

# **Philosophy Department Honors**

## **General**

The honors program in philosophy gives students an opportunity to work in depth on a philosophical issue and to make an original contribution to philosophy. The honors program involves a year of intensive writing and research in which students work closely with a member of the Philosophy Department to write a philosophy thesis. Students may take up to six credits of independent work in order to write the thesis. The honors program is much more intensive and challenging than the capstone experience in philosophy which requires the senior seminar and writing a single paper rather than a thesis.

Students begin in the spring of their junior year by selecting an honors advisor in the philosophy department who will help develop an honors proposal. During the fall of the student's senior year, the student and advisor will choose another member of the department and an appropriate scholar outside the department to assist with the thesis. The honors advisor and the two additional persons constitute the honors committee.

## **The Honors Thesis**

Honors theses in philosophy vary, and the details of your thesis will be worked out with your honors advisor. An idea of what is involved, however, can be seen by considering the typical philosophy thesis. Typical theses are focused on a single philosophical issue; they have an introduction and several chapters. The introduction typically does three things: provides an explanation of the issue and discusses why the issue is important, states the original thesis to be defended, and states what the various chapters are about. While honors theses vary in their approach, a typical honors thesis in philosophy will have an initial chapter that sets out the background of the issue and introduces concepts and techniques that will be used in the following chapters. There is also typically a chapter that considers previous attempts to deal with the issue. Finally, of course, there is a chapter devoted to defending the main position or thesis of the honors thesis. Most honors theses are between 75 and 100 pages in length.

## **The Oral Exam**

When the honors thesis is completed, the student defends it at an oral examination conducted by the honors committee. The committee may accept the thesis, reject the thesis, or ask that the thesis be further revised and resubmitted. AT this time there may also be a public presentation of the student's work. The student and advisor will coordinate the oral exam and public presentation.

## **Eligibility**

Students who have a grade point average of at least 3.3 and who have four philosophy courses taken or in progress may apply for the honors program in philosophy.

## **Schedule**

If any of the dates listed below fall on a weekend, then the deadline will be the following Monday.

April 15: The honors proposal is due. The proposals should state the philosophical issue that the student intends to investigate and explain how the student plans to conduct research. In addition the proposal should explain what courses the student has taken or is taking in philosophy and how the student's background serves as preparation for writing a philosophy thesis. The proposal must also have the approval of a member of the Philosophy Department who will serve as the student's advisor. The proposal is submitted to the department chair and reviewed by the members of the Philosophy Department. Forms are available from the secretary of the Philosophy Department. [December graduates should turn in their proposals December 1 of their junior year.]

September 15: An annotated bibliography is due. The bibliography should be based on research done over the summer as well as any research done the previous spring. The bibliography should be given to the department chair who will distribute it to members of the philosophy department for review. [For December graduates the due date is March 15.]

October 1: The list of seniors approved for the honors program will be given to the Dean of Academic Programs. Students who have not done significant research by the time of the department review in late September will not be approved. [For December graduates the due date is April 1.]

December 1: A report on the work completed for the honors thesis is due. The report should review the research that has been completed, update the annotated bibliography, and set out a time table for completion of the honors thesis. In addition, the report should contain a draft of a chapter of the thesis. Finally, the report should state who the members of the honors committee are. The report is prepared by the student, endorsed by the honors advisor, and given to the department chair to be distributed to and reviewed by the members of the Philosophy Department. [For December graduates the due date is September 1.]

January 31: The department chair submits the names of students who are approved by the Philosophy Department to continue work on the honors thesis. [For December graduates the due date is November 1.]

April 1: The completed thesis should be submitted to the members of the student's honors committee and a date for the oral examination will be set. [For December graduates the due date is November 1.]

April 20: The Honors Advisor will inform the Dean of Academic Programs whether the student will be graduating with honors. [For December graduates the due date is December 1.]

