When and where is philosophy useful and how does it differ from other academic disciplines?

“Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)” for Philosophy Majors:

1. What can you do with a philosophy degree?

Nothing except teach. Just kidding. First, even if one does not go into teaching, here is a list of non-academic careers for philosophy majors (and these are actual careers that philosophy majors (BA) have gone into, not hypothetical ideas, from the APA):

1. Business: advertising executive; assistant manager of a hotel; assistant to the president of a national firm; brewer; development manager; manager of a winery; manpower services coordinator.
2. Computers and Technology: computer systems analyst; consultant; owner of a computer firm; programmer; technical writer.
4. Education (non-teaching fields): admissions officer; alumni relations officer; archivist; college president; dean; educational testing administrator; humanities bibliographer; librarian; residence hall director; provost; vice-chancellor for academic affairs.
5. Engineering.
6. Finance: bank officer (various departments); commodities broker; financial advisor; investment broker; tax accountant.
7. Government (federal): armed forces officer; CIA staff member; congressional staff member; diplomat; immigration service staff member; intelligence officer; intern in the Department of Defense; policy analyst; policy and planning consultant; United Nations official; U.S. Postal Service staff member.
8. Government (state and local): director, human services agency; county commissioner; county supervisor.
9. Insurance.
10. Law: attorney; bond lawyer; coordinator of a criminal justice program; director of communications at a state bar association; legal researcher; police officer; legal aid society employee; paralegal assistant; security officer.
11. Marketing.
12. Media: free-lance writer; executive editor of a magazine; TV producer.
13. Medicine: director of a provincial medical association; hospital administrator; nurse; nursing administrator; physician; veterinary oncologist; ethicist on an ethics board.
15. Real Estate.
16. Religious Ministry
17. Research: business, educational, governmental, and scientific.
[This comes from the American Philosophical Association website and it also has detailed reasons why philosophy can help one in each of these areas, which could be very helpful.]

**Second**, philosophy is useful in any line of work, because, if you can think better, more logically, question assumptions well, and make good arguments for your positions (without being obnoxious about it), then how would being able to do so **not** be of great use in any other discipline?

2. Is there “money” in the philosophy field?

**First**, the average salary of a philosophy major, no matter what area he or she goes into, is $80,000 a year. See the list of careers above, and imagine how much money a college president or hospital administrator makes, if you deeply value money.  
**Second**, don’t look now, but here’s a philosophical argument that is relevant to this topic: One should question whether money can truly make one happy. Happiness studies done in the field of positive psychology have found that people in general do not report being any more happy beyond a salary of $75,000, so congratulations on not winning the recent $1.5 BB lottery.

3. Are philosophy majors just a bunch of kids getting high on marijuana a bunch?

**First**, though I realize that this is not a good philosophical response: I hate when people think, ask, or say this.  
**Second**, though there are many people who get high or drunk and philosophize, and usually very poorly because they typically haven’t had a class in logic or have read much of what philosophers have actually written, this does not imply that the reverse is true: That philosophers get high and write up papers and books, or shoot the bull. One must make well-reasoned, coherent arguments for one’s position in order to be worthy of the title philosophy.  
**Third**, assuming getting high is done to escape reality, a philosopher doesn’t really know exactly what is real, as that is a major philosophical question, so doing philosophy is or should be mind-blowing enough.

4. How is philosophy different than other academic disciplines?

**First**, and most significantly, philosophy questions or can question every other discipline, its methods, its conclusions, and its assumptions, among other things. For example, there is philosophy of science, which questions and studies the methods of science, what science is, how it differs from pseudo-science, whether we can obtain certain knowledge from science, and so on. There is also philosophy of law, language, religion, psychology, physics, biology, mind, sport, and others.

5. Does philosophy still have a place?
**First**, see above. Unless somehow we all together find the answers to all the philosophical questions we have, and agree that those are the correct answers (and sound arguments), and have no questions or objections against the arguments/answers, then philosophy has (and will have) a place.

**Second**, Stephen Hawking states that philosophy is dead, but … long story short, uses philosophy in order to try to argue that philosophy is dead, and/or uses philosophy as a physicist.