

THE PROPOSITION

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Before beginning dissertation work (and before taking the qualifying oral examinations and advancing to candidacy), students write an extended paper of between 7500 and 9000 words (25-30 pages) that treats some specific philosophical problem that roughly falls into either the category of metaphysics and epistemology or ethics and value theory. (As described above, students will take one graduate seminar in an area complementary to that in which they write the proposition. Students should consult with the Graduate Advisor to determine the category into which the selected proposition topic falls.)

The intent of the proposition requirement is to provide an opportunity for students to recognize, formulate, and think through philosophical problems, to engage in substantial revision and rewriting, and to write a more polished piece of work than is typical in the time frame associated with seminars.

It is recommended that the proposition be a substantial development of a previous seminar paper. However, it can also be a piece of work on a new topic. The proposition will be read and graded by two faculty members, one of whom is the Proposition Advisor. It must be completed before a student can advance to candidacy.

THE PROCESS

Overview

In Fall Quarter, third-year students work with a faculty member to propose a proposition topic and prepare a draft of the proposition (enrolling in Philos 596 for four units). In Winter Quarter, the student enrolls in Philos 596 with the same faculty member along with a second member of faculty. Additionally, students will circulate their work among their peers and present it in a student-run proposition workshop. The revised proposition is then submitted at the beginning of Spring Quarter. The two faculty members will then determine whether it is satisfactory. Passage of the proposition requirement in the third year is required for continuation in the program.

Fall Quarter: The Proposition Proposal and Draft

At the beginning of Fall Quarter (or even in the summer before), third-year students find a Faculty Advisor who will supervise the writing of a draft of the proposition. (Any member of the faculty can serve as a Faculty Advisor; students can simply approach those with whom they would like to work.) In Fall Quarter students are to enroll for **four units of Philosophy 596, with their Faculty Advisor, for a letter grade.**

By the **Friday of the fifth week of Fall Quarter**, the student will submit to the SAO a **half-page Proposition Proposal** containing a

proposition title, a short paragraph containing the topic of the proposition, and the signature of the Faculty Advisor. (The Proposition Proposal is for tracking purposes.)

Students will work with their Faculty Advisor throughout the fall quarter. A **first but complete draft** of the proposition is due no later than **the last day of classes of Fall Quarter**. Proposition drafts should be submitted to (1) the student's Faculty Advisor, (2) the Graduate Advisor, and (3) the SAO.

Completing a draft by the last day of classes of Fall Quarter is critical. The next stages cannot go forward unless students have completed their first drafts. Students who fail to submit a draft on time will no longer be in good standing in the department. Failure to correct this deficiency quickly may put their status and their eligibility for teaching in jeopardy.

Winter Quarter: The Proposition Workshop and Final Draft

In Winter Quarter all third-year students will **enroll in two units of Philosophy 596, with their Faculty Advisor, on an S/U basis, and two additional units, on an S/U basis, with a Second Reader from the faculty, who is assigned by the Graduate Advisor.**

In the first two weeks of the winter quarter, the student will meet with both the Faculty Advisor and with the Second Reader. In their first meeting, the student will give a 10-15 minute presentation of the principal thesis and argument of the proposition to both faculty members and will get some feedback on the ideas in the presentation.

A further revised draft of the proposition will be due at the beginning of the fourth week of the winter quarter that responds to the Faculty Advisor's feedback to the fall draft as well as to the Second Reader's feedback in the preliminary meeting. It should be submitted to the Faculty Advisor, the Second Reader, and the Graduate Advisor. Soon thereafter, the student should meet with both the Faculty Advisor and the Second Reader.

Also during the Winter Quarter, each student should circulate a proposition draft and secure feedback about it from at least two other peers – at least one member of his/her cohort, and another, more senior, graduate student. Each student should be willing to give feedback to members of his/her cohort. Students who have difficulty securing peer feedback may ask the Graduate Advisor for assistance. The student should seek to obtain feedback **by week five** of the quarter so they can use it to improve their final draft.

Also during the Winter Quarter, the student must arrange to present (orally) their proposition to a departmental audience and answer

questions. The default format is an APA-style presentation of 15-25 minutes, leaving at least 30 minutes for questions. (Should all or some of the third year class prefer a longer oral presentation time and they have time to organize and attend longer sessions, they should consult the graduate advisor.) The presentations should happen in a workshop series to which other graduate students are invited. The workshop series will be organized by the graduate advisors and the SAO. Students are encouraged to invite all or select members of the faculty from whom you'd like to get feedback. Every student's presentation must take place by **week five** so they can use the audience feedback to improve their final draft. This oral presentation is an additional requirement for passing the proposition.

Final Draft

The final draft of the proposition is due on the **first day of classes in Spring quarter**. The proposition should be submitted to (1) the student's Faculty Advisor, (2) the Graduate Advisor, and (3) the SAO. It should be accompanied by a document specifying how and when the additional requirements above (the oral presentation and the peer feedback) were satisfied.

Spring Quarter: Submission and Evaluation

As noted above, the final draft of the proposition is due to the student's faculty advisor, the Graduate Advisor, and the SAO on **the first day of classes, in Spring quarter**.

The Faculty Advisor and Second Reader will read and grade the proposition over the next three weeks.

Propositions are graded on a Pass/Fail basis.

Students who fail to submit a completed proposition on time and any who submit a proposition that does not receive a grade of Pass will no longer be in good standing. While this does not effect the ability to teach in summer, such students may not enroll in the fall.

Any students in this situation should consult with the Graduate Advisor and with the faculty members who reviewed the proposition. Following consultation with the Graduate Advisor, such students may request reconsideration on the basis of a rewritten proposition to be submitted by July 1st. If such a rewritten proposition is deemed a Pass, good standing will be restored, the student may enroll in the fall.

Immediately after the Proposition is completed, a student must choose an interim advisor to guide them through the initial stages of advancing to candidacy. (Please see the section "Advancing to Candidacy" below for details.)