Philosophy

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Degrees Awarded
M.A. in Philosophy; Ph.D. in Philosophy; Advanced Graduate Certificate in Art and Philosophy

Description of the Philosophy Department

The Department of Philosophy, in the College of Arts and Sciences, offers programs leading to the Master of Arts in Philosophy and to the Doctor of Philosophy.

The doctoral program offers a rare opportunity to integrate the study of the history of philosophy with an exploration of contemporary philosophical methods and to apply an interdisciplinary approach to the framing and treatment of philosophical problems. The Philosophy Department is sponsor of Transatlantic Philosophical Collegium that offers advanced students opportunity for extended study at the University of Köln and Wuppertal. Departmentally based, funded exchanges with the University of Tübingen and the University of Paris give students further opportunity to study abroad.

There are three general aims of the doctoral program:

1. To cultivate and make explicit the values and principles of the principal contemporary styles of philosophical reasoning.

2. To investigate the areas between philosophy and other disciplines that involve methodological, conceptual, and historical exchanges between philosophy and these other disciplines.

3. To provide an understanding of the history, major figures, and diverse problems of philosophy.

M.A. Degree in Philosophy with a focus on the Arts and Aesthetics

Many of the questions that occasioned Plato's reflection on art are still with us: What is the relationship between art and truth? Is the task of the artist to represent already existing things or to create altogether new things? Is the spectator of art to be regarded as a mere witness or as an active participant? What is the role of emotion in the experience of art? What are the most salient differences between the various arts?

Other questions have arisen with increasing urgency in more recent times: What does psychoanalysis have to teach us about the place of art in our lives? How are class, race, and gender pertinent to the production and enjoyment of art? Do we need to reconceive aesthetics in view of a global electronic culture?

This master's program offers an open and informal setting in which to explore such questions in seminars and lectures taught by renowned philosophers of art. Practicing artists will also participate in an intensive discussion of issues in the philosophy of art that are of enduring as well as contemporary interest.

M.A. in Philosophy Curriculum and Degree Requirements

For the master's degree, a student must take 30 course credits, i.e., the equivalent of 10 courses. Many of these courses are listed below, the full list is subject to revision. Of the 30 credits, six can be taken as independent study. An M.A. thesis option is available.

Advanced Graduate Certificate (AGC) in Art and Philosophy (ArtPHIL)

For information on this advanced certificate program, go to http://www.stonybrook.edu/commcms/philosophy/docs/artscert.html

Admission to the Ph.D. and M.A. Programs in Philosophy

For admission to the doctoral and master's programs in philosophy, the following are normally required:

A. A bachelor’s degree with a major in philosophy.

B. Some knowledge of the history of philosophy and of contemporary modes of thought is highly desirable. Deficiencies in these areas may require the student to undertake special work.
C. An official transcript of undergraduate record and of any work completed at the graduate level.

D. Letters of recommendation from three previous or current instructors.

E. Submission of a philosophical essay (which may be a paper written for a previous course).

F. Graduate Record Examination (GRE) General Test scores.

G. Acceptance by both the Department of Philosophy and the Graduate School.

Requirements for the M.A. Degree in Philosophy

Given its commitment to philosophical pluralism and its triple focus on the history of philosophy, interdisciplinary studies, aesthetic and the philosophy of art, Stony Brook's Master of Arts in philosophy has been recognized throughout the profession as distinctive and innovative. The curriculum of the program embodies this commitment and focus. This handbook offers a statement of the purposes, policies, structures, and requirements of the MA Program and applies to all students currently enrolled in the program.

A. Administration

The administration of the MA Program is carried out by the MA Director in consultation with the Chair of the Philosophy Department, the Graduate Program Committee, the Graduate Coordinator and the core faculty of the philosophy and arts program.

B. Course of Study

The primary purpose of the Master of Arts Program in Philosophy is to prepare students for original and independent research and scholarship in the field, and to prepare them for further postgraduate work in either philosophy or other humanistic disciplines. As an MA Program with special emphasis on the fine arts, it is also designed to provide artists with access to philosophical and intellectual resources not generally available in the art field.

In order to graduate student must have earned a total of 30 credits. Of these 30 credits:

1. 6 credits may be transfer credits (so long as they were not used toward earning another degree).

2. 6 credits may be earned either by taking 2 independent study courses, or by taking 1 independent study course and PHI 599 (Master’s Thesis Research).

3. In order to be able to register for the MA Thesis course, students must fill out the MA Thesis Approval form, and have it signed by the MA Program Director as well as the Advisor of the MA thesis. (See Appendix A). The MA Thesis Advisor must be a permanent faculty member of the philosophy department.

4. All MA students must take at least one 500 or 600 level seminar on the Stony Brook University Campus.

5. First year MA students may not take either Ph.D. seminars or independent studies. A second year MA student wishing to enroll in a PhD seminar must first obtain approval from the program director to request permission from the teaching faculty member. Only the teaching faculty member can give permission to enroll in the seminar.

6. If students enroll for PHI 520, it must be done with a permanent faculty member of the Philosophy Department.

Note the difference between PHI 520: Advanced Studies in Philosophy (3 credits, ABCF grading, variable and repetitive credit) and PHI 521: Independent Study (may be repeated for credit, S/U grading). If the Independent Study is intended to reach the required 30 credits for graduation, enrollment in PHI 520 is recommended (as only ABCF graded courses count towards cumulative credits).

C. The MA Thesis Option

Students are strongly encouraged to fulfill all of their MA degree requirements by taking the regularly scheduled graduate courses. Under certain conditions however a student may wish to pursue the MA thesis option by requesting the formation of a faculty committee for the thesis project. Such a Thesis Committee will consist of a thesis advisor, and at least one other member of the departmental faculty or a reader from the faculty of another discipline. The MA Thesis Advisor is selected by the student, while the Second Reader (and possibly third reader) is selected by the advisor and student together. The Thesis Committee must be approved by the MA Program Director upon submission of the appropriate form and a brief thesis proposal summary. This form must be submitted to the MA Program director at least four weeks before the beginning of the semester in which the student is registering for PHI 599: Masters Thesis Research. The student will not be able to register for the MA thesis course without this form having been fully filled out and signed. See Appendix A for the form.

An MA student who takes the thesis option (see above) must notify the MA Program Director when submitting the thesis document to her/his thesis director. Once a student has submitted the thesis, the faculty thesis director has 3 weeks in which either to approve it for graduation purposes or require further revisions. In either case, the thesis director will notify the MA Director of the decision to approve or to require revisions. In the event that a thesis director fails to act within the time frame just specified, the MA Director will notify the student of her/his right to be assigned a different thesis director. The MA Director will also inform the Department Chair in case further administrative action is required.

Requirements for the Ph.D. Degree in Philosophy

The doctoral program is designed to be completed in five years of full-time work. The Graduate School regulations prescribe a minimum of two semesters of full-time enrollment. In addition to the minimum degree requirements of the Graduate School, the following are required:

A. Seminars

Seminar coursework will be required from the following three areas: history of philosophy, interface studies, and contemporary philosophy. Each of the three areas has a minimum number of required courses. The student will also take at least two additional seminars in one of the three areas to fulfill the concentration of studies requirement.

1. Three seminars in the history of philosophy from four groups of courses concentrating on ancient philosophy, medieval/Renaissance philosophy, modern philosophy, and 19th-century philosophy. These courses will feature an intensive writing component. For those students
wishing to pursue a concentration of studies in the history of philosophy, a minimum of two additional courses may be taken from these areas or from seminar studies directed to special topics in the history of philosophy (which draw upon specific authors, texts, themes, or problems from the history of philosophy).

2. Two interface seminars in interdisciplinary areas between philosophy and another discipline pertaining to the natural sciences, to the social sciences, or to the humanities. This requirement may be met either by taking seminars interdisciplinary seminars team-taught by philosophy faculty with faculty from another discipline or by taking regular graduate courses in another discipline. Two additional courses from this category may be taken to fulfill concentration requirements.

3. Five seminars in contemporary philosophy are required. Two seminars in the preeminent styles or modes of philosophy are required: one in continental philosophy (PHI 630) and one in analytic philosophy (PHI 631). These two seminars will explore the methods, presuppositions, and operational modes of the contemporary philosophy involved. Two additional seminars, chosen from a list of subjects, must be taken to fulfill the basic requirement. Two more seminars from the contemporary category may be taken to fulfill concentration requirements.

4. A practicum in the teaching of philosophy. This involves a supervised teaching seminar, along with additional teaching experience in the undergraduate program.

5. A prospectus seminar taken in the spring semester of the third year. The primary goal will be to produce a dissertation proposal.

6. An overall average grade of B or better is required, with no more than six credits of B- grades counting toward the degree.

B. General Requirements

1. The student must pass an examination in the history of philosophy. Although the student may take the exam any number of times prior to the deadline, the examination must be passed by the end of the second year. The history of philosophy examination is constructed and read by the faculty History of Philosophy Committee.

2. The student must submit an essay, judged acceptable by a committee, in one of the areas of contemporary philosophy.

3. The student must submit an essay, judged acceptable by a committee composed of at least one Philosophy faculty member and a faculty member from the relevant second discipline, in one area of interface studies.

General reviews of student progress based upon a portfolio (courses taken, courses completed, grades, faculty evaluations of seminar work sample papers, teaching evaluations and performance in the above general requirements) will be undertaken at the end of the first and third years and in the second year after the deadline for passing the history of philosophy examination. The second-year review is the milestone requirement of the program. These reviews will assess the progress of students and determine qualifications for continuance or non-continuance in the program.

The graduate program director will guide students in planning their program of studies to assure that general requirements are completed prior to their advancement to candidacy.

C. Ph.D. Candidacy

Official Ph.D. candidacy is attained when, in addition to the requirements listed above, a student fulfills the following competency requirements:

1. Competence in symbolic logic. Sufficient knowledge of concepts and notations of first-order logic for understanding and applying them to problems in philosophy. A grade of B or better in an undergraduate symbolic logic course is normally adequate evidence of competence.

2. Competence in a foreign language. This is shown by translating a previously untranslated philosophical article (or the equivalent).

3. Competence to undertake a dissertation project. This is shown by (a) a prospectus (10-15 pages) outlining projected study, expected findings, and relevant arguments and evidence (e.g., bibliography), and (b) an oral defense of the projected study before a faculty examining committee.

Upon the recommendation of the examining committee and the graduate program director that the dissertation project be initiated, the student becomes a candidate for the Ph.D.

D. Dissertation

After advancement to candidacy, the student will concentrate on a dissertation (the written results of specialized study and research) under the supervision of a dissertation committee. After the dissertation is completed, it is read by a committee of four members, consisting of the director, two other members of the philosophy faculty, and one faculty member from outside the department who has specialized in related areas. Before final approval can be granted, the student must present the results of the dissertation research at an oral examination convened for that purpose by the department and open to interested faculty members and graduate students. If the dissertation defense is successful, the candidate is recommended to the University for the Doctor of Philosophy degree.

Doctoral students may be awarded the M.A. degree upon completion of the minimum coursework of 30 graduate credits of graded coursework.

Course Requirements

Requirements for the Doctoral Program in Philosophy

I. History Courses

Three of the four history courses marked with an asterisk (*) are required, plus two additional courses for a concentration in the history of philosophy. History courses will feature an intensive writing component.

II. Interface Studies Seminars
Two seminars, selected from either team-taught interface seminars or graduate seminars in another discipline, will fulfill the basic interface requirement. For a concentration in Interface Studies two additional seminars must be taken (from among team-taught or approved non-philosophy graduate seminars).

III. Contemporary Philosophy Seminars
The two seminars marked with an asterisk (*) are required. Three additional seminars chosen from the remaining list of contemporary philosophy seminars must be taken to fulfill the basic requirement. Two more seminars may be chosen to fulfill concentration requirements.

IV. Independent and Directed Studies

Courses
Detailed course descriptions for the doctoral program are available from the Philosophy Department office each semester. Please refer to the current undergraduate and Graduate Class Schedules for specific semester offerings.

Distinguished Professors
Casey, Edward S., Ph.D., 1967, Northwestern University: Aesthetics; phenomenology; philosophy of psychology.
Ihde, Don, Ph.D., 1964, Boston University: Phenomenology; philosophy of technology; hermeneutics.

Distinguished Service Professor

Distinguished Teaching Professor
Grim, Patrick, B. Phil., 1975, University of St. Andrews, Scotland; Ph.D., 1976, Boston University: Logic; ethics; computer modeling; contemporary analytic philosophy.

Professors
Allison, David B., Ph.D., 1974, Pennsylvania State University: Contemporary European philosophy.
Crease, Robert, Ph.D., 1987, Columbia University: Philosophy of science; aesthetics.
Dilworth, David, Ph.D., 1963, Fordham University; Ph.D., 1970, Columbia University: East Asian languages and cultures.
Kittay, Eva, Ph.D., 1978, City University of New York: Philosophy of language; philosophy and literature; feminism.
Kuspit, Donald B., D.Phil., 1960, University of Frankfurt, Germany; Ph.D., 1971, University of Michigan: Art criticism; 20th-century art; northern Renaissance art.
Miller, Clyde Lee, Ph.D., 1974, Yale University: History of philosophy.
Silverman, Hugh J., Ph.D., 1973, Stanford University: Continental philosophy (hermeneutics, deconstruction, and postmodern theory); Aesthetics and cultural theory; Contemporary European philosophies, literatures, and cultures.
Simpson, Lorenzo, Ph.D., Yale University: Contemporary continental philosophy (hermeneutics and critical theory); philosophy of the social sciences; philosophy of science and technology; neopragmatism and post-analytic philosophy; philosophy and race.
Spector, Marshall, Ph.D., 1963, Johns Hopkins University: Philosophy of science; philosophy of technology; environmental issues.
Welton, Donn, Ph.D., 1973, Southern Illinois University: Phenomenology and epistemology; philosophical psychology; Contemporary German philosophy.
Williams, Peter, Ph.D., 1973, Harvard University: Philosophy of law; ethics.

Associate Professors
Cormier, Harvey J., Ph.D., Harvard University: American philosophy; William James and pragmatism; philosophy and culture.

De Laurentis, Allegra, Ph.D., 1982, University of Frankfurt: Greek philosophy; Hegel.

Edwards, Jeffrey B., Ph.D., 1987, Universitat Marburg, Germany: History of philosophy; Kant; modern philosophy.

Manchester, Peter, Ph.D., 1972, Graduate Theological Union: Greek philosophy; Heidegger.

Mar, Gary, Ph.D., 1985, University of California, Los Angeles: Logic; philosophy of mathematics; contemporary analytic philosophy; philosophy of religion.

O’Byrne, Anne, Ph.D, 1999, Vanderbilt University: 20th-century and contemporary European philosophy.

Rawlinson, Mary C., Ph.D., 1978, Northwestern University: 19th-century philosophy; Hegel; aesthetics and literary theory; philosophical psychology; philosophy of medicine.

Assistant Professors
Craig, Megan, Ph.D., 2006, New School of Social Research: Ethics; aesthetics; pragmatism; phenomenlogy; Levinas.


Number of teaching, graduate, and research assistants, fall 2011: 27

1) Joint appointment, Department of Art
2) Joint appointment, Department of Comparative Studies
3) Joint appointment, Community and Preventive Medicine
4) Recipient of the State University Chancellor’s Award for Excellence in Teaching, 1977
5) Recipient of the State University Chancellor’s Award for Excellence in Teaching, 1978
6) Recipient of the State University Chancellor’s Award for Excellence in Teaching, 1980
7) Recipient of the State University Chancellor’s Award for Excellence in Teaching, 1988
8) Recipient of the State University Chancellor’s Award for Excellence in Teaching, 1993
9) Recipient of the Commonwealth of Virginia’s Outstanding Faculty Award, 1990; University of Richmond’s Distinguished Educator Award, 1984
10) Recipient of President’s and Chancellor’s Award for Excellence in Scholarship and Creative Activity, 2005

NOTE: The course descriptions for this program can be found in the corresponding program PDF or at COURSE SEARCH.