Honors Thesis requirements

Students accepted into the Philosophy Department Honors Program must write an Honors thesis on a philosophical topic under the direction of a member of the department by registering for both PHIL 4396: Thesis I (during the Spring semester of their Junior year) and PHIL 4397: Thesis II (during the Fall semester of their Senior year). In PHIL 4396 (Thesis I) you will write a complete thesis; in PHIL 4397 (Thesis II) you will revise and develop this thesis, partly in response to comments provided by the faculty.

1. Enrollment

In order to register for PHIL 4396 (Thesis I), you must submit a proposal to the department chair along with your request for admission to the Honors Program. You may register for the course only if you are accepted into the Honors Program and the department votes to accept your proposal.

You may register for PHIL 4397 (Thesis II) only if invited to do so by the department on the basis of the final version of your thesis for PHIL 4396 (Thesis I) and your oral defense of it.

2. Contents of the Proposal

You should write a proposal with the assistance of a faculty member who has expertise in the topic area. You should select a topic and begin working on the proposal in the summer or early Fall semester of your Junior year. Your thesis proposal should include the following:

- A thesis statement: What position do you plan to defend?
- An argumentative strategy: How do you plan to defend your position?
- An annotated bibliography: This should be a list of materials germane to your topic.

Your proposal does not commit you to a particular conclusion or argumentative strategy; its point is rather to demonstrate to the department that you have a basic understanding of the issues and literature relevant to your topic. Upon acceptance of your proposal, the department will assign you a thesis supervisor; this is the person with whom you will work most closely on your thesis. Your supervisor may or may not be the same faculty member who assisted you with the proposal. Your supervisor will provide feedback on drafts of your thesis. You are also encouraged to discuss your thesis work with other faculty members, particularly those with expertise in the area in which you are working.
3. Contents of the thesis

Your thesis should include all the following elements:

**Introduction**: State the thesis you will defend, and outline the argument you will give.

**Literature Review**: Survey the relevant literature on your topic, explaining the main positions on the issue and situating your own position with respect to them. Clarify key terminology.

**Argument**: Develop the argument for your thesis.

**Critical discussion**: State potential criticisms of your thesis and arguments, and show why these criticisms fail.

**Conclusion**: Review the argument you have given for your thesis.

In PHIL 4397 (Thesis II), you must revise your thesis in light of the comments provided by the faculty following the defense of your thesis for PHIL 4396 (Thesis I).

4. Oral defenses

You will be required to give an oral defense of the final version of your thesis for PHIL 4396 (Thesis I) before the faculty of the philosophy department during reading days. The defense will begin with your giving a 5-10 minute summary of the thesis. Then there will be 35-40 minutes of discussion, during which the faculty will ask questions of clarification, raise objections, and so on. Each faculty member will give you written comments on your thesis by the end of the exam period.

You will be required to give an oral defense of the final revised version of your thesis for PHIL 4397 (Thesis II) before the faculty of the philosophy department during reading days. The defense will have the same format as that for PHIL 4396 (Thesis I).

5. Timetable

- **October 31, Fall semester, Junior year**: Thesis proposal due to the department chair.
- **Week 11 (each semester)**: complete rough draft of thesis due.
- **Week 13 (each semester)**: final version of thesis due.
- **Reading days (each semester)**: oral defense.

The department as a whole will determine 50% of your final grade in each course on the basis of the final version of your thesis together with your oral defense. Submitting the complete draft late will result in a 1/3-letter grade reduction per day in this grade, up to a full letter grade. Submitting the complete draft late will result in an additional 1/3-letter grade reduction per day in this grade, up to a full letter grade. The other 50% of your final grade will be determined by your supervisor on the basis of your work leading up to the final draft.