“I learned a lot in the music industry, but that scene really wasn’t for me,” Javier says. “However, I did meet a lot of people in that business, and I realized that what I’m actually interested in is the interaction between humans – exploring the question of why we do what we do. And philosophy allows me to look for answers.”

Initially, Javier tried to sign up for a philosophy of language course. “That class was overbooked, but I emailed the professor and told him that his course sounded really interesting. I asked him to let me in, and his response was ‘sure.’ The experience in that class just opened the floodgates for me.”

Since then, he’s chosen to double major in psychology and philosophy, and minor in neuroscience. “A lot of my questions are in areas that aren’t so easily categorized, but they can be explored through philosophy. When I combine that approach with the empirical, lab-based information I learn in neuroscience and psychology, I can see it all start to come together for me.”

Javier has found important mentors in the philosophy department. “I have a good rapport with one in particular who I see almost every day. Our conversations range from 1980s indie noise bands to philosophical debates. He’s always very open, encouraging and helpful. For instance, I wanted to submit a paper to a conference, and he guided me through that. The paper was accepted, and with his help, later on I got a paper accepted for publication in the Duke University journal of philosophy.”

So, where will all this lead? “Some people ask, ‘what are you going to do with a philosophy major?’ Well, you can do a lot of things. One friend will be going to law school because she’s interested in mediation. Some other friends are headed to medical school. I plan to attend graduate school in a program that blends modern neuroscience and philosophy. For me, it’s really exciting.”