

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

GUIDE TO INDEPENDENT WORK



**ACADEMIC YEAR
2017-2018**

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I PRINCIPLES

A PHILOSOPHICAL WRITING

Philosophy is concerned with big and controversial and difficult questions, many of which have been the subject of discussion and debate since ancient times, without yet being resolved. What makes these questions philosophical is not their subject matter, for they are about many different subjects. Some are about how things are: *How is my mind related to my body? Do all events, including the choices I make, have causes?* Others are about how things ought to be: *Just what is rightness in an individual choice, or justice in a social institution? What is the relationship between rightness or justness and having good consequences?* Yet others about we can know about such things, or about anything: *Does all knowledge require inference from perceptual experience? Are there unknowable truths?* What such questions have in common is that they are so big and so controversial and so difficult that they cannot just be handed over to the experts in some special branch of science or scholarship for an answer.

And what distinguishes *philosophical* thinking about such questions from other ways of addressing them is philosophy's commitment to tackling them by appeal to reasoned argument and the evidence of experience, and without appeal to revelation, tradition, faith, authority, or the like. Though this conception of the scope and limits of philosophy may have been most sharply formulated by religious thinkers in the middle ages, it really goes right back to the beginnings of the activity of philosophy and the coining of the word "philosophy" for that activity. The title *philosophos* (lover-of-wisdom), implying someone who is seeking wisdom, is more modest than the older title *sophos* (wise one), implying someone who already possesses wisdom; and what the modesty in practice has always primarily consisted in has been a readiness to defend one's views by argument, and to listen to arguments on the other side.

Good philosophical writing therefore will not advocate a view without offering an argument for it, and responding to arguments against it. Good philosophical writing also exhibits several other virtues, all related to the centrality of argument in philosophy: It is clear in enunciating whatever views and arguments are considered. It is accurate in reporting the views and arguments of other writers. It is thorough in canvassing the views and arguments that have been offered. The cultivation of such virtues, which make for effective writing (and for effective thinking), is central to an undergraduate concentration in philosophy.

Very few philosophy majors become academics, but the qualities key to an undergraduate concentration in philosophy prove to be of value in a variety of careers. Our department website features profiles in some distinguished undergraduate alumni active today in various ways in the public and private spheres. If you read what they have to say about the benefits of studying philosophy, what they tend to mention especially is the way one learns to think and write: "Philosophy...honed my analytic ability, an ability I have drawn upon virtually every day in my professional work," remarks one, an educator and philanthropist. "My experience as a Princeton philosophy major taught be to think clearly, argue persuasively and write clearly," says another, a journalist.

The skills to be acquired by concentrating in philosophy include the ability to think and write in an organized and disciplined way about confusing and controversial questions, to treat one's beliefs as serviceable as they are but capable of improvement, and to react to criticism not with outrage but with a willingness to state the grounds for one's views and to listen to the grounds of others for theirs. Such skills are of value not only in a career, but in life. For Princeton philosophy majors, the chief opportunity to acquire and display such skills and abilities comes with junior and especially senior independent work.

B COURSE *vs* INDEPENDENT WORK

The project of writing the junior paper extends over most of spring semester junior year, and the project of writing the senior thesis extends over most of the senior year. But in philosophy, preparation for the junior paper and senior thesis in effect begins well before the student has even entered the department. The prerequisite for majoring in philosophy is to have taken one philosophy course (though it is more usual to have taken two) and the prerequisite for most 300-level courses is to have taken a previous 200-level course. What distinguishes the levels is that 200-level, introductory courses generally teach, in addition to their particular subject matter, the basics of how to write a philosophy paper, while 300-level courses presuppose that students already know these basics. Since the principles learned in connection with three-page papers in introductory courses continue to apply throughout a student's undergraduate career, right up to and including the senior thesis — and for that matter, also apply to professional publications by the faculty — the student really is in training for writing the senior thesis from the first assignment in his or her first philosophy course. Among the basic principles governing philosophical writing, one stands out as the most important of all, and is appropriately put first in what is perhaps the most widely used on-line guide to the basics of writing philosophy papers, prepared by the former Princeton graduate student and faculty member James Pryor, who formulates the principle as follows: *Your paper must offer an argument. It can't consist in the mere report of your opinions, nor in a mere report of the opinions of the philosophers we discuss. You have to defend the claims you make. You have to offer reasons to believe them.* There is much other advice to be found in the same place (see the list of URLs later in this document), but this is the first and most central item, and it only becomes more important as one moves on from introductory to advanced courses and from course work to independent work, though other factors also enter in at these later stages.

In our department the transition from course work to independent work takes place through seminars held in the fall of junior year. These **junior seminars** differ from courses in two basic ways. First, in courses, the instructor's lectures will typically involve exposition and commentary on the arguments to be found in the assigned course readings, which are then further discussed in precepts. In a junior seminar, by contrast, there are no lectures, and the task of extracting a writer's main argument and analyzing its form is left almost entirely to the students, who explain and evaluate the arguments to and for each other in precept-like seminar meetings (naturally, with some direction from the instructor, who selected the readings in the first place). Second, junior seminars also differ from most courses in that by far the larger part of the grade will depend on a single large-scale final paper. The rest of the grade will be based on smaller assignments throughout the term, but even these often take the form of oral presentations or short papers that are like warm-ups for the eventual long seminar paper, and sometimes even take the form of drafts of sections of the final paper. The student should in any case by this stage be developing the habit of submitting drafts or fragments for comment before the final due date (and well enough before to allow sufficient time for the instructor or advisor to write comments and for the student to revise in the light of those comments). This is something that it will be even more important to do with the spring junior paper and the senior thesis.

The spring **junior paper** differs from the junior seminar paper in several respects. The regular weekly meeting of a small group of students with the seminar instructor are replaced by one-on-one meetings between student and advisor, the entire grade is to be based on a single final paper, and two tasks still handled by the instructor in seminars are now left to the student: the task of choosing a suitable paper topic, and the task of locating appropriate readings about it. The advisor is there to help and advise with these tasks, but generally will not just hand the student a complete reading list, or menu of paper topic questions to choose from, as a junior seminar instructor may do. So the student should by this stage if not earlier be learning how to research a chosen general topic area, how to come up with questions and sources on his or her own. This involves, for instance, becoming acquainted with the *Philosopher's Index*, the main abstracting journal in our field, with the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, the best on-line source for up-to-date survey articles of various fields, and with J-stor, through the University's subscription to which many journal articles are made available on line. Students should above all familiarize themselves with the University's philosophy library resource webpage. (See the list of URLs later in this document.) For the rest, once the student has acquired the ability to use these

research tools, what is involved in writing a JP is, due allowance being made for the difference in scale of the projects, much the same as what is involved in writing the senior thesis, to which we may now turn.

C THE THESIS: GOALS & ASSESSMENT

Skills to be learned over the course of the senior thesis project include: how to manage time on a year-long project, how to locate tractable specific questions within a larger subject area, how to summarize effectively the current state of debate on an issue, how to situate a specific question in a larger context — all this in addition to learning better how to write in a way that will exhibit such virtues as those discussed earlier: clarity, accuracy, thoroughness, and the like.

1. MANAGING TIME

To begin with, the senior thesis will for most students be the largest-scale project so far in their lives, requiring them to manage time over an extended period; and one of the things to be learned in the course of working on a thesis, quite apart from what one learns about its subject matter, is how to organize one's time efficiently. At the beginning of fall term, or better, over the summer before senior year, the student should carefully review all department deadlines. (See the list of dates later in this document.) At the same time, the student should try to foresee at which periods during the academic year he or she will be most busy with non-thesis matters such as extracurricular activities, so as to determine what periods should see the most intensive work on the thesis. Once an advisor has been found or assigned and the project begun, a regular schedule of meetings should be maintained. The chief means of assessment, the chief test, of whether the goal of effectively managing time has been achieved is, of course, whether the thesis comes in on time; and, needless to say, there is a grade penalty for lateness. But before the final thesis due date there are two preliminary deadlines, one for a **thesis proposal** and the other for a **thesis draft**. (For specifics see the "Procedures" portion of this document.) Missing these deadlines would be a sign that more effective time-management is needed. There is no grade penalty as such for missing them, but there is reward for meeting them, in that by doing so the student can earn the right to a short grace period on the final submission of the thesis.

2. LOCATING A TOPIC

The ability to locate a topic, a tractable specific question or small cluster of related questions within a larger subject area, is crucial early on in the project, as the student seeks within his or her chosen general topic area a specific question that can be adequately handled in a piece of writing the size of a senior thesis. None of the great questions with which we began this document — for instance: *How is my mind related to my body?* — could possibly be adequately treated in a work on that scale, and what a student interested in such a large question needs to do, and to do fairly promptly, is to narrow down such a huge issue and locate some manageable subissue. This is mainly done by looking at the literature, especially survey articles, to get a sense of how the larger debate has gone, and of what more specific subquestions have arisen and generated discussion, until the student finds one that siezes his or her interest. The requirement for a *thesis proposal* is intended as a means of assessing whether this goal is being met in a timely manner. The student should, halfway through fall term, and after consultation with his or her advisor, be able to identify a topic suitable for a forty-page paper, identify at least some of the most important aspects of the question that the thesis will have to address, and at least some of the most important literature that will have to be taken into account. The advisor, on reviewing the proposal, will be able to tell the student whether things are on track, or whether some adjustment is needed, and the departmental representative will use the information in the proposal in assigning the eventual second reader to theses.

3. SUMMARIZING A DEBATE

The ability to summarize a debate, to give a concise account of the state of play on a given issue, becomes crucial sometime around midway through the academic year, when work on the thesis turns from

being primarily a matter of reading to being primarily a matter of writing. The student needs to be able to sum up the state of debate as he or she has found it in the literature, before attempting to contribute something new; and often the opening chapter of a thesis will be devoted to giving such an account of the *status quaestionis*. When the thesis is organized in this way, the requirement of submitting, just after winter break, a *thesis draft*, or substantial chunk of written work towards the thesis, can serve not merely as a check on whether the transition from the reading phase to the writing phase has been undertaken, but also as a means of assessing whether the student has the background literature under control. (There are, however, no hard and fast rules about the best organizational plan, and some students and advisors may prefer that the thesis draft be something like an outline of the whole, rather than a finished first chapter.)

4. SITUATING AN ISSUE

The ability to situate an issue, to place a question in a larger context, comes into play at a later stage, after the thesis is finished and the student has a chance to reflect on what has been accomplished by the thesis project and what has been left for future work (what questions have been left unresolved, what loose ends have been left dangling), and on how the specific topic of the thesis fits in to the larger branch of philosophy to which the specific thesis topic belongs. Such reflection, as well as reading a few items from that larger branch of philosophy that did not find their way into the thesis bibliography, is precisely what is involved in preparing for the *senior departmental examination* (described in the “Procedures” portion of this document), which is also the chief means of assessing, the chief check on, whether the student has achieved an adequate sense of the relation of the thesis project to larger issues.

D THE THESIS: GRADING STANDARDS

1 ORIGINALITY

In addition to all this, the student is, of course, supposed to be honing and applying the skills involved in the clear and accurate and thorough written treatment of a philosophical issue. The final assessment of the student’s degree of success in reaching this goal will be made when the thesis graded. However, long before the final grade, the student who has regularly turned in drafts for comment will have received a great deal of feedback on how well he or she was progressing towards this goal.

Three virtues to be looked for in a finished thesis have already been mentioned: **clarity** in expounding sometimes difficult material or subtle ideas; **accuracy** in reporting the views to be found in the literature and in conveying the supporting arguments offered for them; **thoroughness** to the extent the word limits of a thesis allow in taking into account the philosophical and where relevant nonphilosophical literature. In addition to these features of good philosophical writing, the best philosophical writing will also exhibit the feature of **originality**, finding something genuinely novel to say about the issue under discussion — even when it is one that has been under debate since antiquity. In writing seminars rhetorical means of articulating how your project is original are discussed under the rubric “motive.” In philosophy the required originality may be displayed in any number of ways, including producing any of the following: a new and intriguing thesis with cogent supporting argument; a new but plausible interpretation of difficult material in the writing of a famous philosopher of the past; a genuinely novel argument for a well-known philosophical thesis or interpretation; genuinely novel criticism of an influential argument or interpretation; a novel defense of an argument or interpretation against a criticism widely thought to vitiate it; a novel counterexample to a well-known thesis; a derivation of heretofore unrecognized consequences from a well-known thesis; a revised formulation of a thesis immunizing it against certain important criticisms. And this list is not exhaustive.

2 NUMERICAL AND LETTER GRADES

In evaluating theses for how well they display such virtues, our department does not merely assign grades on the ABC scale, to appear on the student's transcript, but also assigns finer-grained numerical grades, used in computing the averages that determine departmental graduation honors, and in the award of thesis prizes. (See the "Procedures" portion of this document.) Each thesis is graded by two readers, one at least an experienced member of our department, aware of how theses have been graded on our numerical scale in the past. As a result there has been no rapid drift or inflation of grades over the years in our department. Since each thesis presents a different mix of strengths and weaknesses, it is not easy to formulate any strict rules, but nonetheless an attempt to say in words what the numbers assigned as grades mean to us will be made below. It should be noted, however, that the ambitious student who wants to know what a prize-winning thesis would look like has a much more direct method of finding that out than poring over such verbal descriptions as those below and attempting to interpret them. A list of the titles of all the prize-winning theses of the past ten years is posted on the departmental representative's webpage, and with this information the interested student should have no difficulty in tracking down the theses themselves in Mudd Library.

But as for the matter of numerical grades, a grade of **98 (A+)** would go to work comparable to that of professionals, work that (perhaps with some *slight* revision) ought to be publishable, and in a journal of high standard. Such grades are very rarely given (about once in five years). A grade of **97 or 96 (high A)** would go to work comparable to that of good advanced graduate students, work of a kind more common in doctoral dissertations than undergraduate papers of any kind. Such grades are not common (and are not given every year). A grade of **95 (middle A)** would go to work that is almost flawless on the score of clarity and accuracy and thoroughness, and displays significant originality as well, though perhaps of a kind more intriguing than compelling — a thesis from which the readers, professional philosophers, learned something significant that they really didn't previously know. A grade of **93 or 94 (low A)** would go to work that is almost flawless on the score of clarity and accuracy and thoroughness, and with some significant features of originality that are partially developed, though not so fully as to leave no room for further work. Higher grades than this being rarely given, prize-winning theses tend to come from this level. A grade of **92 or 91 (A-)** would go to work that is almost flawless on the score of clarity and accuracy and thoroughness, with some suggestive original ideas that remain relatively undeveloped. Theses at this level have sometimes, in years when the competition has been less strong, been awarded prizes, but this does not happen regularly.

A grade of **90 (A-/B+ border)** would go to a work that is almost flawless on the score of clarity and thoroughness and accuracy, but lacks substantial original ideas. A reader with no previous knowledge of the subject would come away from this thesis with an accurate knowledge of the basics, but a reader already familiar with the subject would come away bored. Touches of originality move a grade up, and lapses of clarity or accuracy or thoroughness move a grade down. And so, though in principle a thesis devoid of originality put perfect in other respects would receive a grade at this level, in practice most theses graded at this level are not like that, but rather show a mix of occasional flashes of originality and occasional lapses in other qualities that more or less cancel each other out. Theses at this level or lower are definitely not prize-worthy.

Hence fine-grained grade distinctions are not really significant below this point. It may simply be said that, the larger and more numerous the unclaritys or inaccuracies or oversights of the thesis, the lower the grade. A grade in the **B** range would go to a thesis that, despite a lapse or lapses vitiating some significant part or parts, would still give a reader with no previous knowledge of the subject a knowledge of the basics, marred by some localized misunderstandings. A grade in the **C** range would go to a thesis with deficiencies serious enough to prevent from accomplishing even this much; the grade of **D** would go a thesis that falls down in almost every respect, but that does at least show some evidence of the student having put forth some effort; the grade of **F** would go to thesis that doesn't even do that. **C** range theses are not common, and there have been no **D** or **F** theses in recent years; presumably students who know they are heading towards such grades simply don't submit theses. For whatever reason, about one philosophy major per year, on average, does fail to submit one. Such students cannot graduate with their class or receive academic honors or prizes, but almost all do produce an acceptable thesis within a year or two, and graduate late.

II PROCEDURES

A COURSE REQUIREMENTS

For juniors and seniors, course selections are approved, and course cards and course change forms are signed, by the departmental representative, who can perform some of the functions of an academic advisor — juniors and seniors do not have academic advisors as such — and refer students to other department faculty for further advice if desired. All students are encouraged to see the departmental representative in person at course selection time, and the following are required to do so: sophomores entering the department; fall seniors selecting spring senior courses; spring seniors dropping departmental courses.

The departmental course requirement is eight courses. Courses taken before fall semester junior year normally may be counted, including the prerequisite course, and up to two courses may be lower division (200-level or lower), or three is one of them is a logic course.

Normally *six out of the eight* courses must be so distributed that there are two in each of *three of the four* areas (metaphysics; ethics and philosophy of value; logic and philosophy of science; history of philosophy) into which philosophy courses are divided; there is no such restriction on the remaining two out of the eight. The area classification of most department courses is listed in the *Undergraduate Announcement*; for other courses (one-time-only, graduate, cognates in other departments) the classification will be made by the departmental representative.

Up to two courses in other departments may be counted as cognates, if approved by the departmental representative as contributing significantly to the student's course of study; these must normally be courses completed before spring semester senior year. Cognates may not be used for both courses in a distribution area.

In general, courses considering means other than philosophical argument (e.g. appeal to religious revelation, tradition, authority, faith) that have been used to answer questions of a kind considered in philosophy, and courses considering philosophical works from a non-philosophical standpoint (e.g. as literary texts, emphasizing rhetorical style, or as historical documents, emphasizing external influences) are considered valuable supplements but not substitutes for philosophy courses, and hence not suitable as cognates.

Courses that have been routinely approved as cognates in recent years include: Various courses taught by associated faculty of the department (listed on the department website) and described by them as philosophical in content; POL courses labeled political theory by the politics department in the statement of its requirements for its majors in the *Undergraduate Announcement*; certain courses in intellectual history having philosophical content that the department is not in position to cover itself, especially EAS 415 and/or 416 (but not 417).

Students doing the senior thesis in certain interdisciplinary fields have the option of replacing the regular requirement of two courses in each of three philosophy areas by an alternative requirement. The **political philosophy** option involves using the quota of two cognates for courses listed under the Politics Department as political theory courses and counting this in place of one philosophy area, and then doing two courses in the ethics and philosophy of value area, and two courses in some one other philosophy area. The **philosophy of science** option involves using the quota of two cognates for upper division courses in one relevant science (e.g. mathematics, physics, biology, psychology, linguistics) and counting this in place of one philosophy area, and then doing two courses in the logic and philosophy of science area, and two courses in some one other philosophy area. With either special option the student may be allowed one further cognate beyond the two involved in the option.

Variations for students going on study abroad are approved by the departmental representative on a case-by-case basis as part of the study abroad approval process for the individual student.

B JUNIOR SEMINARS

Fall semester junior year, independent work normally involves participation in a seminar of up to five students under the supervision of an instructor from the faculty of the department. A junior seminar meets weekly for an hour or biweekly for two hours to discuss readings selected by the instructor, and each student writes a final paper of at least 5,000 words, usually on a topic chosen by the student from a list provided by the instructor in the area defined by those readings. The student's grade for fall semester independent work will be mainly based on this paper but is usually partly based also on shorter papers and/or oral presentations in the seminar earlier in the term. (Most commonly the split is about 75%-25%).

A listing of the junior seminar offerings available will be posted on the Notice Board on the first floor of 1879 Hall, and distributed electronically to students by the first day of fall semester. Note that there is no requirement for the junior independent work of a student intending to elect a special option (Philosophy of Science, Political Philosophy) to be on a topic relevant to that area; on the contrary, students are encouraged to do at least one semester's independent work outside that area. While the department undertakes to make a variety of junior seminar topics available each year, it does not undertake to provide one directly relevant to each special option each year.

Students will have a few days to report their preferences among the offerings and their schedules to the departmental representative. By the beginning of the second week of classes, the placement of students in seminars will be posted and distributed electronically to students, by the departmental representative, and notice of the hour, day, and place (usually the instructor's office) of the first, organizational meeting of each seminar will be posted by the seminar instructors. Since this is when the regular meeting time for the seminar will be fixed, it is important to attend this first meeting, *especially* if the hour is one that would not be convenient as a regular meeting time.

Final papers for junior seminars are due the second day of reading period. This is a University deadline: departments and instructors cannot grant extensions on their own authority. Late work cannot be accepted for grading by the department unless permission to do so is granted by the student's academic dean. There is a grade penalty of 1 point per weekday to a maximum of 10 (= a full letter grade) for lateness, unless a waiver is granted. Waivers require approval of the seminar instructor and the departmental representative.

C JUNIOR PAPERS

1 REGULAR ARRANGEMENTS

Spring semester junior year, independent work consists of writing a junior paper, an essay on a philosophical topic, normally amounting to at least 5,000 words, written under the supervision of a faculty advisor.

On the one hand, any member of the department faculty is eligible to advise a junior paper if willing to do so, except that a student may not have the same advisor for both semesters' junior independent work (fall seminar and spring paper). Students may find advisors on their own, by agreement with a member of the faculty. On the other hand, certain faculty are assigned by the chair of the department special responsibility for supervision of undergraduate independent work and constitute the Senior Thesis/Junior Paper Advising Panel. Students who do not find advisors on their own are assigned advisors from this panel by the departmental representative. By the end of the second week of classes spring semester, every junior should submit to the departmental representative either confirmation of an agreement about advising with some one member of the faculty, or else a list of several members of the panel by whom the student would be willing to be advised. Notice of advisor assignments will be posted and distributed electronically to students early the next week of classes.

Junior papers are due the second day of reading period. This is a University deadline. Late work cannot be accepted for grading by the department unless permission to do so is granted by the student's academic dean.

There is a grade penalty of 1 point per weekday to a maximum of 10 (= a full letter grade) for lateness, unless a waiver is granted. Waivers require approval of the seminar instructor and the departmental representative.

2 SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR STUDY ABROAD

Students participating in the Study Abroad program one or both semester junior year should be aware that the University requires them to complete the usual junior independent work expected of Princeton students in addition to their course work at a foreign university. Because of the special role played by junior seminars in our program, students who are planning to take only one semester, are encouraged to make that the spring rather than the fall semester if possible. For students who will be abroad fall semester, the normal requirement of participation in a junior seminar is replaced by the requirement to produce a fall junior paper in addition to the spring junior paper.

Students planning to go on study abroad are encouraged to participate spring semester sophomore year in the process of getting a junior paper advisor assigned. This will permit them to get a head start on a junior paper before going abroad, or even to have a paper substantially completed by then, though the paper will not be officially due, and a grade will not be officially reported to the registrar until the usual time during junior year. Note that this option of early advisor assignment does *not* involve officially declaring early concentration as a sophomore, which would require completing a piece of independent work sophomore year *in addition to* the usual junior independent work.

D SENIOR THESES

1 ASSIGNMENT OF ADVISORS

Senior year independent work consists of preparation for a departmental examination (see below) and writing the senior thesis, an essay or group of related essays on a philosophical topic or group of related topics, totaling 10,000 to 15,000 words, prepared under the supervision of faculty advisor.

On the one hand, any member of the regular, visiting, or associated faculty of the department faculty is eligible to advise a senior thesis if willing to do so. (Advising by outside faculty is also possible, subject to approval by the departmental representative.) Students may find advisors on their own, by agreement with some member of the faculty. On the other hand, certain faculty are assigned by the chair of the department special responsibility for supervision of undergraduate independent work, and constitute the Senior Thesis / Junior Paper Advising Panel. Students who do not find advisors on their own are assigned advisors from this panel by the departmental representative.

By the end of the second week of classes fall semester, every senior should submit to the departmental representative either confirmation of an agreement about advising signed by a member of the faculty, or else a list of several members of the panel by whom the student would be willing to be advised, along with an indication of the general area in which the student wishes to work. Students who have very specific ideas about the thesis project they wish to pursue should begin early seeking a faculty member willing to advise them on their preferred topic. For students who leave their advisor assignment to the department, the specific topic pursued within the general area indicated by the student will be subject to negotiation between the student and the advisor. Notice of advisor assignments will be posted and circulated electronically to students early the next week of classes after the arrangement forms are due. In rare cases, a student may be assigned a preliminary advisor for fall semester and another, final advisor for spring semester.

2 FORMAT AND WORD LIMITS

There is a recommended format for the title page:

[a third of the way down the page]

TITLE

[halfway down the page]

by

NAME
 [two-thirds of the way down the page]
 submitted to the
 Department of Philosophy
 in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
 Bachelor of Arts
 [bottom of page]
 Date

By University rules, every thesis must contain at the end the statement “This paper represents my own work in accordance with University regulations” followed by the student's signature. Note the exact wording. (There is no mention of the honor code, which applies only to in-class examinations, not written assignments.) The regulations in question can be found in the University document *Rights, Rules, and Responsibilities*.

Any word-processing program now in common use will have a command for making an automatic word count, which the student should employ as writing proceeds. Advance approval of the advisor is required if the thesis will go outside the above-indicated 10,000-to-15,000 word limits in either direction. Such approval should be sought at the latest by the Tuesday after winter recess (when thesis drafts as described below are due). Cases where modifications of the usual limits may be appropriate include but are not limited to the following three special situations.

(1) Some students writing on philosophy of science, political philosophy, or other areas where philosophy interacts with another discipline may find it necessary or desirable to include some background exposition of material from the other discipline involved, though students must be aware that the thesis will be evaluated primarily for its merits as a philosophical essay, and not for its merits as exposition or popularization of non-philosophical material. Up to an additional 5000 words may be allowed for such purposes.

(2) Some students, especially among those working towards a certificate in certain programs, may consider the idea of a creative thesis or thesis otherwise outside the normal essay form. Any plans of this sort require advance approval both of the individual advisor and of the departmental representative. An essay, though a shorter one than a typical thesis, will normally be required in addition to any creative work, in order to make the philosophical content explicit. Approval should be sought at the latest by the Tuesday after fall recess (when thesis proposals as described below are due). Appropriate word limits will be set as part of the approval process.

(3) Some students may wish to make their thesis project a further development of one of their junior papers, or less often, of a paper written for some course. Any plans of this sort require advance approval both of the individual advisor and of the departmental representative. Such approval should be sought at the latest by the Tuesday after fall recess (when thesis proposals as described below are due). Students must carefully review University regulations pertaining to multiple submissions as set forth in *Rights, Rules, and Responsibilities*. Copies of any pertinent earlier work must be supplied to both readers of the thesis, who will be evaluating the thesis for its new contributions only. If it is found necessary or desirable to reproduce any earlier work within the thesis itself, such material must be clearly labeled and set off from new material, for instance by placing it in an appendix. It will not count towards the thesis word limit.

3 DEADLINES AND GRADING

A thesis proposal of at least 300 words, indicating some of the principal issues to be pursued and works to be discussed in the projected thesis, is due on the Tuesday immediately after fall recess (the second day of the seventh full week of classes, fall semester). Two hard copies should be submitted by 4:00 p.m. to the undergraduate administrator in the department office. A thesis draft of at least 3000 words, consisting of a chapter or two in nearly finished form, or a fairly detailed outline of the whole thesis, or some combination, is due on the Tuesday immediately after winter recess (the second day of reading period, fall semester). Two hard copies should be submitted by 4:00 p.m. to the undergraduate administrator in the department office. Any student who gets the thesis proposal in on time will be allowed a one-day grace period (waiver of lateness penalty) on the completed thesis. Any student who gets the thesis draft in on time will be allowed a two-day

grace period (waiver of lateness penalty) on the completed thesis (for a total of three days if both preliminary deadlines are met). Students entitled to such grace periods should nonetheless think of the official final thesis due date as their target, with the grace period available in case of unanticipated last-minute delays. The official final thesis due date is Monday the eighth week of classes spring semester. Theses are to be submitted electronically in pdf format, as an attachment to an e-mail to the undergraduate administrator. It is a courtesy to send a copy to the two readers of the thesis at the same time (for instance, by copying them on the e-mail to the undergraduate administrator), but it is the submission to the undergraduate administrator that counts as the official submission. Students traditionally have wished to print out and have bound a copy of their senior theses for their own use, but submission of the electronic copy should not be delayed: The printing and binding can always be done later.

There is a grade penalty of 1 point per weekday to a maximum of 10 (= a full letter grade) for lateness, unless a waiver is granted. Waivers require approval of the thesis advisor and the departmental representative. Requests for extensions on medical grounds must be supported by a note from University Health Services. Theses late past the University deadline (first day of reading period) cannot be accepted for grading by the department unless permission to do so is granted by the student's academic dean, which approval is to be sought before the University deadline passes. (If the deadline has passed and the dean's approval has not yet been secured, the student may and should nonetheless convey an electronic file of the theses to the undergraduate administrator, for recording of date received, but the student should be aware that the thesis will not be read and graded until approval has been granted by the dean.)

The thesis is read and graded by the student's advisor together with the student's departmental examination coordinator (appointed as described below in connection with the senior departmental examination). The thesis grade (like the examination grade) is reported to the student, along with oral comments by the readers, immediately after the student's departmental examination. Written comments should generally not be expected, unless specially requested.

A student who fails to submit a thesis, or who receives a grade of F on the thesis is ineligible for graduation with his or her class. If an acceptable thesis is subsequently submitted, the F will be joined on the transcript by another grade for "senior thesis, late submission". The University may assess a special fee for processing a late thesis, of which the department sees not a penny.

Under University rules, changes of grade, whether on courses or independent work, can be made only by the University Faculty Committee on Examinations and Standing: This is the only body to which a student may make formal appeal, and even in cases where the relevant faculty and/or department themselves agree that a change of grade is warranted, the change-of-grade form then filed is formally only a petition to the committee, which need not always grant the petition, though it usually does so.

E DEPARTMENTAL EXAMINATIONS

1 FORMAT AND SYLLABUS

Senior year independent work consists of writing the senior thesis and preparing for the departmental examination, an oral of an hour to ninety minutes' duration examination on an area of philosophy including the topic of the thesis, defined by a syllabus of readings. A student who feels that an oral examination will not sufficiently reveal his or her knowledge and abilities may take a written examination in addition to, but not instead of, the oral examination. The examination is conducted by a member of the department faculty assigned as the student's examination coordinator, together with the student's thesis advisor. In case the advisor is a new or visiting or outside faculty member, the examination coordinator will also serve as an informal source of information for the advisor about department expectations for the thesis.

Departmental examination coordinators are assigned by the departmental representative during the latter part of fall semester, based on the information provided in the student's senior thesis proposal (as described above). It is therefore very much in the student's interest to be as specific as possible in formulating that proposal. The examination is in part an oral defense of the thesis, and will usually begin with the student

giving a concise summary of the thesis project (with the emphasis on “concise”). The examination is not, however, merely an oral defense of the thesis, and the syllabus will generally include, in addition to items culled from the thesis bibliography, at least a couple of items not on that bibliography, so as to broaden the area somewhat beyond the immediate topic of the thesis. The coordinator assists the student in developing an acceptable syllabus during the period of about a month between the submission of the thesis and the occurrence of the examination. This syllabus typically consists in all of about a dozen philosophical papers or book chapters, a short enough list that the student should be able to be prepared to answer questions about any of them, though in practice examiners will probably not have time to get around to all of them. A completed examination syllabus, already discussed with the coordinator and ready for final approval by the examiners, is due Monday of the twelfth and last week of spring classes, or four weeks after the due date for the thesis. Two copies should be submitted by 4:00 p.m. to the undergraduate administrator in the department office. Any requests for a written component in addition to the oral component of the examination are also due at this time. If a student fails to submit a syllabus, the examiners may question the student at the examination about any material that seems to them pertinent, including but not limited to any item on the thesis bibliography.

2 TIME AND PLACE

The examination itself is normally held during the two-day of the period towards the end of spring semester (just after reading period, at the beginning of examination period) set aside in the University academic calendar for departmental examinations. It may be held earlier if all three parties agree, but not earlier than a week after the submission of the thesis. It may not be held later, except with the permission of the student's academic dean, which is only granted in extraordinary circumstances. It is the student's responsibility to confer with both examiners and reach agreement on the hour, day, and place of the examination. (The place is usually the examination coordinator's office, unless the advisor is from outside the department, in which case as a courtesy the examination may be held in the advisor's office if that is more convenient for the advisor.) These agreed arrangements are to be reported to the undergraduate administrator at the same time the examination syllabus is due. If arrangements are not completed by the student by that date, the examination coordinator will to confer with the thesis advisor and reach agreement on the hour, day during the period set aside in the University calendar for departmental examinations, and place of the examination, and report these agreed arrangements to the undergraduate administrator in the department office, who will notify the student by e-mail and campus mail. It is the student's responsibility to check e-mail and campus mail regularly for such a notification.

3 GRADING

The examination grade (like the thesis grade) is reported to the student, along with the thesis grade and oral comments by the readers, immediately after the examination. A student who fails to appear at the designated time and place for the examination receives a grade of F. A student who receives a grade of F on the examination after receiving a grade of D on the thesis is ineligible for graduation, unless the department faculty, on consideration of the student's overall academic record, votes to make an exception. A student who fails to submit a thesis, or who receives a grade of F on the thesis is ineligible to take the departmental examination, and receives a grade of I (incomplete) for it. If an acceptable thesis is subsequently submitted, a departmental examination must then be scheduled and held before the student can be granted a late degree.

F HONORS & PRIZES

1 DECLARING DEPARTMENTALS

Certain of a student's courses are designated departmentals, and the grades in courses so designated are the course grades used in computing the student's departmental average (*see under* Honors & Prizes below). The official designation of departmentals occurs during the fall of the senior year when selecting courses for spring senior year: All designations before this time are provisional. After this time a designation cannot be

changed merely in order to improve a student's average. All **philosophy courses taken for a letter grade during junior or senior year** must be designated departmentals, as must **all eight courses used to fulfill departmental requirements** (as described in section A above). Designation of any other philosophy course or approved cognate is optional.

2 COMPUTING AVERAGES

Course grades and junior independent work grades are reported as letter grades, converted to number grades for purposes of computing averages as on the left below

A+	= 98	97.5	= A+
A	= 95	92.5	= A
A-	= 92	90.0	= A-
B+	= 88	87.5	= B+
B	= 85	82.5	= B
B-	= 82	80.0	= B-
C+	= 78	77.5	= C+
C	= 75	72.5	= C
C-	= 72	70	= C-
D	= 65	65	= D
F	= 55		

Senior independent work (thesis and departmental examination) grades are reported as number grades, converted to letter grades for recording on the student's transcript, the lower bounds for each grade category being as on the right above (while anything below 60 is failing). The departmental average is computed according to the following formula:

Departmental Courses	40% (= 5% per course in the usual case of 8 courses)
Jr. Independent Work	20% (= 10% fall seminar + 10% spring paper)
Sr. Independent Work	40% (= 35% thesis + 5% departmental examination)

Grades for courses taken at other institutions (summer, transfer, study abroad, or other) are never taken into account. Generally cognates are supposed to be taken *before* spring semester senior year, since grades from courses in outside departments will generally not be available to the department at the time averages have to be computed.

3 GRADUATION HONORS

The distinctions of honors (*cum laude*), high honors (*magna cum laude*), and highest honors (*summa cum laude*) are awarded on the basis of departmental averages. The faculty decides each year the conversion of averages to honors for that year, in such a way as to avoid so far as possible making a distinction as to honors between students whose averages are very close. In recent years the lower bound for honors has been set somewhat above 92, resulting in about half of the department's graduating seniors receiving some class of honors, which is close to average among departments in the University as a whole. The Honors List is posted shortly after the last faculty meeting of the academic year.

4 THESIS PRIZES

Prizes are awarded by vote of the department faculty. All senior theses are automatically considered for prizes; no formal nomination is required. A single prize may be divided among two or more winners. The larger prizes are as follows.

McCosh Prize	for theses in any area of philosophy
Class of 1869 Prize	for theses in moral or social philosophy
Old Warbeke Prize	for theses in aesthetics
New Warbeke Prize	for theses in any area of philosophy <i>except</i> moral or social philosophy or aesthetics
Dickinson Prize	for theses in logic or theory of knowledge
Tomb Prize	for theses in philosophy of time

The Dickinson and Tomb Prizes are \$500; the value of the others varies from year to year, but in recent years the total, which may be divided, has been over \$3000. There are besides some thesis prizes awarded by other departments for which seniors in the philosophy department may be eligible. Prizes are announced and awarded at the Class Day reception for parents.

III RESOURCES

A LIBRARY

Seniors are entitled to keys to the Marx Hall library. Note, however, that personal items are not to be left there when the student is not present, and all posted library rules must be strictly observed. The importance of the library's Philosophy Resources webpage has already been mentioned (in the "Principles" section of this document), and all students should be familiarize themselves with it early in their careers as majors. That webpage not only includes technical information on how to acquire books or articles, but also has a section on *evaluating* sources, which is especially important in a discipline like philosophy, where there is a larger volume of fringe literature than in many other fields, and where the material turned up simply by running a search engine will be of very mixed quality. The Philosophy Librarian emphasizes that he is ready and eager to provide any form of assistance.

B WRITING CENTER

The University Writing Center, located in Whitman College, offers assistance with writing at all levels from short papers in introductory courses through the senior thesis, and at all stages of writing from initial planning to final polishing. Because the exact menu of offerings of individual individual consultations and writing group mentoring and workshops is subject to change, students are advised to check the Writing Center web-pages directly, as well as the on-line Princeton Undergraduate Research Calender. (See under Electronic Links below.)

C FUNDING

The Office of the Dean of the College has available funds to make small grants to assist thesis research, during the summer before senior year or during senior year itself, where appropriate. The application process requires a full account of the student's research proposal, a detailed itemized budget, planned iternerary (if travel would be involved), and the name of the student's thesis advisor. Students are encouraged to start working on application materials early so as to have ample time to meet the strict deadlines set by the various funding sources. Reminders and further details of the application process are generally communicated electronically to students from the dean's office, mainly during the spring of junior year. (See also under Electronic Links below.) In addition to such University sources, the philosophy department can sometime supply limited funds to enable seniors who are invited to speak at undergraduate philosophy conferences to attend and do so. (Consult the departmental representative.)

DEPARTMENT DEADLINES

JUNIORS

Academic Year 2017-2018

All department items are due by 4:00 p.m. on the day of the deadline
Note carefully to whom and in what format each item is to be submitted

FRI 15 SEP 2017 (third day of classes)

Junior Seminar Arrangements Form

due in departmental representative's mailbox, 211 1879 Hall
or may be scanned and sent electronically **in pdf format** to jburgess@princeton.edu

***** Mandatory Majors Meeting in the Tower Room at 3:30 *****

MON 02 OCT 2017

"Princeton & Beyond" Dinner

Faculty and Philosophy Juniors and Seniors

The Garden Room, Prospect House

6:00pm-9:00pm

TUE 09 JAN 2018 (second day of reading period after winter recess)

Junior Seminar Final Papers

to be submitted to **seminar instructor** in hard copy or electronically as instructor directs
(*this is a University deadline*)

FRI 16 FEB 2018 (end of second week of classes)

Junior Paper Arrangements Form

due in departmental representative's mailbox, 211 1879 Hall
or may be scanned and sent electronically **in pdf format** to jburgess@princeton.edu

TUE 08 MAY 2018 (second day of reading period)

Junior Papers

to be submitted to **advisor** in hard copy or electronically as advisor directs
(*this is a University deadline*)

University deadlines:

TUE 26 SEP 2017 fall drop/add deadline

MON 27 NOV 2017 fall drop & PDF deadline

TUE 12 DEC 2017 spring course selection deadline

FRI 16 FEB 2018 spring drop/add deadline

FRI 13 APR 2018 spring drop & PDF deadline

WED 25 APR 2018 fall course selection deadline

SENIORS**Academic Year 2017-2018****All department items are due by 4:00 p.m. on the day of the deadline**

Note carefully to whom and in what format each item is to be submitted

FRI 15 SEP 2017 (second day of classes)

3:30 p.m. Mandatory Majors' Meeting, Tower Room, 1879 Hall

FRI 22 SEP 2017 (end of second week, the first *full* week, of classes)*Senior Thesis Arrangements Form*

to be left in departmental representative's mailbox, 211 1879 Hall

or may be scanned and sent electronically in pdf format (email to jburgess@princeton.edu)

MON 02 OCT 2017*"Princeton & Beyond" Dinner*

Faculty and Philosophy Juniors and Seniors

The Garden Room, Prospect House, 6:00pm-9:00pm

TUE 07 NOV 2017 (second day after fall recess)*Senior Thesis Proposal* to be emailed electronically in **pdf format**

to the undergraduate administrator, zuczek@princeton.edu

FRI 08 DEC 2017*Departmentals Declaration* one (1) hard copy

to be left in departmental representative's mailbox, 211 1879 Hall

or may be scanned and sent electronically in **pdf format** (jburgess@princeton.edu)**TUE 09 JAN 2018** (second day of reading period after winter recess)*Senior Thesis Draft*to be submitted electronically to undergraduate administrator in **pdf format**, zuczek@princeton.edu

[get this right: it's practice for how the University requires senior theses to be submitted]

MON 02 APR 2018 (first day of eighth week of classes)*Senior Thesis*to be submitted electronically in **pdf format** to department administrator, zuczek@princeton.edu**MON 30 APR 2018** (first day of last week of classes)*Departmental Examination Arrangements Form* email pdf format to zuczek@princeton.edu*Departmental Examination Syllabus* email pdf format to zuczek@princeton.eduSenior Thesis Abstract (.doc format) email **doc format** to zuczek@princeton.edu**WED 16 MAY & THU 17 MAY 2018**

Departmental Examination Period

MON 04 JUN 2018

Class Day

University deadlines:

TUE 26 SEP 2017 fall drop/add deadline**MON 27 NOV 2017** fall drop & PDF deadline**FRI 08 DEC 2017** spring course selection deadline**FRI 16 FEB 2018** spring drop/add deadline**FRI 13 APR 2018** spring drop & PDF deadline

DECLARING DEPARTMENTALS
(FORM HAS TWO PAGES)

Print Your Name _____

DEPARTMENTALS =

- X SET OF 8 COURSES USED TO FULFILL DEPARTMENTAL DISTRIBUTION REQUIREMENTS
+ Y OTHER PHI COURSES TAKEN FOR LETTER GRADE JR OR SR YEAR
+ Z ANY OTHER PHI COURSES OR ELIGIBLE COGNATES **YOU CHOOSE TO INCLUDE**

HOW TO LIST COURSES

List courses that have a PHI number (either as main listing or as cross-listing) by that number, e.g. 205.

List courses that do not have a PHI number (neither as main listing nor as cross-listing) by department code and number, e.g. WWS301.

List courses taken on study abroad by institution and title, e.g. Oxford: Kant's Moral Philosophy.

Star () any course in which you are now enrolled and have not yet received a final grade.*

*Double star (**) any course you are selecting for next semester.*

(X) SET OF EIGHT

STEP I Choose one of the following three options:

___ Regular option: choose three of the four areas M, V, L, H below.

___ Political philosophy option: choose areas P, V, and one of M, L, H

if you choose this option, your thesis must be in political philosophy, broadly construed.

Thesis topic: _____

___ Philosophy of science option: choose areas S, L, and one of M, V, H

if you choose this option, your thesis must be in philosophy of science, broadly construed.

Thesis topic: _____

STEP II Having chosen areas as above, list two courses (not both cognates for M, V, L, H) for each

M METAPHYSICS

H HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY

1.

1.

2.

2.

V ETHICS/VALUE

L LOGIC/PHI SCI

1.

1.

2.

2.

P POLITICAL THEORY (POL courses so listed in *Undergraduate Announcement*)

1.

2.

S SCIENCE: 300-or-higher level courses in the same science (e.g. EEB & MOL both count as "Biology")

Science _____

1.

2.

STEP III Also, list two further courses unrestricted as to area

1.

2.

STEP IV. Check these restrictions

How many of the above courses are 200-level or below? _____

(You are allowed at most two, or three if one of them is a logic course)

How many of the above courses are cognates (no PHI listing or cross-listing)? _____

(You are allowed at most two for the regular option,
one in addition to the two area P or area S courses on the other options.)

(Y) OTHER COURSES WITH PHI LISTING OR CROSS LISTING
TAKEN FOR LETTER GRADE JUNIOR OR SENIOR YEAR

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

(Z) COURSES WITH PHI LISTING OR CROSS-LISTING TAKEN FOR LETTER GRADE
BUT NOT LISTED UNDER X OR Y AND THAT YOU WISH TO COUNT

(You may list proposed cognates as well; these are subject to approval.)

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

COURSES YOU DO NOT NEED TO AND DO NOT WISH TO COUNT

To avoid ambiguity, list here ~~crossed-out~~

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

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JUNIOR SEMINAR ARRANGEMENTS FORM

Name: _____

Obtain a JUNIOR SEMINARS OFFERINGS list.

List below *three* seminars, in order of your preference:

Fill in your schedule: ☞ out times when you are NOT free.

Return to departmental representative's mailbox *before*
 or to the departmental representative in person *at*
 the Mandatory Meeting for majors
 (time & place announced electronically)

	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI
8:00 - 8:30					
8:30 - 9:00					
9:00 - 9:30					
9:30 - 10:00					
10:00 - 10:30					
10:30 - 11:00					
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6:30 - 7:00					
7:00 - 7:30					
7:30 - 8:00					
8:00 - 8:30					
8:30 - 9:00					
9:00 - 9:30					
9:30 - 10:00					

JUNIOR PAPER ARRANGEMENTS FORM*

Name: _____

General Area of Paper _____
(particular topic subject to negotiation between student & advisor)

OPTION A

If you have a strong preference for some one particular member of the department faculty as advisor, you must obtain the agreement of that person, as confirmed by his or her signature below:

I am willing to advise the above-named junior.

[Faculty Signature]

[Print Name]

OPTION B

If you are content to have an advisor assigned by the department, obtain a copy of the Junior Paper/Senior Thesis Advising Panel list, and list below *at least three* members of the panel, in order of your preference:

Do not request any one particular member of the faculty, and especially not one who is not on the advising panel, or who is indicated as having low availability, unless you have obtained that person's agreement, as indicated by his or her signature.

Return this form to departmental representative by **4:00 PM, Friday, Second Week of Classes**

*Sophomores who either

- (1) are *official* early concentrators and as such required to do sophomore independent work, or
 - (2) are planning to enter the department but are also planning to go away on study abroad, and who wish get an *unofficial* head start on their eventual junior independent work
- should also complete and return this form by the deadline.**

SENIOR THESIS ARRANGEMENTS FORM

Name: _____

General Area of Thesis _____
 (particular topic subject to negotiation between student & advisor)

OPTION A

If you have a strong preference for some one particular member of the department faculty as advisor, you must obtain the agreement of that person, as confirmed by his or her signature below:

I am willing to advise the above-named junior.

 [Faculty Signature]

 [Department if not PHI]

 [Print Name]

Advisor please note: the senior departmental examination is oral, and normally requires the physical presence on campus of the thesis advisor

OPTION B

If you are content to have an advisor assigned by the department, obtain a copy of the Junior Paper/Senior Thesis Advising Panel list, and list below *at least three* members of the panel, in order of your preference:

Do not request any one particular member of the faculty, and especially not one who is not on the advising panel, or who is indicated as having low availability, unless you have obtained that person's agreement, as indicated by his or her signature.

Return this form to departmental representative **4:00 PM, Friday, Second (= First Full) Week of Classes**

SENIOR DEPARTMENTAL EXAMINATIONS ARRANGEMENTS FORM

Name: _____

Thesis Advisor: _____

Examination Coordinator: _____

Examination Area: _____

Examination Date: _____

Examination Hour: _____

Examination Place: _____

My thesis advisor and examination coordinator have agreed to the above arrangements.

[Student's Signature]

Return this form to the undergraduate administrator by **4:00 PM, Monday, Last Week of Classes**