

PHL490

Senior Seminar in Philosophy I

(Senior Thesis)

Fall 2010



Class meetings Monday-Wednesday- Friday 11:45-12:50, building 9, room 207

Instructor Michael Cholbi

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Office hours, fall 2010: Mondays 1:30-4:00, Wednesdays, 1:30-4:00, or by appointment. (I will also be available some Tuesdays to meet with students.)

Blackboard 9 login: <https://blackboard.csupomona.edu/webapps/login/>

Description

PHL490 is the first in a two-quarter course sequence (PHL490, PHL491) to enable advanced philosophy students to write a substantial philosophical thesis. At the conclusion of PHL491 (Senior Seminar in Philosophy II) in the winter 2011 quarter, students will be expected to produce a thesis paper meeting the following requirements:

- 4,000-8,000 words in length
- defending a substantial philosophical claim, of an interpretive or argumentative nature
- references to at least 4 appropriate philosophical sources

More generally, the thesis should exhibit significant knowledge of its subject matter while carefully and forcefully defending a clearly articulated philosophical claim. This thesis will be evaluated by your instructor and by another member of the philosophy faculty, chosen on the basis of your thesis subject.

The aim of PHL490 is thus to prepare students to write a thesis meeting these requirements. (The actual drafting and revision of the thesis will occur in PHL491 during the winter quarter.) As such, PHL490 is an extended exercise in ‘pre-writing,’ i.e., its purpose is to guide you through the tasks necessary to be ready to draft your thesis paper.

The pre-writing will culminate in a *thesis proposal*, due at quarter’s end. This proposal will the following four components:

1. A ‘long abstract’ of your thesis approximately 1,000 words
2. A list of the references you intend to use in your thesis
3. An outline of the thesis, no more than one single-spaced page

4. A thesis 'work plan,' describing at least two of the main challenges or difficulties you expect to face in drafting your thesis and how you intend to address these challenges or difficulties

This thesis proposal will be due to my office (1-331) Wednesday, December 8, noon.

Prerequisites

The course is restricted to philosophy majors with *senior standing* (where 'senior standing' means, roughly, that you expect to graduate before the conclusion of the fall 2011 quarter). Any students who do not meet these prerequisites but who wish to take this course should contact me as soon as possible.

Course grading and relationship to PHL 491

1. Please note that any student enrolled in PHL490 *must* also enroll in PHL491.
2. At the conclusion of this quarter, you will receive an RP (Report in Progress) for PHL490. However, you will also be assigned a provisional grade for PHL490 based on your thesis proposal. At the conclusion of PHL491, your thesis will receive a grade. If the thesis grade is equal to or higher than the provisional grade for PHL490, then the grade for the thesis will be your grade for PHL490 and for PHL491. If the thesis grade is lower than the provisional grade for PHL490, then the grade for PHL490 and for PHL491 will be the average of the thesis grade and the (original) provisional grade for PHL490. Examples:
 - Thesis proposal receives a B, thesis receives an A → receive an A for PHL490 and for PHL491
 - Thesis proposal receives an A, thesis receives a C → receive a B for PHL490 and for PHL491

Note that you will receive the same grade for PHL490 and PHL491 no matter what.

Course learning objectives

By the conclusion of this course, students will have completed the pre-writing tasks necessary to position them to write a successful thesis paper in the winter 2011 quarter.

What to expect during our meetings

Since this is not a course organized around specific philosophical content, it will not have a typical lecture or discussion format. Occasionally, I will have a presentation, handout, etc., for discussion, but you should expect a more workshop-like atmosphere in which we discuss common writing challenges, analyze arguments in your papers, etc. Along the way, I will sometimes ask you to complete various tasks in preparation for subsequent class meetings. I may sometimes ask particular students to come prepared to discuss their progress at a subsequent meeting, so be ready! I may also meet with students individually or in small groups during class time. In general, we will do a lot of improvising based on your needs and interests. Toward the end of the quarter, I will ask you to identify a partner with whom you can share ideas, drafts, feedback, etc.

Roughly, we will proceed through the quarter addressing the following writing tasks:

1. Identifying a thesis topic
2. Identifying appropriate sources
3. Identifying a thesis statement (or thesis question)
4. Crafting the thesis organization

Varia

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