Table of Contents

Important Deadlines........................................................................................................2
Graduate Coordinators Overview ................................................................................3
Prerequisites ..................................................................................................................4
New Students Beginning Coursework ...........................................................................5
Travel Funding for Conferences ....................................................................................6
896 Exam Information ....................................................................................................7
ATC Form - Advancement to Candidacy .......................................................................11
PCE Form - Proposal for Culminating Experience ......................................................12
Thesis Defense Procedures ............................................................................................13
Applying to Ph.D. Programs ...........................................................................................14
IMPORTANT DEADLINES (SPRING 2021)

Advancement to Candidacy Form (to Prof. Landy)  **February 19**  
(submitted once you have completed your prerequisites and are taking your 18th unit to be counted towards your degree)

Proposal for Culminating Experience (to thesis committee)  **February 19**  
(submitted the semester *before* you plan to register for your thesis course: PHIL 898)

Proposal for Culminating Experience (to Prof. Landy)  **March 5**

Deadline to Apply to Graduate  **February 19**

Final Deadline to Apply for Graduation  **May 14**

Last Day to Take Oral Exam  **April 16**

Preliminary Thesis Format Check  **April 9**

Final Format Check  **May 14**

Proof of Completion  **May 14**
GRADUATE COORDINATORS

The Department of Philosophy has two Graduate Coordinators, each of whom handles different aspects of the MA program. The department also has a Graduate Program Administrative Coordinator.

Professor Sowaal

Graduate Coordinator regarding matters of recruitment, admissions, and student status, including:
- Applications to MA program;
- Formal Logic Challenge Exam (in conjunction with Professor Peschard);
- See: http://philosophy.sfsu.edu/page/formal-logic
- Information regarding student travel funds;
- Adviser for students before they have completed Phil 715;

Professor Landy

Graduate Coordinator regarding matters of progress to degree, including paperwork regarding:
- Advancement to Candidacy (ATC) and revisions;
- Proposal for Culminating Experience (PCE) and revisions;
- Change of Graduate Program Form (to move from Conditionally Classified to Classified Standing, usually after having fulfilled outstanding prerequisites);
- Cross Registration and Consortium Agreements (Berkeley and other CSUs);
- Work done at SFSU and in excess of Bachelor’s degree;

Graduate Program Administrative Specialist

Chris Wessels

Helps with all administrative aspects of the graduate program. Always feel free to contact him with any questions or concerns you have.
STUDENTS WHO ARE COMPLETING PREREQUISITES

Your main focus should be on completing your prerequisites.

Petitioning prerequisites:

When admissions actions occur, the Graduate Coordinator has only the transcript, CSU application, and prerequisites grid, so may not fully understand the applicant’s preparation. In addition, sometimes students have completed courses after they have submitted their applications; such coursework has not been reviewed on admission.

This petition process offers students a chance to provide the Graduate Coordinator with more information demonstrating sufficient preparation for graduate work.

If you would like to petition that a prerequisite be waived, please submit the following information to the Graduate Coordinator during office hours:

- The email that was initially sent to you by the Graduate Coordinator in which your prerequisites are listed (if you do not currently have a copy, you can request one from Chris at grdphl@sfsu.edu in the Philosophy office);
- a letter that clearly indicates which prerequisite(s) you are petitioning;
- your email address and SFSU ID number;
- relevant information about your work regarding the prerequisite, for example:
  - for all classes except Phil 205, evidence that the class you took to satisfy the prerequisite was an upper-division class;
  - evidence that you received a B or better in the undergraduate class or analogous graduate class;
  - the syllabus for the class;
  - if the class was an independent study, a reading list and a letter from the professor verifying that you indeed read those materials and completed the writing assignments;
  - any written work you completed for the class (papers, exams, etc.).
STUDENTS WHO ARE BEGINNING COURSEWORK

Given their preparation, students enter the MA program as either “conditionally classified” (if they have not completed all prerequisites prior to applying to the program) or as “classified” (if they have completed all prerequisites prior to applying to the program).

All students are full members of the MA program.

CONDITIONALLY CLASSIFIED STUDENTS:

If you have completed all of your prerequisites (with a 3.0 or better, which is equivalent to a B), you may apply for Classified Standing. (Note: being enrolled in a class is not the same as having completed the class.)

You can find the “Change of Master’s Degree” form here. Only fill out the information on the very top portion of the page (your identifying information) and sign in the space for student's signature [see sample form in this packet].


Submit to the Graduate Program Administrative Coordinator:

- the completed form;
- the email that was initially sent to you by the Graduate Coordinator in which your prerequisites are listed (if you do not have this, you can obtain a copy from Chris);
- one copy of your unofficial transcript.

There is no deadline for the submission of this form and your standing will automatically be changed whenever your ATC form is processed, however:

- Your standing is particularly important if you want to apply for fellowships; many SFSU fellowships require that you are a classified student.

CLASSIFIED STUDENTS:

Keep in mind that you should complete the following in roughly this order:

- Phil 715 during your first year of graduate coursework;
- Phil 896 during your second or third semesters of graduate coursework;
- Phil 898 during your last semester.

Once you have completed 18 units toward the MA degree, it is highly advisable that you fill out an Advancement to Candidacy (ATC) form. With the exception of courses at the 600-level, prerequisite classes do not count toward the MA degree, and so are not counted among the 18 units.

See “Submitting the Advancement to Candidacy (ATC) Form” in the next pages. This form is submitted early in the semester; it can be submitted in Fall or in Spring.
TAKING CLASSES AT OTHER UNIVERSITIES WHILE ENROLLED AT SFSU

SFSU has several programs that allow students to pay fees at SFSU and to take classes at other universities. Please see “Special Enrollment Programs” at the following link for more information: http://bulletin.sfsu.edu/resources/

As part of the Cross Registration Program with UC Berkeley, the Department of Philosophy allows all MA students to take undergraduate courses at Berkeley. Students who have achieved a track record of excellent Master’s-level coursework at SFSU may be considered eligible to take additional courses; to take such courses, they will need: (1) an arrangement with a faculty sponsor at SFSU, (2) permission (and signature) from the Graduate Coordinator.

- The Consortium program is only available during the regular sessions of the academic year and specifically excludes summer session, winter session, and extension.

The Berkeley cross-registration form can be found here: https://registrar.sfsu.edu/sites/default/files/ucb.pdf

PETITIONING COURSEWORK COMPLETED THROUGH OPEN UNIVERSITY OR AT OTHER INSTITUTIONS

Students may petition a maximum of six semester units to count toward their MA degree. This may include any combination of Open University (CEL) work, credit by examination, and/or transfer work). For more information, see: http://bulletin.sfsu.edu/graduate-education/academic-policies-procedures/

Students who completed their BA degrees at SFSU and who took courses that were not counted towards their BA degrees may also petition to count such courses toward their MA degrees.

STUDENT TRAVEL FUNDING

Students may apply for funds to aid in travel to present work at conferences that will contribute to their philosophical studies and/or careers. Funds will be awarded according to the following criteria.

1. Students should be presenting original work, although students delivering comments may also apply.
2. Presentations should be beneficial to the advancement of the student’s philosophical studies and/or career.
3. Students already receiving travel funding from another source (e.g., APA travel funds) are not eligible.
4. As a rule, acceptance to student conferences or student sections of conferences will not be assessed as sufficiently important to advance a career, although these are very helpful as a first step in learning how to submit and in networking. Occasionally, however, a student conference will be highly selective and will qualify.

As in previous years, the earlier the application is made, the better. To submit an application, please contact Chris Wessels at grdphl@sfsu.edu.
PHILOSOPHY 896 - COMPREHENSIVE EXAM

Contact the Graduate Coordinator if you have any questions about the guidelines below.

PHIL 896 Guidelines

Contact the Graduate Coordinator if you have any questions about the guidelines below.

Taking PHIL 896

1. PHIL 896 is the Department of Philosophy qualifying exam for graduate students. The course tests the student’s ability to comprehend, explain, compare, and explore the views of philosophers working on topics selected by the Department faculty. The course also satisfies the University’s Written English Proficiency Requirement for graduate students.

2. PHIL 896 is a mandatory CR/NC course. It may be repeated once if NC is earned the first time. It must be completed with a CR before the student may officially begin work on the master's thesis. Students are permitted two attempts to pass PHIL 896. Students who fail a second time will be subject to disqualification from the program.

3. All students should confer with the Graduate Coordinator before enrolling in the course. Students who are Conditionally Classified are generally advised not to take the exam until all prerequisite work is completed. Students are encouraged to take PHIL 896 in their second or third semester of graduate-level work, and to have successfully completed three graduate seminars prior to attempting the course.

4. Students who fail the course for the first time will be contacted by the Graduate Coordinator for a mandatory conference. Students will not be allowed to retake the course without having this mandatory conference.

5. The passing grade for credit is a B-. Three faculty instructors grade the assignments for the course and confer to assign the final grades. The results of the course will be emailed to students within two weeks after the date of the final submission.

6. It is possible to pass the course with distinction, although this honor will not appear on your transcripts.
The Format of the Course

1. Summary:
   a) Students will work on one topic throughout the semester.
   b) Each topic will have four readings assigned to it.
   c) Students working on the same topic will participate in four study sessions throughout the semester.
   d) Following each study session, each student will submit a summary of the discussion at the session.
   e) Additionally, each student will submit a final exam for the course.

2. An orientation session with the Graduate Coordinator will be held in the first two weeks of the semester.

3. Each semester, three faculty volunteer to assign readings, lead a discussion section on those readings, and assess student work for the course. Prior to the start of the semester, the Graduate Coordinator will inform students of the three topics that the faculty volunteers have chosen for that semester, along with the readings for each. Each set will consist of four readings, and will have at least one contemporary and at least one historical selection.

4. Each student will work on one of those topics throughout the semester. Students begin the course by submitting a ranked list of the topics on which they wish to work to the Graduate Coordinator, who will then assign each student to a topic, taking these preferences into consideration. A student cannot undertake a topic on which they have taken a course as a graduate student at SFSU.

5. Students assigned to work on the same topic constitute a study group for that topic. Students from each study group will meet four times during the semester to discuss the assigned readings (including one meeting with the faculty volunteer for that topic). All meeting times will be posted by Graduate Coordinator prior to the start of the semester, although students may meet at other times, if all the members of a group and their faculty volunteer agree.

Within a week of each meeting, each student will submit their own summary of the discussion at that meeting. These summaries each constitute 10% of the student’s grade in the course.

Your summary should have the following format.
   a) The summary should state the text(s) that was discussed.
   b) It should begin with 1-2 sentences that summarize the overall discussion during the meeting.
   c) It should then be broken down into sections, and sections should be structured as follows:
      i. Each section should have a clear and concise header that is a statement that tells the reader what was discussed by the group with respect to a particular issue in the reading. For example:

      1. “The group discussed how Rawls defines legal obligation in Rawls's “Legal Obligation and the Duty of Fair Play.” We came up with the following proposals;” or
2. “The group discussed the positions for which Smith argues in Smith’s “On Knowing God’s Nature.”

ii. Under that header statement, in bullet point or numbered form, the writer should present the reasons the group discussed in support of the positions taken with respect to the issue at hand in clear, concise sentences (2-3 sentences). For example:

1. “Some group members concluded that Rawls’s account of the duty of fair play makes it the case that it would only rarely be permissible to disobey the law. Other group members concluded that Rawls’s account of the duty of fair play makes it the case that it would often be permissible to disobey that law, provided that the society whose laws those were was sufficiently systematically unjust.” or

2. “Some group members took the conclusion of the argument to be that God does not exist, because his existence is incompatible with human suffering. Others took it to be that we cannot know the nature of God, because we cannot understand the role that suffering plays in maximizing the goodness of the world.”

6. Each student will also submit a final exam that summarizes the main theses and arguments of each assigned reading, and of how these readings relate to one another. Your final exam should be no longer than 3,000 words. This exam counts as 60% of the student’s grade in the course, and the student must receive a B- or better on it to pass the course. Your exam should answer the following questions.

For each assigned reading:

a) What is the thesis for (or against) which the author is arguing in this paper? (If there is more than one thesis, state that and identify the theses.)

b) How does the author argue for this thesis or theses?

c) What, if any, are the subarguments that the author makes in support of the overall argument of the paper?

d) Does the author consider any objections to their argument? If so, identify these objections and briefly state how the author responds to these objections.

For the readings collectively,

e) How do each other these readings relate to the others? Some ways to answer this question:

   i. Which readings present what arguments against which others?
   ii. Which readings share conclusions?
   iii. What is the logical space that these readings occupy with respect to one another? (E.g. do the articles have overlapping scope? Can the views expressed be located on a single dialectical spectrum?)

7. Students may collaborate in interpreting the material, providing feedback on each other’s writing, etc., but must each write their exams individually.
8. To preserve anonymous grading, faculty will not review drafts of the final exam. Students should also prepare their exams for anonymous grading before uploading, e.g. by ensuring that no identifying information is included in the body of the exam.

9. Meeting summaries and the final exam must be submitted on iLearn.

10. Late meeting summaries will be assessed a penalty of one-third of a letter grade per day late, and will not be accepted more than one week late.

11. Late exams will not be accepted, except where an emergency has prevented the student from submitting their assignment on time. Students may be required to provide documentation of the emergency.

12. If students have any questions about the organization of their study group, they should raise these questions with the Graduate Coordinator as soon as possible.
Submitting the Advancement to Candidacy form (ATC)

Submit this form after the completion of 18 units and at least one semester before you intend to graduate.

You can find the ATC form here: [https://grad.sfsu.edu/content/grad-forms](https://grad.sfsu.edu/content/grad-forms)

Deadline for you to submit this form to the Professor Landy:

- Fall Deadline: **September 15**
- Spring Deadline: **February 19**

**Important notes:**

*Be sure to type your form online.*

Save a copy, as you will need it when you apply for graduation.

You should email your ATC to David Landy in advance of the deadline. He will review it, ask for any necessary changes, and when it is ready, have it signed and submitted to Graduate Studies via Docusign.

(Note that the timelines in the SFSU Bulletin and on the Graduate Studies webpage apply to administrators, not to you.)

- In addition to Phil 715, 896, and 898, you need to take eight classes: four of these eight must be seminars in philosophy, five of these eight must be at the graduate level (In other words, up to three classes at the undergraduate level can count toward the degree).

**Note to students who are conditionally classified:**

When you submit this form, you will be automatically changed to classified standing. Prof. Landy will need to assess whether you have indeed **completed** your prerequisites and thus whether you qualify for this standing.

For this purpose, please also attach:

- 1. the initial letter that was sent to you in which your prerequisites were stated (if you do not have a copy of this, you can request one from Chris Wessels),
- 2. any additional relevant supporting materials (e.g., paperwork that shows a prerequisite was waived). (**Note:** being enrolled in a class is not the same as having completed the class.)

**If you are resubmitting an ATC:**

Please follow the instructions above and attach a copy of your original ATC, noting that it is original. If you are not sure whether or not you need to resubmit an ATC, obtain a copy of your ATC (from your files or by requesting one from Chris Wessels) and review it. If you need to make one or two changes, simply submit an ATC substitution form. If you need to make more than two changes, fill out a new ATC form.
Checklist to Avoid Common Errors on the ATC

Class standing
If you are a conditionally classified student (this is noted on your transcript), then you will need to provide proof of the following: (1) what your prerequisites were; (2) that you completed these classes with a B or better (a B- will not count).

Note what year you started
Be sure you have properly noted when you started the graduate program by selecting the correct University Bulletin year for the requirements listed below. For example, if you started in Spring ‘16, you choose ‘2015-16’; if you started in Fall 16, you choose ‘2016-17’.

Correct listing of classes
With the exception of courses at the 600-level, courses you took as prerequisites cannot be counted toward the degree (with the exception of 600-level courses) and, thus, should not be listed on the ATC form.
In the second grouping of classes, there must be at least one class that is at the graduate level; this can be a philosophy seminar, Phil 717, Phil 898, or a seminar in another graduate program (as long as it is related to your field of study and approved by the Graduate Coordinator).
No class should be listed more than once anywhere on the form.
If you would like to petition to have a class that is “older” than seven years count on your ATC, you also need to submit a Seven Year Limit Extension Form. Keep in mind that this petition may or may not be accepted.
If you would like to petition classes that you took outside of any consortium program that SFSU has with another university, you need to submit a form called Request for Graduate Program Transfer Unit Evaluation.

Grades in classes that are numbered 300-599
In these classes, you must have received an A or A- to count them on your ATC.

List the Graduate Coordinator whose duty it is to approve this form (Professor Landy) as both the Graduate Adviser and the College Graduate Coordinator
The Graduate Coordinators are the only advisers that sign the forms.

Correct number of forms submitted
one original copy of the ATC
one copy of your unofficial transcript
one copy of any supporting materials

Unnecessary submission
If you have already completed an ATC and it was approved, you don’t need to submit another. If you need to substitute more than three courses for the ones on your original ATC, you need to fill out an ATC Substitution Form.
Submitting the Proposal for Culminating Experience (PCE) form:

Submit this form one semester before you intend to enroll in your thesis course (PHIL 898).
You can find the PCE form here: https://grad.sfsu.edu/content/grad-forms

Be sure to type your form.

Deadlines for you to submit this form to your thesis supervisor and to your entire committee:

- Fall Deadline: September 15
- Spring Deadline: February 19

After your committee has approved your form, email it to Prof. Landy. He will gather the requisite signatures and submit it to Graduate Studies. Keep a copy of your PCE form. You will need it when you apply for graduation.

Note: You should begin a conversation about your plans with your committee well before this deadline.

Deadline for you to submit this form with all necessary signatures to the Graduate Coordinator:

- Fall Deadline: October 1
- Spring Deadline: March 5

Important: Your PCE must be submitted to and reviewed by the Graduate Coordinator before it is passed along to Graduate Studies. The timelines in the SFSU Bulletin apply to administrators, not to you! Please see the Prof. Landy so that you can be sure you have correctly filled out your forms. (The most common error in filling out this form is that students use more than the allotted 12 words in the titles of their theses.)
THESIS DEFENSE - DETAILED PROCEDURES

Weeks 1 & 2 of the semester
At the beginning of your final semester, talk with your thesis chair about a do-able timeline for you to complete your thesis and for your chair and committee members to read your drafts and give you comments. You will use these comments to make revisions; note also that in the majority of cases these revisions will be substantial. Be sure to give everyone involved enough time.

Mid-Semester
Work on your rough draft, according to the process upon which you and your chair have agreed.

Week 11 of the semester
By week 11, the final draft of your thesis is complete (ideally, you should complete your thesis well beforehand). A completed draft of a thesis is the last of many drafts; note also that it is a draft that has been vetted by all of the members of your thesis committee. This means that each thesis committee member has agreed that your thesis is acceptable. Once each has done so, notify your committee chair.

Scheduling your defense is a two-step process:
Step one is to pick a date for the defense, which must take place by semester week 12. To get things rolling, you could check your committee's teaching schedules and suggest a few possible dates when they might all be able to attend.
  o It would be prudent to begin these arrangements much earlier, as there are a number of students finishing each semester. Faculty are sometimes out of town for conferences.
  o Each oral exam must be scheduled such that there is a period of one week before the actual exam. During this week, your completed thesis will be made available in the Department of Philosophy so that any interested party can read it.
  o If you plan to use PowerPoint or other devices, arrange preparation (i.e., obtain the technical devices that will project your materials).
Step two is to email the Philosophy office (both phlsphr@sfsu.edu and grdpnl@sfsu.edu) with your requested date and time. In your email, also include (1) a PDF of your thesis (it need not be finalized); (2) list your official thesis title, which must be twelve words or less; and (3) list your committee members.
Linda will prepare the necessary forms that will need to be signed at your defense. The student and the committee chair should review the student’s file and contact Linda to let her know which of the following forms to prepare in addition to the Report of Completion of Culminating Experience: Title Change for Culminating Experience, Petition for Committee Revision, Petition for Grade Change (if 898 was taken an earlier semester), etc.

During your Defense:
At your defense, you should plan to give a 10-15 presentation in which you explain the nature and significance of your thesis project and outline the main claims made and your arguments for them. You should prepare a printed handout, though your presentation should not consist of you merely reading your handout. You can use Powerpoint, but it requires prior preparation for which you are responsible (i.e., for obtaining the technical devices that will project your materials). Then you should be prepared to answer questions from your committee. This discussion period usually lasts about 45 minutes to an hour, and then non-committee members are permitted to ask questions. After that, everyone but the committee leaves the room while the committee and other present faculty deliberate. Finally, the results are announced and the candidate is invited back in the room.
TIMELINE FOR APPLYING TO PH.D. PROGRAMS

Spring and Summer

Make appointments with your professors so that you can talk with them about your plans.

Begin thinking about which paper you will submit as your writing sample. Note that you may want to revise (and perhaps lengthen) your paper with the help of one or more of your professors. This is true even if you received an A on this paper.

Study for and take the GRE.

- Note that it is highly recommended that you study for and take this exam before the fall semester when you will apply for programs. This is because the process of applying for programs itself can be a time-consuming task, it you should not over burden yourself during this time.
- If you google ‘GRE’ the GRE homepage will come up. Follow the links for information about the different kinds of exams (paper-based, computer-based), how many times you can take the exam, different ways of receiving your scores, etc.

Consider many different graduate programs. In doing so, consult the following:

- directories and brochures at the library,
- departmental web pages,
- *Peterson’s Annual Guide to Graduate Study* and *Directory of American Philosophers* (available in the library),
- the Leiter Report (this report is especially good for graduate programs that focus on analytic philosophy; see [http://www.philosophicalgourmet.com/](http://www.philosophicalgourmet.com/)),
- information provided by the Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy (for graduate programs that focus on continental philosophy, click on ‘resources’ at [www.spep.org](http://www.spep.org))

Think about which professors you will ask to write letters that recommend you.

Ask three professors to write letters that recommend you. These professors should be: (1) your thesis committee chair; (2) the second person on your thesis committee; (3) one of the following: the third person on your committee, if you have one; a faculty member in whose graduate seminar you did superb work; a faculty member for whom you have TAed; (note: this third person does not need to be doing research in your field). Be aware that all faculty need to know of your request before the beginning of September so that they can budget their time. Note also that faculty are sometimes on leave and are not available to write letters in the fall, which is a good reason for contacting them in spring or summer. Keep in mind that under the current modes of submitting recommendations electronically, the submission of each letter is enormously time consuming for faculty; for this reason, faculty may put a limit on the number of letters they will submit on your behalf.

Note: When you ask the professors to write your letters, be sure to ask whether or not they will be able to write you a good letter (you should not have any lukewarm letters in your dossier).

Early September

Gather application forms (and financial aid and housing information) from the programs to which you are considering applying. Schools prefer that you complete on-line applications. Be sure to check departmental web pages for application important information and deadlines.
In deciding where to apply, consider the specialties, placement record, character, and size of the program. You should also consider the pros and cons of M.A. versus Ph.D. programs. You should apply to a number of programs. The competition is stiff, and you should be sure to apply to a number of “fall back” schools. (People often recommend submitting ten applications.)

Draft your statement of intent.

Work on your writing sample.

Connect with the professors who will write your letters. Talk with them about your progress with respect to where you will apply, your statement of intent, and your writing sample.

At this point, you should be able to provide to your letter writers the following:
- a list of the schools to which you are applying,
- clear directions about to where the letters should be sent,
- your unofficial transcripts,
- a draft of your statement of intent,
- a draft of your writing sample,
- prior work you did for their classes.

**October to December**

Work on your statement of intent and writing sample. Show drafts of these to the professors who are writing letters that recommend you.

**January and February (sometimes December)**

Applications are due!

There are several online sites that discuss the process of applying to PhD programs. Below are just a few:

The University of Chicago, Department of Philosophy

- [http://philosophy.uchicago.edu/prospective/admissions.html](http://philosophy.uchicago.edu/prospective/admissions.html)
- Brian Leiter’s Philosophical Gourmet Report
  - [http://www.philosophicalgourmet.com/applyingto.asp](http://www.philosophicalgourmet.com/applyingto.asp)

**Other sites you may want to examine:**

Philosophy Graduate Schools
Friendly to Continental Philosophy
  - [http://www.earlham.edu/~phil/gradsch.htm](http://www.earlham.edu/~phil/gradsch.htm)

NYU’s Listing of Graduate Programs
  - [http://www.nyu.edu/gsas/dept/philo/guides/realguide.html](http://www.nyu.edu/gsas/dept/philo/guides/realguide.html)

Information about Midwestern graduate schools to which you can apply for free:
  - [https://www.cic.net/students/freeapp/introduction](https://www.cic.net/students/freeapp/introduction)