

Philosophy grad seeks to impart foundational humanities skills on future generations

By Julia Taylor, ASU News
May 12, 2026

Editor's note: This story is part of a series of profiles of notable [spring 2026 graduates](#).

Carsten Berry didn't take the typical route to becoming a math teacher — he majored in philosophy, fostering logic, critical thinking and problem-solving skills to bring to his personal experiences, and his lessons, into the classroom.

Berry's love for philosophy began with his seminar-based high school courses. He later developed a fascination with the philosophy of education, specifically how Plato's ideas of education shaped classical liberal arts today, focusing on teaching students how to think rather than simply memorizing facts. This later became the subject of his [Barrett, The Honors College](#) thesis: "The Training of the Mind: A Platonic Legacy in the Classical Liberal Arts."

At the same time he was completing his research, Berry was interning with local schools as part of his [secondary education certificate](#) with the [Mary Lou Fulton College for Teaching and Learning Innovation](#). This opportunity allowed him to see how his thesis played out in real classrooms while helping students with diverse learning needs, he said.

Originally from Scottsdale, Arizona, Berry chose to study at ASU because of the university's opportunities for growth, as well as its proximity to his home and support systems.

He is the recipient of the [Christine Sato Memorial Scholarship in Philosophy Endowment](#), the [New America University Scholar](#) President's Award and [Lee Family Memorial Scholarship](#), among other distinctions.

Now, as he graduates with his [bachelor's degree in philosophy](#), Berry plans to begin his career as a secondary mathematics teacher. He wants to help students develop the same skills he honed during his time at the [School of Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies](#) — teaching them to process information, make logical decisions and adapt to challenges.

"I've seen firsthand the positive impact a teacher can have on students," he said. "I'm really looking forward to continuing that impact in a classroom of my own, helping students find success not just in mathematics, but in all areas of life."

We spoke with Berry to learn more about his time at ASU.

Question: What was your favorite spot on campus, whether for studying, meeting friends or just thinking about life?

Answer: My favorite spot on campus was, without hesitation, "A" Mountain. Pretty early on at ASU, "A" Mountain became my go-to spot to unplug. I'd hike up there once or twice a week in the evenings specifically to get away from my schoolwork. That said, the mountain was much more than simply a place to relax. There's something about listening to music as I watched the lights dance across the Valley that completely reset me. My favorite part was the view of Sky Harbor Airport. I'd just sit at the summit and wait for the planes to fly right over me. Ultimately, the mountain gave me a much-needed sense of perspective, rest and joy amidst my busy semesters.

Q: Have you participated in or benefited from any programs, labs or centers at ASU?

A: I utilized the [SHPRS Writing Studio](#), specifically for help with symbolic logic, which ended up being a great foundation for the more technical side of my studies. That background really fed into my Barrett Honors thesis, a 75-page project I completed under the guidance of (Associate Teaching) Professor [Shawn Klein](#).

Q: Which professor taught you one of the most important lessons you've learned at ASU? What was the lesson?

A: One of the most impactful lessons I learned came from Dr. [Thad Botham](#) (or just "Thad," as he insisted we call him) in my [PHI 304: Existentialism](#) course. Going into a heavy philosophy class, I expected to just sit quietly and read dense texts, but Thad completely flipped that expectation, reminding us that philosophy is actually a deeply social discipline. He purposely broke down the traditional walls between student and teacher to foster authentic conversation and relationship. His biggest rule was that we had to bring our "KFC" to every single class: kindness, fairness and curiosity. Between that daily reminder and the way he genuinely fostered community (like cooking us delicious food every week for Philosophy Club!), he taught me that true intellectual growth doesn't happen in isolation but in community with those around you.

Q: What's something you learned while at ASU (in the classroom or otherwise) that surprised you or changed your perspective?

A: Every person is on their own path. As a freshman, I quickly fell into the "comparison trap," constantly measuring my progress against others, thinking about who would make more money after graduation or who was "ahead" in life. Over time, however, I realized that everyone is on a different path and that comparing my journey to someone else's wasn't beneficial or healthy. Eventually, I began to shift my focus to my own responsibilities and goals, which helped me tremendously, allowing me to stay grounded while completing my degree and preparing for my career.

This story originally appeared on [ASU News](#).

Text image(s)



Carsten Berry, courtesy photo