

**CAL STATE LA
MA PROGRAM IN PHILOSOPHY**

Welcome to the Cal State LA MA Program in Philosophy!

This pamphlet contains important information about our program, as well as College and University regulations.

There are two ways to complete our program, the *Thesis Option* and the *Comprehensive Exam Option* (see page 3).

Students who are interested in pursuing a PhD are encouraged to adopt the Comprehensive Exam Option. This leads to a quicker graduation, and it enables you to concentrate on developing a strong writing sample for your applications. Writing samples need to be about 10-15 pages; if you want to, you can develop a writing sample in a 1- or 2-unit directed study with a faculty member; but either way, it is not the best use of your time to write a long thesis when writing samples need to be much shorter.

However, if you choose to write a thesis, and if you maintain the required thesis GPA (3.7), then you can pursue the thesis option. If you do this, you will only need to do 27 units of course work.

Whichever option you choose, you must complete at least 30 units with a GPA of at least 3.0. If you choose the Comprehensive Exam Option, all of these units will be in course work and directed studies. If you choose the Thesis Option, 27 units will be in course work, and 3 will be in thesis preparation and writing.

NOTE: If you take more courses than are needed for your program, the first courses you take will be the ones that are counted. Later courses won't be counted.

In addition to reading this pamphlet, we strongly recommended that you familiarize yourself with the University Graduate Handbook, which may be found online:

<https://www.calstatela.edu/sites/default/files/Grad-Student-Handbook-2023-24%20published.pdf>

MA PROGRAM ADVISEMENT MILESTONES

1. Mandatory Group Advisement Meeting: This will take place just prior to the start of your first semester. Check the philosophy department website (or call the department) for time and place. At this meeting, you will (a) receive advisement about the program requirements; (b) receive advice about what courses to take during your first term; and (c) fill out a generic Program. (If you are a conditionally classified student, you will not be filling out a Program.)

2. Only for students who are admitted on a conditional basis and who have to take prerequisite courses that don't count toward the MA: When you finish your prerequisite courses, you must see a Grad Advisor so that your status can be changed to "Classified" (G2). This will be done by filling out a Program. (NOTE: 5000-level courses may be taken prior to finishing prerequisites with instructor approval.)

3. Graduate Writing Assessment Requirement: From the University Catalog: "Graduate students are considered to have met the GVAR ... upon admission to the university if they earned a bachelor's degree or higher from an accredited college or university where English is the medium of instruction." If you do not have such a degree, the following courses can be used to satisfy the Assessment Requirement: PHIL 4100, PHIL 4200, PHIL 4600 and PHIL 4700. (A relevant graduate seminar can also be substituted for one of these courses.) This requirement must be met before you are advanced to candidacy.

4. Mandatory Advisement Meeting after you have completed 12 units toward the MA degree: When you have completed 12 units toward the degree (if you're a conditionally classified student, this shouldn't include your prerequisite classes), you *must* see a grad advisor to fill out a form (Form GS-10) to be advanced to candidacy. If you don't do this, it could delay your graduation. The form can be found on the Office of Graduate Studies website: <https://www.calstatela.edu/graduatestudies/forms-and-petitions>. The form requires you to choose the Comprehensive or Thesis option. If you're not sure which you want to do, just pick one. The form can be changed and refiled later if necessary.

5. Apply to Graduate (and corresponding mandatory advisement meeting): You must apply to graduate the semester before you plan to graduate. If you wait and do it during your last term, it will slow down your graduation. To apply to graduate, you need to do the following things (in the following order):

- (a) Go to the Graduation Office to get the form to apply to graduate.
- (b) See a graduate advisor in the philosophy department. The advisor will (i) check to make sure that you are on track to graduate and inform you of any remaining requirements that you need to finish, and (ii) file course substitutions as necessary on the Student Advisement page on GET.
- (c) After seeing an advisor, take the form to the Cashier and pay for graduation.
- (d) After paying the Cashier, take the form to the philosophy department and turn it in.

NOTE: You cannot apply to graduate in the same semester in which you are advanced to candidacy. This is one of several reasons why it is important to be advanced to candidacy as soon as you finish 12 units and the WPE. And this is also why it's important to take the WPE during your first two semesters.

Further information can be found on the Registrar's website: <https://www.calstatela.edu/registrar/apply-your-degree>

6. Thesis Option Only: If you're writing a thesis, you need to fill out Form GS-13. You can do this with a graduate advisor, or you can get your thesis advisor to do it. The form can be found here: <https://www.calstatela.edu/graduatethesis/gs-13-form>

COURSE WORK

In planning your coursework, you must comply with the following rules. Failure to do so will result in your having to take extra courses.

1. Students must take at least 30 units to graduate.
2. All courses that count toward the MA degree must be at the 4000- or 5000-level.
3. At least 50% of the units that that count toward the degree must be at the 5000-level.
4. There are three required courses for the program, as follows:
 - a. Phil 4050 (Symbolic Logic)
 - b. Phil 4100 (Social-Political Philosophy) *or* Phil 4200 (Ethics II)
 - c. Phil 4600 (Metaphysics) *or* Phil 4700 (Theory of Knowledge)

You must take these three courses unless you are officially exempted by an advisor because you took an equivalent course as an undergraduate.

5. You can take a *maximum* of 6 units of directed study (Phil 5980).
6. The journal course (Phil 5000) is by invitation only. You may use a *maximum* of 3 Journal units toward the degree.
7. Phil 4990 cannot be used toward the MA degree.
8. At least 24 units must be within Philosophy; courses outside Philosophy must be relevant to your program.

9a. For Comprehensive Exam Students Only: Phil 5960 (Comprehensive Exams) is a 0-unit course. So if you are taking the comprehensive exams, you must have at least 30 units of course work, independently of the comprehensive exams.

9b. For Thesis Students Only: If you decide to write a thesis, you need to do only 27 units of coursework because you will earn 3 units for the thesis. However, you have an additional requirement: You must take at least one MA seminar in 3 of the following 4 areas: (i) History (5100, 5110, etc.); (ii) Philosophy of Language, Logic, and Science (5200-something); (iii) Metaphysics and Epistemology (5300-something); (iv) Values (5400-something).

COMPREHENSIVE EXAM OPTION

<https://www.calstatela.edu/al/philosophy/cal-state-la-department-philosophy-ma-degree-comps-option>

In order to take a comprehensive exam you must be registered for Phil 5960, which is a 0 unit course, and requires a permit. Have your advisor to submit a permit request any time you want to register to take a comprehensive exam.

THREE POINTS TO NOTE ABOUT THE COMPREHENSIVE EXAMS:

1. Students who choose the Comprehensive Exam Option are required to take one more course than students who choose the Thesis Option. This is due to the fact that 0 units are assigned to comprehensive exams (Phil 5960), and 3 units are assigned to thesis preparation and writing (Phil 5990). *Hence, if you change from the Thesis Option to the Comprehensive Exam Option, you will need to add one course to your program.*
2. Students who are not enrolled in any credit-bearing course during the semester in which they take the comprehensive examination must pay the comprehensive examination fee. Note: Since the fee is only \$10, this may be an economic option for students.
3. You cannot take comprehensive exams during the same semester in which you're advanced to candidacy. This is one of several reasons why it is important to see an advisor to be advanced to candidacy after you complete 12 units and the WPE. And this is also why it's important to take the WPE during your first two semesters.

You must take a total of *three* comprehensive exams, in three of four general areas listed on the [department's comps web page](#). You may take anywhere from one to three exams in a given semester. If you spread the exams out over more than one semester, your record will show a grade of RP ("Report in Progress") until all three are completed – at which point all previous RPs must be changed accordingly (your advisor must file a Change of Grade form).

Comprehensive exams are given in the tenth and fourteenth weeks of the semester. Exact times will vary depending upon faculty availability for proctoring. Each exam lasts 2 hours and 15 minutes. No exam is repeated in any given semester (see the department website for the schedule).

☛ *The use of computers is not permitted in the writing of the Comprehensive Exams.*

Each exam consists of four to six questions, of which you must answer *two*. Some exams may have questions based on recent relevant graduate seminars. In such cases, typically there will be four questions drawn from the reading lists posted on the department website, and two from recent seminars. You are not required to answer questions from recent seminars (i.e., you may answer two drawn from the reading list).

Past exams are available for your use in studying for the comprehensive exams.

NOTE: If you do not pass a comprehensive exam, you should consult with relevant faculty for advice on how to prepare for a retest, which may be taken in a subsequent semester.

☛ *Students who fail a comprehensive exam twice will be subject to disqualification from the program.*

THESIS OPTION

<https://www.calstatela.edu/al/philosophy/cal-state-la-department-philosophy-ma-degree-thesis-option>

☛ You must have a GPA of 3.7 or better in your first 24 units of course work in order to qualify for the Thesis Option.

NOTE: Students who choose the Thesis Option are required to take one fewer course than students who choose the Comprehensive Exam Option. This is due to the fact that 3 units are assigned to thesis preparation and writing (Phil 5990), and 0 units are assigned to comprehensive exams (Phil 5960). *Hence, if you change from the Comprehensive Exam Option to the Thesis Option, you will need to delete one course from your program.*

Note, also, that you cannot register for thesis units during the same semester in which you're advanced to candidacy. This is one of several reasons why it is important to see an advisor to be advanced to candidacy after you complete 12 units and the WPE. And this is also why it's important to take the WPE during your first two semesters.

Once you have decided on a topic, you need to identify an appropriate faculty member as your *main advisor* and two additional faculty members as *readers*, and you need to request their participation.

Prospectus (Phil 5990): 8-10 page summary of your project, plus relevant bibliography. This should be prepared with your main advisor, and distributed to the two readers *only* when it has been completed to your mutual satisfaction. *Registration for Phil 5990 requires a departmental permit. Have your advisor inform the department secretary that you need a permit before you attempt to register.* When the prospectus is approved, you need to fill out and file an Approval of Thesis/Project Proposal (form GS-14*).

Thesis (Phil 5990): Work on your thesis with your main advisor. Once you and your main advisor decide the thesis is complete to your mutual satisfaction, distribute the thesis to the two readers. *Registration for Phil 5990 requires a departmental permit. Have your advisor inform the department secretary that you need a permit any time you intend to register for Phil 5990.*

☛ You must leave sufficient time (typically, four weeks) for your additional readers to read and comment on your thesis, and for you to make needed changes, before you plan to graduate.

Once the thesis is done, it must be filed with the library. Instructions on format, deadlines, etc. may be found here:

<https://www.calstatela.edu/graduatestudies/graduate-thesis-project-and-dissertation-guidelines>