

## THE PROPOSITION

### GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Typically in the third year, 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.<sup>1</sup>

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. A Proposition can be a substantial development of a previous seminar paper, or a piece of work on a new topic. The content can advance and defend a thesis or provide a critical literature review that bears on a significant question.

The proposition will be read and graded by two faculty members, one of whom is the student's Proposition Advisor. It is expected that a final draft of the proposition will be submitted by the **first day of classes in Spring quarter**.

### THE PROCESS

#### *Fall Quarter: The Proposition Proposal and Draft*

Students enroll in 4 units of Philos 596 for a letter grade with a faculty member who has agreed to supervise the writing of their proposition draft from the Fall quarter to its completion in the Spring.<sup>2</sup>

By the **Friday of the fifth week of Fall quarter**, the student will submit to the SAO a **half-page Proposition Proposal** containing proposition title, a short paragraph containing the topic of the proposition, and the signature of the Proposition Advisor.

A **first but complete draft** of the proposition is due no later than **the end of Fall Quarter**. Proposition drafts should be submitted to (1) the student's Proposition Advisor, (2) the Graduate Advisor(s), and (3) the SAO.

---

<sup>1</sup> Students will take one graduate seminar in the complementary area to that in which they write the proposition. (See Special Area Requirement.) Students should consult with the Graduate Advisor(s) to determine the category into which the selected proposition topic falls.

<sup>2</sup> Students are encouraged to identify proposition advisors in the summer before their third year. Advisors are often faculty whose seminars a student has taken, or whose research areas overlap with a student's interests.

### *Winter Quarter: The Proposition Workshop, Drafts and Feedback*

Proposition-writing students will **enroll in two units of Philosophy 596, with their Proposition 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 Proposition 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 revised draft of the proposition will be due at the **beginning of the fourth week of the Winter quarter** that responds to the Proposition 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 Proposition Advisor, the Second Reader, and the Graduate Advisor. Soon thereafter, the student should meet with both the Proposition Advisor and the Second Reader.

*Proposition feedback.* Also during the Winter Quarter, each student should circulate a proposition draft and secure feedback 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.<sup>3</sup> To be useful, feedback should be provided no later than **by week five** of the quarter.

*Proposition Workshop.* Also during the Winter Quarter, students will present (orally) their proposition to an audience of (some) faculty and graduate students (including their proposition peer group). The default format is an APA-style presentation of 15-25 minutes, leaving at least 30 minutes for questions. The presentations will be organized by the Graduate Advisor(s) and SAO into a workshop series, which will be complete by Week 8 (students should be ready to present at the beginning of Winter quarter). 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

---

<sup>3</sup> Students who have difficulty securing peer feedback may ask the Graduate Advisor(s) for assistance.

Proposition Advisor, (2) the Graduate Advisor(s), 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*

The Faculty Advisor and Second Reader will read and grade final draft of the proposition over the next three weeks. (Propositions are graded on a Pass/Fail basis.)

**AFTER THE PROPOSITION**

When 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.)