

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). In Winter quarter, the student enrolls in the Proposition Seminar (Philos 299). In the Seminar, students circulate their drafts, give two short presentations, and revise their drafts. The revised proposition is then submitted at the beginning of Spring Quarter. It will be read by two readers, who will 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 Student Affairs Officer 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 first day of classes of Winter Quarter**. Proposition drafts should be submitted to (1) the

student's Faculty Advisor, (2) the Graduate Advisor, and (3) the Student Affairs Officer.

Completing a draft by the first day of classes of Winter Quarter is critical. The Proposition Seminar 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 Seminar and Final Draft

In Winter Quarter all third-year students will **enroll in the Proposition Seminar (Philosophy 299), for four units, on an S/U basis**. In this seminar, students will read and respond to one another's drafts.

Format of the Proposition Seminar

In each meeting of the seminar two or three drafts will be discussed, with an hour devoted to each. Each student's proposition will be discussed twice, creating two rounds of the seminar.

In the first round of the seminar, students will read each other's drafts in advance and provide written comments. The session will operate as a workshop: the presenter will field questions, discuss the written comments, and seek advice for revisions. Students whose paper is not under discussion should come prepared with one or two larger comments or questions, to start and fuel discussion.

After presenting in the first round, each student will revise his or her paper, in light of the comments and discussion. It is a good idea to give a copy of the revised proposition to one's faculty advisor at this point. This revision will also be presented in the second round of the proposition seminar.

In the second round, the presenter will begin with a 20-minute, APA-style presentation of the core points of the proposition. The remainder of the hour will be devoted to discussion. Again, others should come prepared with questions.

Each session will have a designated Faculty Facilitator—typically not the Faculty Advisor of any of the drafts under discussion. Different sessions will have different Faculty Facilitators.

Logistics and Due Dates for the Proposition Seminar

The default meeting time for the Proposition Seminar is Tuesdays 1:00–3:00. The order in which students are to present will be determined in December. (It is best if the order of presentations is identical for each round of the seminar.)

As noted above, the first draft of the proposition is due on the first day of the classes in Winter Quarter. The Graduate Advisor will immediately circulate those drafts by email to the entire seminar.

These first drafts will be discussed in the first round of the seminar, which

will begin in the **second week** of Winter Quarter (allowing the first week for reading and writing comments on the drafts to be presented in the second week).

Each student will provide written comments on each first-round draft (other than his or her own). **These comments will be circulated on the Friday before** the session in which the draft will be discussed, **to the entire seminar, to the Graduate Advisor, and to the Faculty Facilitator.**

After a draft has been presented, its author can begin revising it for the second round. There will be at least a week's break between the first and the second round, to allow students more time to continue working on their revisions.

The second round will start in week six or seven. Each **revised, second-round draft** will be **due on the Wednesday six days before it will be discussed.** These drafts, along with **one-to-two page abstract** of the proposition, should be circulated to **all members of the seminar, to the Graduate Advisor, and to the Faculty Facilitator.**

In the second-round sessions, the author will begin by giving a 20-minute, APA-style presentation of the main idea. This will be followed by about 40 minutes of discussion.

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 Student Affairs Officer.

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 Student Affairs Officer on **the first day of classes, in Spring quarter.**

The Graduate Advisor will assign a Second Reader for each proposition. 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. Such students are ineligible for summer teaching and 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, and the student will be eligible for teaching in

the second summer session, should slots be available.

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.)