols, including a small triangle, a square, and several other geometric shapes.
- Central Area:** A large, dense field of small symbols and lines, possibly representing a grid or a complex network. It includes many small 't' characters and various geometric shapes.
- Bottom Line:** A horizontal sequence of symbols, including a small triangle, a square, and several other geometric shapes.

