

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

INDEPENDENT WORK GUIDE



WITH DEADLINES FOR
ACADEMIC YEAR
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NOTE: Though the chief faculty person concerned with the administrative side of undergraduate affairs is now termed Director of Undergraduate Studies, and the abbreviation DUS will be used throughout below, the title was formerly Departmental Representative, and that title may still appear on some older forms, as may the former name Marx Hall for Laura Wooten Hall.

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 these projects 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 lower division courses generally teach, in addition to their particular subject matter, the basics of how to write a philosophy paper, while upper division 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 — 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.* This principle 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 writing groups held in the fall of junior year. These **junior independent work study and writing groups** (formerly called junior seminars until some other departments started using that label for certain *courses*, which an independent work group is not, since at Princeton independent work is *in addition to* course work) 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 fall independent work group 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 mainly 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' subscription to which many journal articles are made available online. 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.

Assessment of whether the goal of effectively managing time has been achieved is ultimately a matter of 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 sub-issue. 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 sub-questions have arisen and generated discussion, until the student finds one that seizes his or her interest. 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. (This information will, among other things, be useful to the department in assigning thesis second readers.)

Assessment of how well things are on track in this respect is the main rationale for the requirement of a *thesis proposal* (see the "Procedures" section of this document), upon reading which the advisor will be able to communicate to the student whether any adjustment is needed.

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*.

Assessment not just of whether the transition from the reading phase to the writing phase has been undertaken, but also of whether the student has the background literature under control, can be made by the advisor on the basis of the *a thesis draft*, or substantial chunk of written work towards the thesis, either in the form of a finished first chapter or two, or of a fairly detailed outline of the whole, or of a combination of the two, that is required between semesters. (See the "Procedures" section below.)

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).

Assessment whether and how well the student has achieved an adequate sense of the relation of the thesis project to larger issues is a main goal of the departmental examination.

5. WRITING PHILOSOPHICALLY

In philosophical writing the goals to be sought include **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** in taking into account the philosophical and where relevant non-philosophical literature. A crucial additional virtue to be sought is **conciseness**, a requirement enforced by the word limits imposed of theses. (For what these are see the "Procedures" part of this document.) For longer definitely does *not* always mean better when it comes to philosophical writing.

In addition to the aforementioned features of good philosophical writing, the best 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 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.

It is in the nature of originality that there can be no algorithm or recipe that can be taught that could be guaranteed to achieve it routinely. But successfully fulfilling the requirements and achieving the desiderata already discussed above can at least provide two crucial preliminaries: by familiarizing oneself with the literature, one will become aware of what has already been done or attempted and to that extent would *not* be original, and one will also be exposed to a range of examples of original contributions that have been made in the course of debate so far, especially if one reads the existing literature in chronological order by date of its appearance.

Assessment of these writing goals takes place over the course of the preparation of drafts of the thesis for the advisor and the final thesis will afford ample opportunity to the student to display these virtues. For

example: when the student expounds the views of others, concision and accuracy will be required; when expounding their own views students have a chance to display clarity and originality; when marshalling counterargument to their positions, students will have a chance to show thoroughness in considering all the relevant ways in which their view may be vulnerable to attack.

D THE THESIS: GRADING STANDARDS

In evaluating theses 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 for details.) Since each thesis presents a different mix of strengths and weaknesses, it is not easy to formulate any strict rules, which is one reason why at least one of the two readers of each thesis should be an experienced member of the department, familiar with how theses have been graded in the past. But the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee has approved the following formulation of grading standards, of which faculty will be reminded by the DUS before grading begins:

99 or 98 (A+) Truly exceptional. Such grades are rarely awarded (long term, about once in five years, and then almost always **98** rather than **99**). Work that would be publishable, perhaps with some slight revisions, in a journal of good standard.

97 or 96 (high A) Exceptional. A grade not very common (not necessarily given every year). Work comparable to that of good advanced graduate students, of a kind more common in doctoral dissertations than undergraduate papers.

95 (middle A) Outstanding. Work that is almost flawless on the score of clarity and accuracy and thoroughness and displays significant originality. About what we would expect of a graduate student unit paper.

94 or 93 (low A) Excellent. Work that is almost flawless on the score of clarity and accuracy and thoroughness, and with some significant features of originality that are at least partially developed. Prize-winning theses are generally ones with grades at this level or higher.

92 or 91 (A-) Approaching excellence. Work that is almost flawless on the score of clarity and accuracy and thoroughness, with some suggestive original ideas that remain relatively undeveloped.

90 (A-/B+ border) Very good. Work that is almost flawless on the score of clarity and thoroughness and accuracy but lacks substantial original ideas; or work in which occasional flashes of originality balance occasional lapses of clarity or thoroughness or accuracy. This the bottom of the **A** range, and University policy has been that no more than about 55% of theses should get grades in that range.

89 or 88 (B+) Quite good. Work that is well written with nothing terribly wrong, though there may be small problems, mistakes, or ambiguities.

87 down to 83 (B) Good overall. It may contain some notable lapses, but no really grave misunderstandings. It should make clear why the problem it addresses is a problem, and offer some response, though perhaps straightforward and unoriginal, perhaps less than decisive, perhaps consisting in just working out a strategy only to suggest it doesn't work. These things are, of course, a matter of degree, hence the range of numerical grades available for this same letter grade.

82, 81, or 80 (B-) More than adequate. Work that shows a reasonable command of the material, despite moderately serious lapses (unclear or poor organization in the writing or misunderstandings about what the problem is or what philosophers have said about it). Shows significant effort despite perhaps disappointing final results.

79 or 78 (C+) Adequate. Meets basic standards but with serious problems (writing that is really hard to get through, disorganized or structureless, raising doubts whether the author really understands the texts discussed; alternatively, the writing may be all right, but with show no genuine attempt at making an argument).

77 down to 73 (C) Acceptable. Meets some basic standards.

72, 71, or 70 (C-) Barely acceptable. Falls short of basic standards in several ways.

The grade **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, were one to be submitted; but all recent cases of **F** grades for the senior thesis were the result of no thesis at all being submitted.

II PROCEDURES

A JUNIOR INDEPENDENT WORK GROUPS

Fall semester junior year, independent work normally involves participation in a group of up to five students under the supervision of an instructor from the faculty of the department. Such a group (formerly called 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, or at least pre-approved by the instructor. The student's grade for fall semester independent work will be mainly based on this paper but is normally 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%).

When (in later spring or early summer) descriptions of group topics for the coming fall semester become available, they will be circulated to students, who will be asked to submit within a week or ten days a ranked list of their preferences, on which basis students will be assigned to groups. The instructors will then be in touch with the students assigned them over the summer about scheduling the group meetings. Usually there will be two sections for each group.

The paper should be submitted as an attachment in pdf format to an ordinary e-mail to the group instructor, with copies to the UGA and (Fall) DUS. The due date for the completed paper is the University due date for fall junior independent work as listed on-line in the registrar's academic calendar; it falls about midway through Wintersession. Since this is a University due date, extensions cannot be granted by individual departments or instructors. 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 group instructor and the DUS.

Students who will be away on study abroad fall semester junior year will write the same kind of junior paper all students write spring semester (see below), in place of participation in a junior independent work group. Arrangements will be made as part of the process of approval of the study abroad application. Sophomores contemplating entering the department but being away on study abroad fall semester junior year should consult the DUS about getting a head start on the fall junior paper over the preceding summer or even spring semester sophomore year.

B JUNIOR PAPERS

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 (regular, visiting, associated, or post-doctoral fellow) not on leave 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 (there is no such restriction for the senior thesis). 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 DUS. By the first day of the second week of spring classes every junior should submit to the DUS *either* confirmation of an agreement about advising with some one member of the faculty (in the form of an e-mail from the faculty member to the DUS, or at a pinch a forward to the DUS of an e-mail from the faculty member to the student, unequivocally indicating the faculty member's willingness to advise), *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 electronically to students early the next week of classes.

Junior papers are normally due the second day of spring reading period. They should be submitted in pdf format as an attachment to an e-mail to the instructor, with copies to the UGA and DUS. 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 DUS.

C 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, or post-doctoral fellow of the department who is not on leave is eligible to advise a senior thesis if willing to do so. (Advising by outside faculty is also possible, subject to approval by the DUS.) 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 DUS.

Normally, by the end of the second week of classes fall semester, every senior should submit to the DUS *either* confirmation of an agreement about advising signed by a member of the faculty (in the form of an e-mail from the faculty member to the DUS, or at a pinch a forward to the DUS of an e-mail from the faculty member to the student, unequivocally indicating the faculty member's willingness to advise), *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 fairly 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 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

Otherwise there are no special prescriptions as to type face, margins, style for citations, or the like.

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 name. 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 time thesis drafts (as to be 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 minor (or 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 DUS. 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 Thursday before 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 DUS. Such approval should be sought at the latest by the Thursday before 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 by 5:00 p.m. on the next-to-last day of classes before fall break. It is to be submitted electronically in pdf format, as an attachment to an e-mail to the UGA with copies to the DUS and thesis advisor. The assignment of second readers will be made on the basis of the proposal. It is therefore in the student's interest to be as specific as possible in formulating that proposal.

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 normally due by 5:00 p.m. on the Friday, the end of the first week of Wintersession. It is to be submitted electronically in pdf format, as an attachment to an e-mail to the UGA with copies to the (Spring) DUS, thesis advisor, and second reader.

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 two weeks after spring recess. It is to be submitted electronically in pdf format, as an attachment to an e-mail to the UGA with copies to the DUS, thesis advisor, and second reader. The University will circulate its own requirements for submission to Mudd Library.

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 DUS. 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 UGA, 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 a second reader who will also serve as the student's departmental examination coordinator. 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 in advance.

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".

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.

D DEPARTMENTAL EXAMINATIONS

1 FORMAT AND SYLLABUS

Senior year independent work consists, in addition to the of writing the senior thesis, preparing for the departmental examination, an oral examination of an hour or seventy-five minutes' duration 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, who also serves as second reader of the thesis, 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.

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 a couple of weeks 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 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 by 5:00 p.m. Tuesday of the last week of spring classes. It should be submitted in pdf format as an attachment to an e-mail addressed to the UGA, with copies to the DUS and the two examiners. 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 confer with both examiners and reach agreement on the day and hour of the examination, as well as the place (usually the second reader's office, or the advisor's if the advisor is from outside the department, though the examination may be held virtually if all parties agree). These agreed arrangements are to be reported to the UGA and DUS 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 UGA, who will notify the student electronically. It is the student's responsibility to check e-mail regularly for such a notification. In exceptional circumstances, the examination may be held remotely if all parties agree.

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, receives a grade of INC (incomplete) for it. If an acceptable thesis is subsequently submitted, a departmental examination must then be scheduled and held (remotely if necessary) before the student can be granted a late degree.

E 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 distribution requirements** (as described in the Supplement below). 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		

(Conversion between this department scale and the conventional scale running from F = 0.0 to A+ = 4.3 is like conversion between Fahrenheit and Celsius.) 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% for each semester)
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. (This exclusion does *not* apply to Princeton courses that as part of a special Princeton program are offered abroad in summer by Princeton faculty.) As already stated above, cognates are supposed to be taken *before* spring semester senior year, and 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. The fraction of the class receiving some form of honors has been held to near 50% over the long term, which means that the lower bound for honors has slowly crept upwards over the years as a consequence of grade inflation. 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 shared by or 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 (including history of philosophy) <i>except</i> moral or social philosophy or aesthetics

There are also two smaller prizes.

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, which are often awarded to more than one student, varies from year to year, but in recent years shares of such prizes have been in four figures. 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 families of graduating seniors.

III RESOURCES

A LIBRARY

Seniors are entitled to keys to the Wooten 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 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 stands ready to provide any form of assistance.

B WRITING CENTER

The University Writing Center 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 consultations and writing group mentoring and workshops is subject to frequent change, students are advised to check the Writing Center web-pages directly, as well as the on-line Princeton Undergraduate Research Calendar. (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 department does not have comparable funds of its own.) The application process requires a full account of the student's research proposal, a detailed itemized budget, planned itinerary (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 DUS.)

DEPARTMENT DEADLINES

JUNIORS

All department items are due by 5:00 p.m. on the day of the deadline
 Note carefully to whom and in what format each item is to be submitted:
 please make submissions as simple attachments to ordinary e-mails (no fancy delivery systems, please)

WED 06 SEP 2023 (second day of classes)
 3:30 (virtual) meeting to elect student representatives to the department*

TUE 16 JAN 2024 (University-wide JIW due-date, set in the middle of Wintersession)
Junior Independent Work Group Final Papers
 to be sent electronically **in pdf format** as an attachment to an e-mail to the UGA
 with copies to DUS and group instructor
 [Get this right! It is practice for how senior theses will be submitted.]
this is a University deadline: extensions require dean's approval

MON 05 FEB 2024 (first day of second week of spring classes)
Junior Paper arrangements
either an e-mail from a faculty member agreeing to advise the student
or an e-mail from the student listing of preferences of possible advisors from the advising panel
 in either case to the (Spring) DUS with copy to the UGA
 (see section II.B above)

TUE 30 APR 2024 (second day of spring reading period)
Junior Papers
 to be sent electronically **in pdf format** as an attachment to an e-mail to the UGA
 with copies to DUS and junior paper advisor
this is a University deadline: extensions require dean's approval

Consult the registrar's academic calendar for University deadlines each semester for drops/adds and change of grading scale (ABCDF or PDF), and for deadlines for course selection for the up-coming semester.

*Junior majors and senior majors are each entitled to a representative who may attend department meetings and participate in discussion, but may not vote on matters pertaining to the requirements for majors that would apply to themselves, or requirements for the graduate program, or hiring decisions. Students are also entitled to one representative (normally the runner-up in the vote for senior representative to the department) on the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee, which deals with undergraduate matters generally, and one representative (normally the runner-up in the vote for junior representative to the department) on the Course Allocation Committee, which meets in January to decide on the menu of courses to be offered in during the academic year beginning the following fall. If any *ad hoc* committees are formed during the year to which majors would be entitled to have a representative, the senior representative to the department will serve in that role or appoint another major to do so.

SENIORS

All department items are due by 5:00 p.m. on the day of the deadline
 Note carefully to whom and in what format each item is to be submitted
 please make submissions as simple attachments to ordinary e-mails (no fancy delivery systems, please)

WED 06 SEP 2023 (second day of classes)
 3:30 (virtual) meeting to elect student representatives to the department*

FRI 15 SEP 2023 (end of the second week of fall classes)
Senior Thesis arrangements
 either an e-mail from a faculty member agreeing to advise the student
 or an e-mail from the student listing of preferences of possible advisors from the advising panel
 in either case to the DUS with copy to the UGA
 (see section II.D.1 above)

THU 12 OCT 2023 (next-to-last day of classes before fall break)
Senior Thesis Proposal
 to be sent electronically **in pdf format** as an attachment to an e-mail to the UGA
 with copies to DUS and thesis advisor
 (see section II.C.3 above)

FRI 19 JAN 2024 (end of first week of Wintersession)
Senior Thesis Draft
 to be sent electronically **in pdf format** as an attachment to an e-mail to the UGA
 with copies to (Spring) DUS and thesis advisor and second reader
 (see section II.C.3 above)

MON 01 APR 2024 (first day of second week of classes after spring recess)
Senior Thesis
 to be sent electronically **in pdf format** as an attachment to an e-mail to the UGA
 with copies to DUS and thesis advisor and second reader
 [as well as to Mudd Library per University instructions]

TUE 23 APR 2024 (second day of last week of spring classes)
Departmental Examination Syllabus / Senior Departmental Examination arrangements
 syllabus to be sent electronically **in pdf format** as an attachment to
 an e-mail **indicating the date & time of the examination** to the UGA
 with copies to DUS and thesis advisor and second reader (a.k.a. examination coordinator)

WED 08 MAY & THU 09 MAY 2024 (first two days of examination period)
 Senior Departmental Examination Period

Consult the registrar's academic calendar for University deadlines each semester for drops/adds and change of grading scale (ABCDF or PDF), and for deadlines for course selection for the up-coming semester.

*See footnote on the preceding page.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Though this document pertains mainly to majors' independent work, for the convenience of students, a description of department *course requirements* for majors *and course requirements for* minors are also included here. (There is no independent work requirement for minors.)

1 FOR MAJORS

For juniors and seniors, course selections and changes are approved by the DUS, who can perform some of the functions of an academic advisor and refer students to other department faculty for further advice if desired. All students are encouraged to communicate with the DUS at course selection time, at least by e-mail, and the following are required to do so: sophomores entering the department; fall seniors selecting spring senior courses; spring seniors dropping departmental courses. What follows is a description of the department's normal course requirements. Students with especially good educational reasons to seek exceptions may petition the faculty members of the department's Undergraduate Curriculum Committee.

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 three courses may be lower division, that is, 200-level or lower (The University does not permit departments to count freshman seminars towards official requirements. Though reading courses formally have numbers in the 90s, they count as 300-level or higher.)

Normally *six out of the eight* courses must be so distributed that there are two in each of *three of the four* areas into which philosophy courses are divided (M metaphysics; V ethics and philosophy of value; L logic and philosophy of science; H history of philosophy); 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, reading courses, cognates in other departments) the classification will be made by the DUS in consultation with the instructor as appropriate.

Up to two courses in other departments may be counted as cognates, if approved by the DUS as contributing significantly to the student's course of study; these must normally be courses completed before spring semester senior year (grades for courses outside the department are generally not available to the department in time to include them in calculating the average on which honors are based, and such grades are treated like those for courses taken at other institutions, which are never included in averages at the University or department level). 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 GER 210 and AAS 201.

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 two 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 to fulfill distribution requirements; students are allowed *one* additional cognate beyond the politics courses. The **philosophy of science** option involves using two of 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 to fulfill distribution requirements; students are allowed one additional cognate beyond the science courses. Variations for students going on study abroad are approved by the DUS on a case-by-case basis as part of the study abroad approval process for the individual student.

The Office of the Dean of the College no longer permits undergraduates to enroll in most graduate seminars in our department, but the effect of so doing can still be achieved indirectly. The student must propose — the University form for such proposals is obtainable from residential college deans — a reading course that just happens to have the same instructor as, meet at the same time as, and cover the same readings as, the graduate seminar. The form must be signed by the instructor, who must also supply a syllabus and a statement of how undergraduates will be graded, for approval by the dean's office. (The form also calls for the signatures of the department chair and the DUS, but the department manager can sign for them.)

The normal University rule is that courses taken on a PDF basis cannot be counted as departmentals. This rule was suspended for Spring and Fall semesters of calendar year 2020, but is now back fully in force.

2 FOR MINORS

There are no independent work requirements for minors. The course requirements are a scaled-down version of those for majors. Five courses in philosophy are required, subject to the following restrictions:

- None may be taken on a PDF basis, but all for letter grade.
- At most one may be an approved cognate from another department, or from another institution if the student is participating in study abroad.
- At most two may be lower-division courses (100- or 200-level; freshman seminars may not be counted by University rules)
 - At most three can be from any one of the four areas (M, V, L, H as described above in the requirements for majors); any of the patterns 3-2, 3-1-1, 2-2-1, 2-1-1-1 is acceptable
 - At most two may be courses used towards fulfilling the requirements of the student's major.

Students must declare their interest in the Minor to the DUS at the latest by the spring semester of junior year.

Students minoring in philosophy will be included in invitations to events for our majors to the extent that is conveniently feasible. In department courses with caps on enrollment, accommodating students minoring with us will have second priority after accommodating our majors. Senior thesis supervisors who are members of our department or have associated faculty status may nominate theses of philosophical content for consideration at our department's discretion for its senior thesis prizes.

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. GER210.

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 <i>Undergraduate Announcement</i>)
---	--

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 three. Reading courses, though formally they have numbers in the 90s, do not count.)

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.

This space for use by DUS