

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

Graduate Program Requirements

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Graduate Program Requirements

1. Preliminary Remarks

Every student in the Ph.D. Program must have an advisor. At the start of the program one's advisor is the Director of Graduate Studies; later it is a faculty member in one's own area of interest.

The Department conducts formal evaluations of each student's progress at several stages in the program.

Students have the right to petition the Department - that is, the faculty as a whole - about any matter relating to the program requirements or to their own participation in the program. Such matters should be directed in the first instance to the Director of Graduate Studies.

2. Logic Requirement

a) Purpose

Graduate students should be required to have a basic knowledge of formal logic in order to

- aid their study of literature in fields of philosophy in which formal notation and/or methods are used.
- provide them with the minimum knowledge necessary to go on to teach introductory undergraduate logic courses in their careers.
- enhance their critical thinking and analytical skills, thereby enabling them to become more effective philosophers.
- qualify them to be teaching assistants for an undergraduate logic course in the department.

b) Requirement

The requirement can be satisfied in any of the following ways:

- Completion of the requirements for 150.118, Introduction to Formal Logic, with a grade of 86 out of 100 or higher. Those selecting this option will enroll for credit in the course numbered 150.632. The course and grade earned will appear on the student's transcript. However, this course will neither count as one of the 13 required courses nor will it count as one of the three courses required in a given semester in the

student's first two years. Students who have had little or no prior training in formal logic may wish to select this option.

- Completion of the final examination for 150.118 with a grade of 86 out of 100 or higher, to be taken during the examination period when the course is offered. Those selecting this option may audit the course numbered 150.632 if they so desire. This option is designed for students who have a basic knowledge of logic, and who do not plan to take further courses in the subject. It will serve to demonstrate to the department that such students possess a basic knowledge of formal logic.

(The content of course 150.118 is fixed from year to year; students wishing for information on what is covered in this course, and in the final examination associated with it, should consult with Professor Achinstein.)

- Completion of a 400- or graduate-level course in deductive logic, mathematical logic, axiomatic set theory, or the like with a passing grade. Students seeking more than an introductory understanding of logic are encouraged to select this option. A course taken in this category counts as one of the 13 required courses.

c) Grading

All grading in 400-level logic courses as well as 150.632 will be done by graduate student teaching assistants, if deemed appropriate by the professor instructing the course. The nature of the material is such that there is an objectively correct answer to homework and examination problems, and a uniform standard of grading will be agreed upon by the teaching assistants. Any difficulties over grading or fairness should be openly addressed by all concerned parties with the professor. If either the graduate students taking the course or the teaching assistants so desire, a system can be arranged at the beginning of the semester such that the students taking the course are identified by a number for the duration of the course, to help protect their anonymity.

This Requirement must be completed by the time one's coursework is completed (see #4 below).

3. Foreign Language Study: Study in Other Disciplines

There is no department-wide Foreign Language Requirement for the Ph.D., nor any department-wide requirement to take courses in other disciplines. However, a student's advisor may require special coursework, either in a foreign language or in a discipline other than Philosophy, if this is deemed essential to the student's course of study. (If a student does not accept the necessity of these additional requirements, he or she may petition the Department in accordance with the procedure mentioned above - see #1 above.)

4. Course Requirements

a) Number of Courses Required: Use of Non-Philosophy Courses

A minimum of 13 courses is required of all students in the Ph.D. program. Usually all 13 courses must be Philosophy Department offerings. However, certain courses offered by other departments may be allowed to count towards the total of 13 courses. Except in the case of the formal interdisciplinary Program in the History and Philosophy of Science, all such non-departmental courses that are not cross-listed as Philosophy courses must be approved both by the Director of Graduate Studies and (if distinct) by the student's advisor. Courses that are offered by a faculty member whose primary appointment is in another department, but that are cross-listed as Philosophy courses, may be used towards the total of 13 courses. However, they may not be eligible to count towards Distribution Requirements. Any use of courses offered by other departments – whether or not they are cross-listed as Philosophy courses – to fulfill Distribution Requirements must be approved both by the Director of Graduate Studies and (if distinct) by the student's advisor.

b) Distribution Requirements

In completing the required 13 courses, all students in the Ph.D. program must satisfy the following distribution requirements:

Category I: This category includes metaphysics, epistemology, philosophy of mind, philosophy of language, logic, philosophy of mathematics, philosophy of science, and philosophy of the social sciences. Three courses in Category I are required. Of these three courses, at least two must be in 20th/21st century analytic philosophy in the above-mentioned areas.

Category II: This category includes moral philosophy, aesthetics, and political philosophy. Two courses in Category II are required, of which at least one must be in ethics or political philosophy.

Category III: This category consists of the history of western philosophy prior to the 20th century (and not including any period of Frege or Husserl). Three courses in Category III are required. Of these three courses, at least one must be in ancient Greek philosophy and at least one must be in European philosophy in the period of Descartes through Kant.

In addition, at least three of the required 13 courses must be in 20th/21st century analytic philosophy, irrespective of area.

Some courses may be counted as falling into more than one of the above categories. However, any single course may only be used to satisfy one Distribution Requirement. (Similarly, a 400-level course taken in order to satisfy the Logic Requirement – (see 2. Logic Requirement) - may not also be counted towards the three required courses in Category I.) The decision as to which category or categories a course belongs to is to be made by the faculty member teaching that course, subject to the approval of the Chair of the Department. In

some cases the nature of the written work required may vary depending on which Distribution Requirement the course is being used to satisfy. It is the responsibility of all faculty members to include in the course descriptions circulated within the department a specification of the category or categories to which their graduate-level courses belong, including any differential writing requirements for different categories. Any dispute or uncertainty about the category or categories in which a given course belongs should be brought to the attention of the Director of Graduate Studies, who will resolve it in consultation with the Chair, the faculty member teaching the course, and any concerned students; the final decision in such matters rests with the Chair.

c) Proseminar

The Proseminar is a seminar taught jointly by two faculty members; it is offered every Fall Term, and is required of and restricted to students beginning their first year in the Ph.D. program. The Proseminar is designed to introduce students to matters of philosophical methodology, and typically involves a sustained focus on a relatively restricted area of the subject. The Proseminar may be counted towards the total of 13 required courses, and may be used to satisfy any Distribution Requirement warranted by its subject-matter; in these respects it resembles any other graduate seminar.

[NOTE: The Proseminar is suspended at this time. No other Ph.D. program requirements are affected by this change.](#)

d) Reading Courses

Reading courses are occasionally given on special topics not otherwise treated in the curriculum. However, such courses may not normally be used to satisfy Ph.D. course requirements. Any exceptions to this rule must be approved by a vote of the majority of the Philosophy Department faculty. In no case can a reading course be used to satisfy Distribution Requirements.

e) Transferred Courses

A maximum of three courses may be transferred from another graduate program; such courses must be comparable, in level and subject-matter, to graduate-level courses (either seminars or 400-level courses) that are or might be offered by the JHU Philosophy Department. The transferred courses get recorded as Passes. Transferred courses may also be used to satisfy Distribution Requirements. A determination as to whether a given course taken in another graduate program may be transferred, and if so, which Distribution Requirement(s), if any, it may be allowed to satisfy will be made by the Director of Graduate Studies, who should be shown the syllabus for the course in question, and who may request other relevant course materials.

f) Satisfactory Grades: Incompletes

Letter grades are given in all regular Philosophy Department courses at the graduate level. (Reading courses are graded on a Pass/Fail basis.) The minimally passing grade for graduate students in regular courses is B-. However, it is expected that students in the Ph.D. program will perform at a considerably higher level than that; any significant accumulation of B- grades will be considered reason for concern as to the student's viability in the program.

Although this is in general discouraged, in some cases a graduate student may request and be granted an Incomplete (I) grade for a course. The decision as to whether or not to grant a particular Incomplete, or any Incompletes at all, rests with the faculty member teaching the course. The following deadlines shall apply for the resolution of Incompletes. In the case of Incompletes for courses taken in the Fall Term, work must be completed by the last day of final examinations in the following Spring Term; in the case of Incompletes taken in the Spring Term, work must be completed by the first day of classes in the following Fall Term. If the deadline for resolving an Incomplete is not met, then the course can no longer be completed for a grade; the Incomplete for that course will stand indefinitely, and the course will not count toward satisfying any requirements. This policy applies to all courses taken by Philosophy graduate students, including courses taken outside the Philosophy Department.

g) Good Standing with Respect to Completion of Coursework

A student in the Ph.D. program is deemed to be in good standing, with respect to the completion of coursework, if he or she has completed 3 courses in the first Term, 6 courses in the first two Terms, 9 courses in the first three Terms, 12 courses in the first four Terms, and 13 courses in the first five Terms (subject to the provisos concerning Incompletes in #4f above). Transferred courses may not be applied towards these totals until the fourth Term; for the first three Terms a student must take three courses per Term, regardless of any previous graduate study. Students wishing to apply transferred courses towards these totals in their fourth or fifth Terms must make a formal request to the Director of Graduate Studies by the beginning of the Term in question.

In exceptional cases, a student may petition the department to be allowed to take fewer courses than would keep him or her in good standing. The decision as to whether to grant such requests is to be made by means of a vote of the entire Philosophy Department faculty.

Any student who is not in good standing, and who has not been granted an exemption as just described, is subject to removal of financial aid - including, if applicable, removal of a Teaching Assistantship - until good standing is restored.

5. Qualifying Examination

The Qualifying Examination is a 4-hour written examination designed to test students on their basic mastery of a certain substantial area of the subject. Since preparation for the examination is intended to serve as a starting-point for the third-year paper (see #6 below), and ultimately for the dissertation, the choice of area should be made with these future tasks in mind. The area may either be chosen from those for which approved departmental reading lists are regularly available (e.g., ethics, philosophy of language, Plato), or may be designed by the student. In the latter case the breadth of the area in question must be comparable to those for which there are regularly available reading lists, and the student, in conjunction with his or her advisor, must draw up a special reading list; the area must be approved by the Department faculty as a whole (by majority vote) and the reading list must be approved by the Director of Graduate Studies. The examination will be designed and graded by a committee of two faculty members; the membership of the committee will be decided by the Director of Graduate Studies in conjunction with the Department Chair, and in normal cases will include the student's advisor.

The examination will be taken at the beginning of September of the student's third year, immediately prior to the start of classes. The examination will receive one of the following grades: high pass, pass, low pass, fail. Any student failing the examination at this time must retake and pass it by the end of the fifth Term. The same standards apply for the second examination as for the first.

Failure to retake the examination by the deadline indicated (absent a compelling reason, explained in a petition to the Department and accepted by a majority vote of the entire faculty), or failure at the second attempt, will result in termination from the Ph.D. program. Receipt of a low pass, on either the first or the second attempt, will be considered reason for concern as to the student's viability in the program.

6. Third-Year Paper

The Third-Year Paper is a paper of the length of a substantial journal article (i.e., about 30-40 pages in double-spaced typescript), showing mastery of a particular area of the subject, and making an original contribution in that area. It is not expected to be "publishable" in the sense that any Third-Year Paper of passing quality would be expected to be accepted in its current form by a major philosophy journal. However, it is expected to be a paper of the same general type as a published article, and to be such that, with further revisions, it could develop into a paper worth submitting for publication. The topic of the paper is to be chosen by the student in consultation with his or her advisor.

The Third-Year Paper is to be the major project for the third year; every student is expected to sign up for independent study with his or her advisor for both Terms of the third year in order to work on this project. A five-page prospectus of the paper should be presented to the student's advisor by Thanksgiving of the fifth Term; a bibliography for the paper should be completed by the end of the fifth Term; and a first draft should be completed by February 15 of the sixth Term.

The paper itself is to be completed by April 15 of the sixth Term. Following the completion of the paper, the student will take an oral examination of roughly one hour concerning the paper and topics germane to it; the oral must be taken by the end of the sixth Term.

The paper will be graded, and the oral examination will be conducted, by a committee of two faculty members including the student's advisor, and decided upon by the advisor in consultation with the student. The committee will report a single grade for the paper and the oral together; the grading system is the same as that used for the Qualifying Examination, except that in this case there is no grade of low pass. Receipt of a grade of fail will be considered sufficient grounds for termination from the program; however, the final decision in all such cases will be made by the faculty as a whole, not simply by the two examiners.

7. The Fourth Year: Dissertation Proposal and Topical Examination

After successful completion of the Third-Year Paper and oral, it is expected that students will be ready to begin work towards the dissertation. The fourth year should be devoted to preliminary work on the topic of the dissertation, culminating in the production of a Dissertation Proposal and an associated oral examination known as the Topical. (It is not assumed that there will necessarily be a close connection between the topic of the dissertation and that of the Third-Year Paper - although this typically will be the case. Sometimes work on the Third-Year Paper will have the effect of excluding certain issues from the subject-matter of the dissertation. But even in such cases, the preliminary work on the dissertation can be understood as a natural sequel to the Third-Year Paper.)

The Dissertation Proposal is a paper of roughly 15-20 pages. It should constitute a viable plan for a dissertation-sized piece of original (but researchable) material. It is understood that the plan of a dissertation can often change substantially in the course of writing. The Dissertation Proposal is not supposed to be a summary of already completed work, or an inescapable commitment concerning the shape and content of the dissertation; it is intended to be a clear initial design from which to begin writing the dissertation. The Proposal should be accompanied by a bibliography, which should include both works already read and works expected to be read in the course of writing the dissertation; however, it is not expected to have the scope or detail of the bibliography of a completed dissertation.

The student should work towards the Dissertation Proposal in consultation with his or her advisor and one other faculty member (to be settled by consensus among the three parties); in normal cases these two will become the Dissertation Readers. When the Proposal is completed and is judged acceptable by these two faculty members, the Topical examination will be scheduled; the written Proposal is to serve as the basis for the Topical. At the same time, for informational purposes only, the Proposal will be circulated to the entire Department.

The Topical lasts about one hour, and is conducted by the two above-mentioned faculty members and one other faculty member. Normally all three are members of the Philosophy Department; in no case may more than one be from outside

the Department. The possible grades for the Topical are simply pass or fail. (Note: Any student who has completed an acceptable Proposal may be expected to be in a position to pass the Topical. However, receipt of a passing grade is not merely automatic; the student needs to show an ability to expand upon, and respond to questions about, the proposed subject of the dissertation. At the same time, the Topical is an opportunity for the student to receive helpful feedback and advice, including from a faculty member not involved in the original development of the Proposal.) Once the Topical is successfully completed, the student will proceed to work on the dissertation itself.

The completed Proposal is to be submitted by the last day of classes in the Spring Term of the student's fourth year. Assuming it is accepted by the two readers, the Topical must take place by the end of June of the same year. If the Proposal is rejected (or if the student does not pass the Topical), the student will receive a letter indicating the nature of the deficiencies, and date by which they need to be made up in order for the student to continue in the program. If a student fails to submit a Proposal by the end of the fourth year, he or she must formally petition the Department in order to continue in the program; the petition must be supported by a progress report, a plan of study, and a proposed date for completion of the Proposal.

8. Dissertation

A Ph.D. dissertation is to be written under the direction of the student's Dissertation Readers, who share the entire responsibility for its supervision. Normally, there will be two Readers. In special cases, there may be more. Where appropriate, one (but no more than one) may be chosen from outside the Department. The student's advisor will serve as the primary Reader. Any change in the identities of the Readers from the two supervisors of the Dissertation Proposal (see #7 above) should be settled by consensus among all the parties involved, and should be communicated to the Director of Graduate Studies.

It is the student's responsibility, while the dissertation is in progress, to keep each of the Readers informed about the state of the work.

After the dissertation is completed, the Readers will tell the student whether they approve it; if they do, they certify their approval to the Graduate Board and proceed to schedule a Ph.D. Final Oral Examination.

In normal cases it is realistic to expect that the dissertation can be completed by the end of the sixth year. Students should regard this as their guideline.

9. Ph.D. Final Oral Examination

The Final Oral Examination is held under the rules of the [Graduate Board](#). The oral examination committee consists of five members, of which three are from within the Department and two from outside it. The examination is based on the dissertation, but questioning need not be narrowly restricted to it.

10. M.A. Degree and Special Student Status

a) M.A. Degree Requirements

Students are not normally admitted to pursue a terminal Master's degree in Philosophy. (Anyone applying to the Department to pursue such a degree will need to provide a compelling explanation of why this is necessary or desirable.) However, students may earn and receive a Master's degree in Philosophy in the course of pursuing the Ph.D. in Philosophy, or in the course of pursuing a graduate degree in another field, or if they enter the Ph.D. program in Philosophy but then leave the Department (for any reason) before completing it. Students enrolled in departments other than Philosophy must be approved by the Department (by a majority vote of the entire faculty) in order to receive a Master's degree.

Ten courses are required for the M.A. in Philosophy. All of these courses must either be offered by the Philosophy Department or be such that they would be able to count towards the Philosophy Ph.D. Course Requirements (see Ph.D. Program Requirements, #4a - but in this case the decision as to whether to accept non-departmental courses rests solely with the Director of Graduate Studies). However, a maximum of three courses from other departments can count towards the M.A. in Philosophy. The same restriction on Reading Courses applies as in the Ph.D. program (see Ph.D. Program Requirements, #4d). Transfer courses cannot be used towards the M.A.

Of the ten courses, two must be in Category I, one must be in Category II, and two must be in Category III (for these categories, see Ph.D. Program Requirements, #4b); of the two in Category III, one must be in ancient Greek philosophy and the other must be in the period between Descartes and the end of the 19th century. The same Logic Requirement, and the same means of satisfying it (with the same prohibition on counting 150.118/632 towards courses taken), apply as for the Ph.D. program (see Ph.D. Program Requirements, #2 with Appendix D.) There are no requirements analogous to the analytic philosophy requirements in the Ph.D. program (see Ph.D. Program Requirements, #4b).

b) Special Student Status

The Department occasionally admits students as Special Students; these are typically students who show definite promise in the field, but whose background in philosophy is not yet sufficient for them to enter the Ph.D. program proper. In accordance with university regulations, Special Student status is limited to two consecutive Terms, either as a full-time or as a part-time student. Special Students are not eligible for financial aid from the Department.

A student who enters as a Special Student, and who wishes to be considered for regular admission to the Ph.D. program, must submit an application in the normal way. If the student is admitted to the Ph.D. program, up to three of the courses

taken while the student was in Special Student status may be counted towards the numerical course requirement for the Ph.D. In addition, all of the courses taken while in Special Student status (even those not counted towards the numerical course requirement) may be counted towards the Distribution Requirements, allowing for greater flexibility in the student's remaining coursework. These dispensations are not, however, guaranteed. As with students entering the program having done graduate work in philosophy elsewhere, such determinations are made on a case-by-case basis; but in this case the decision is made by the Philosophy Department faculty as a whole (by majority vote), not by the Director of Graduate Studies. (See Ph.D. Program Requirements, #4 for details on course requirements and Distribution Requirements.)