

THE DISSERTATION

There is much to be said about the writing of a dissertation, and most of it will be said by your dissertation committee. Here are a few, largely administrative, comments:

Dissertation committees have three reading members – that is, three people who must read and sign the final version of the dissertation. Students writing a dissertation work closely with the chair of their dissertation committee. It is advisable, though, to show work in progress to the other members of your committee. Indeed, it is helpful, both for the development of your dissertation and as preparation for the job market, to receive wide and varied feedback from many sources. Students working in ethics (broadly construed) can present dissertation chapters to the Ethics Writing Seminar (Philos 259). As the job market nears, dissertation chapters or writing samples are presented in the Job Seminar (see the section below, “Placement and the Job Market”). You might also consider presenting work to the Albritton Society or at a conference.

It is ideal if you have a complete draft of your dissertation in the fall of (what is hopefully) your final year, as you engage the job market. Students who know exactly how their dissertation ends, because they have written it out, tend to perform better on the job market. In any case, you will need two polished pieces of work (a writing sample and a job talk) to engage the job market, and you should not expect to have a lot of time for writing in the Fall or Winter of any year you are on the market, since being on the job market is very time consumptive. (See the later section, “Placement and the Job Market.”)

Even after the dissertation has been completed, there are certain final hurdles that must be cleared before the conferral of the Ph.D. (which typically takes place in the Spring, though, if you are out of residence in the year you finish your dissertation, there is a financial advantage to filing for your degree during the Summer).

It will have been decided, when you advanced to candidacy, whether a Final Oral Exam is required for your Ph.D. If such an exam is required, it should be scheduled well in advance, since committee members will have complicated schedules. Again, two months in advance is not too soon.

Whether or not a Final Oral Exam is required, you need to give your committee time to read your entire dissertation before (taking your oral exam or) filing for the degree (three weeks seems to me a reasonable *minimum*). You should consult closely with your Chair, and with other committee members, about the schedule for the distribution of your final product.

There are many technical requirements that must be met, in filing your dissertation with the University. Information about them all can be found here:
<http://www.gdnet.ucla.edu/gasaa/library/thesisintro.htm>

Finally, the department asks all its Ph.D.'s to donate a copy of their dissertation to our reading room.