Welcome to the Cal State LA MA Program in Philosophy!

This pamphlet contains important information about our program, as well as College and University regulations.

There are two ways to complete our program, the Thesis Option (see page 3), and the Comprehensive Exam Option (see page 4).

Students are strongly encouraged to take the Comprehensive Exam Option. This leads to a quicker graduation, and it enables students who are applying to PhD programs to concentrate on developing writing samples for their applications. Writing samples need to be about 10-15 pages; if you want to, you can develop a writing sample in a 1- or 2-unit directed study with a faculty member; but either way, it is often not a wise use of time to write a long thesis when writing samples need to be much shorter.

However, if you really want to write a thesis, and if you maintain the required thesis GPA (3.7), then you can pursue the thesis option; if you do this, you will only need to do 40 units of course work.

Whichever option you choose, you must complete at least 45 units (most students complete 48), with a GPA of at least 3.0. If you choose the Comprehensive Exam Option, all of these units will be in course work and directed studies. If you choose the Thesis Option, 40 units will be in course work, and 8 will be in thesis preparation and writing.

NOTE: If you take more courses than are needed for your program, the first courses you take will be the ones that are counted; i.e., later courses won’t be counted.

In addition to reading this pamphlet, we strongly recommended that you familiarize yourself with the University and College of Arts and Letters Graduate Handbooks, PDFs of which may be found on line:

University:

http://www.calstatela.edu/academic/aa/gsr/assets/cadatalog/gshandbook.pdf

College of Arts and Letters:


MA PROGRAM ADVISEMENT MILESTONES

1. Mandatory Group Advisement Meeting: This will take place just prior to the start of your first quarter. Check the philosophy department website (or call the department) for time and place. At this meeting, you will (a) receive advisement about the program requirements; (b) receive advice about what courses to take during your first term; and (c) fill out a generic Program. (If you are a conditionally classified student, you will not be filling out a Program.)

2. Only for students who are admitted on a conditional basis and who have to take prerequisite courses that don’t count toward the MA: When you finish your prerequisite courses, you must see a Grad Advisor so that your status can be changed to “Classified” (G2). This will be done by filling out a Program. (NOTE: 500-level courses may be taken prior to finishing prerequisites with instructor approval.)

3. Take Writing Proficiency Exam (UNIV 400): You should do this within your first two quarters in the Program. Do this by signing up for Univ 400.

4. Mandatory Advisement Meeting during your last quarter of course work: When you are finishing your coursework, you must see a grad advisor to do the following:

   (a) You need to fill out a form (Form GS-10*) to be advanced to candidacy.

   (b) If you’re writing a thesis, you need to fill out Form GS-12*.

   (c) You need to fill out a replacement program that reflects the courses that you already took.

   (d) If you didn’t take any of the three required courses for the program (viz., Phil 405, Phil 410 or 420, and Phil 460 or 470), you need to have an advisor enter course substitutions for these courses into the university’s online advising system. (NOTE: The
system calls these courses “prerequisites”, but they’re actually requirements; in order to skip any of them, you must obtain prior permission from an advisor; and you will be given permission to do this only if you’ve already taken an equivalent course. But even if you obtained prior permission to do this, you still need to see an advisor during your last quarter of coursework to have the course substitutions entered into the system.)

Do not wait until your last quarter at Cal State to see an advisor about these things. If you do, it will hold up your graduation, because you cannot graduate in the same quarter in which you are advanced to candidacy. So you should do this during your last quarter of coursework.

5. Apply to Graduate: Do this 3-6 months before graduation, during the University’s time frame for applying for graduation for the quarter in which you want to graduate. Do this by going to the Philosophy Department office.

*GS forms mentioned above and below are available in the department office, and on line at
http://www.calstatela.edu/academic/aa/gsr/cal_la/form/form.html

THESIS OPTION
http://www.calstatela.edu/dept/phil/thesis.php

☞ You must have a GPA of 3.7 or better in your first 36 units of coursework in order to qualify for the Thesis Option.

NOTE: Students who choose the Thesis Option are required to take two fewer courses than students who choose the Comprehensive Exam Option. This is due to the fact that 8 units are assigned to thesis preparation (Phil 598) and writing (Phil 599), and 0 units are assigned to comprehensive exams (Phil 596). Hence, if you change from the Comprehensive Exam Option to the Thesis Option, you will need to delete one to two courses from your program.

Once you have decided on a topic, identify appropriate faculty as main advisor and two additional readers, and request their participation.

Prospectus (Phil 598, 2 units): 8-10 page summary of your project, plus relevant bibliography. This should be prepared with your main advisor, and distributed to the two readers only when it has been completed to your mutual satisfaction. Registration for Phil 598 requires a departmental permit. Have your advisor inform the department secretary that you need a permit before you attempt to register. § When the prospectus is approved, you need to fill out and file an Approval of Thesis/Project Proposal (form GS-14*).

Thesis (Phil 599, 1-6 units): Work on your thesis with your main advisor. The amount of time you take is up to you, but you should use up all six of the allotted 599 units. Once you and your main advisor decide the thesis is complete to your mutual satisfaction, distribute the thesis to the two readers. Registration for Phil 599 requires a departmental permit. Have your advisor inform the department secretary that you need a permit any time you intend to register for Phil 599.

☞ You must leave sufficient time (typically, four weeks) for your additional readers to read and comment on your thesis, and for you to make needed changes, before you plan to graduate.

Once the thesis is done, it must be filed with the library. Instructions on format, deadlines, etc. may be found here:

http://www.calstatela.edu/library/guides/thesisprep.htm

§ Note that Phil 598 is also the designation for 4-unit Directed Study courses. You may have up to two such courses on your program. (In addition to the 2-unit Thesis Preparation 598.) Registration for 4-unit Phil 598 Directed Study requires instructor permission and a departmental permit. Have your advisor inform the department secretary that you need a permit before attempting to register for a 4-unit Phil 598.

COURSE WORK

In planning your coursework, you must comply with the following rules. Failure to do so will result in your having to take extra courses.

1. Students must take at least 45 units to graduate. Most take 48.

2. All courses that count toward the MA degree must be at the 400- or 500-level.

3. At least 50% of the units that count toward the degree must be at the 500-level. Thus, if you have a total of 45 or 46 units that are counting toward your degree, then you must have at least 23 units at the 500-level; if you have a total of 47 or 48 units, you must have 24 units at the 500-level; and so on.
4. There are three required courses for the program, as follows:

   a. Phil 405 (Symbolic Logic)
   b. Phil 410 (Social-Political Philosophy) or Phil 420 (Ethics II)
   c. Phil 460 (Metaphysics) or Phil 470 (Theory of Knowledge)

You must take these three courses unless you are officially exempted by an advisor because you took an equivalent course as an undergraduate.

5. You can take a maximum of 8 units of directed study (Phil 598 and/or Phil 499).

6. Journal courses (Phil 400 and Phil 500) are by invitation only. You may use a maximum of 4 Journal units toward the degree. (You will have to enroll in 6 units in order to publish in the journal, but you will only be able to count 4 units toward the degree.)

7. Phil 496, 580, and 581 cannot be used toward the MA degree.

8a. For Comprehensive Exam Students Only: Phil 596 (Comprehensive Exams) is a 0-unit course. So if you are taking the comprehensive exams, you must have at least 45 units of course work, independently of the comprehensive exams.

8b. For Thesis Students Only: If you decide to write a thesis, you need to do only 40 units of coursework because you will earn at least 5 units for the thesis. However, you have an additional requirement: You must take at least one MA seminar in 3 of the following 4 areas, (i) History (510, 511, etc.); (ii) Philosophy of Language, Logic, and Science (520-something); (iii) Metaphysics and Epistemology (530-something); (iv) Values (540-something).

**COMPREHENSIVE EXAM OPTION**

http://www.calstatela.edu/dept/phil/comps.php

In order to take a comprehensive exam you must be registered for Phil 596, which is a 0 unit course, and requires a permit. Have your advisor inform the department secretary that you need a permit any time you want to register to take a comprehensive exam.

**NOTE:** Students who choose the Comprehensive Exam Option are required to take two more courses than students who choose the Thesis Option. This is due to the fact 0 units are assigned to comprehensive exams (Phil 596), and 8 units are assigned to thesis preparation (Phil 598) and writing (Phil 599). *Hence, if you change from the Thesis Option to the Comprehensive Exam Option, you will need to add two courses to your program.*

You must take a total of three comprehensive exams, in three of four general areas listed on the department website. http://www.calstatela.edu/dept/phil/comps.php. You may take anywhere from one to three exams in a given quarter. If you spread the exams out more than one quarter, your record will show a grade of RP (“Report in Progress”) until all three are completed – at which point all previous RPs must be changed accordingly (your advisor must file a Change of Grade form).

Comprehensive exams are given in the fifth and ninth weeks of the quarter, on Wednesday and Thursday. Exact times will vary depending upon faculty availability for proctoring. Each exam lasts 2 hours and 15 minutes. No exam is repeated in any given quarter (see the department website for the schedule).

☞ **The use of computers is not permitted in the writing of the Comprehensive Exams.**

Each exam consists of four to six questions, of which you must answer two. Some exams may have questions based on recent relevant graduate seminars. In such cases, typically there will be four questions drawn from the reading lists posted on the department website, and two from recent seminars. You are not required to answer questions from recent seminars (i.e., you may answer two drawn from the reading list).

**NOTE:** If you do not pass a comprehensive exam, you should consult with relevant faculty for advice on how to prepare for a retest, which may be taken in a subsequent quarter.

☞ *Students who fail a comprehensive exam twice will be subject to disqualification from the program.*