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 online:

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 (if you don’t, it could slow down your graduation). Do this by signing up for Univ 400.

4. Mandatory Advisement Meeting after you have completed 16 units toward the MA degree: When you have completed the WPE (Writing Proficiency Exam) and 16 units toward the degree (if you’re a conditionally classified student, this shouldn’t include your prerequisite classes), you must see a grad advisor to fill out a form (Form GS-10*) to be advanced to candidacy. If you don’t do this, it could slow down your graduation.

5. Apply to Graduate (and corresponding mandatory advisement meeting): You should apply to graduate 3-6 months before graduation, during the University’s time frame for applying for graduation for the quarter in which you want to graduate. If you wait and do it during your last term, it will slow down your graduation. To apply to graduate, you need to do the following things (in the following order):
(a) Go to the Graduation Office to get the form to apply to graduate.

(b) See a graduate advisor in the philosophy department. The advisor will (i) check to make sure that you are on course to graduate and inform you of any remaining requirements that you need to finish, and (ii) fill out a replacement program that reflects the courses that you already took (or are still going to take, as the case may be). When you meet with the advisor, you should bring with you an unofficial transcript that shows all the courses you have taken at Cal State LA; and if you still have any courses to take, you should know which course(s) you plan to take. If you don’t know this, the advisor won’t be able to fill out the replacement program and won’t be able to approve your application for graduation.

(c) After seeing an advisor, take the form to the Cashier and pay for graduation.

(d) After paying the Cashier, take the form to the philosophy department and turn it in.

NOTE: You cannot apply to graduate in the same quarter in which you are advanced to candidacy. This is one of several reasons why it is important to be advanced to candidacy as soon as you finish 16 units and the WPE. And this is also why it’s important to take the WPE during your first two quarters.

6. Thesis Option Only: If you’re writing a thesis, you need to fill out Form GS-12*. You can do this with a graduate advisor, or you can get your thesis advisor to do it.

*GS forms mentioned above and below are available in the department office, and online at http://www.calstatela.edu/academic/aa/gsr/cal-la/form/form.html

**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 coursework, 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.

THREE POINTS TO NOTE ABOUT THE COMPREHENSIVE EXAMS:
1. 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.

2. Students who are not enrolled in any credit-bearing course during the quarter in which they take the comprehensive examination must pay the comprehensive examination fee. Note: Since the fee is only $10, this may be an economical option for students.

3. You cannot take comprehensive exams during the same quarter in which you’re advanced to candidacy. This is one of several reasons why it is important to see an advisor to be advanced to candidacy after you complete 16 units and the WPE. And this is also why it’s important to take the WPE during your first two quarters.

You must take a total of three comprehensive exams, in three of four general areas listed on the department website. You may take anywhere from one to three exams in a given quarter. If you spread the exams out over 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.

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 course work 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.

Note, also, that you cannot register for thesis units during the same quarter in which you’re advanced to candidacy. This is one of several reasons why it is important to see an advisor to be advanced to candidacy after you complete 16 units and the WPE. And this is also why it’s important to take the WPE during your first two quarters.

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
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.*