

## ADVANCED RESEARCH & SENIOR THESIS 2008-2009

### DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY THE COLORADO COLLEGE

PH 435 (Advanced Research) provides Philosophy students with the opportunity to conduct a directed program of philosophical research in a fall extended format course, leading toward consideration for admission to PH 455 (Senior Thesis). During half-block and block 5, students admitted to PH 455 write a significant essay of 25-30 pages, building on their research in PH 435. Together, these two courses offer Philosophy seniors the chance to work closely with two faculty members on a philosophical research project mutually agreed upon, and to then write a essay over the course of six weeks, allowing for the kind of careful crafting and polished presentation not always possible in typical block courses.

Below is a general overview of the two courses, followed by a checklist showing chronologically the requirements of each course. Some key terms used below are defined on the last page. In the fall, the instructors will provide more detailed syllabi explaining the courses and their requirements.



Faculty. Unlike most courses, which have only one or two instructors, PH 435 and PH 455 involve the participation of the Philosophy Department as a whole. Each year, in addition, two faculty members are chosen to coordinate these courses. In 2008-09, the thesis coordinators will be Dennis McEnerney and Judith Genova.

The rest of the Philosophy Department will participate in the two courses in two ways. First, the whole Department will evaluate the proposals students present in order to be admitted to each course. Second, one additional faculty member, other than the thesis coordinators, will serve as a reader on each student's thesis committee. Each committee will consist of a primary and a secondary reader, one of whom will be either of the thesis coordinators. The other reader – who may be the primary or secondary reader – will be assigned by the Department. While the Department will make every effort to honor a student's preference for readers, it will not always be possible. In order to make thesis an activity of the whole Department and not overburden any one particular faculty member, it is important to distribute the theses as equally as possible among the departmental faculty. Early in the fall, students will therefore be directed to speak with at least two different faculty members, other than the coordinators, to identify more than one potential reader.



PH 435: Advanced Research. PH 435 will focus on developing effective mentor relationships, writing a clear thesis proposal, and reading the philosophical literature relevant to that proposal. The 0.5 unit course will meet in biweekly extended format over the fall semester. Prerequisites: A minimum 3.5 GPA in the major at the end of the junior year and departmental approval of an initial project proposal by the start of block 2.

The first step toward successful research and writing will be developing good working relationships with faculty mentors. To do so, students will present early in the fall a rough one-page thesis proposal to the PH 435 and PH 455 thesis coordinators, who will in turn suggest at least two additional Philosophy faculty members as possible readers for the project. Students will then consult with the thesis coordinators and those two additional faculty members to refine their draft proposals during block 1.

The second step in the process will be gaining departmental approval and having a thesis committee appointed. The one-page thesis proposals developed in block 1 will be reviewed by the whole Department no later than the first week of block 2, at which point the Department will appoint a committee of two readers for each approved project. Those committees will consist of a primary and secondary reader, one of which will be either of the thesis coordinators. The other will be one of the other faculty members the student consulted when refining his or her proposal in block 1.

The third step will be research: once approved, students will work with their committees early in block 2 to devise a reading schedule and a reading list of 8-10 sources (journal articles, books, and book chapters) to study over the course of blocks 2-3. During blocks 2 and 3, they will produce short summaries of each reading, to be incorporated into an annotated bibliography and used as the basis for a critical literature review of 8-10 pages, both of which will be due at the end of block 3. The class will meet as a group in blocks 2 and 3 to discuss their work and any challenges students may encounter. The course grade in PH 435 will be assigned by Dennis McEnnerney, in consultation with the student's readers and Judith Genova, if she is not a reader. Grades will be based on the quality of the literature review and the annotated bibliography, as well as on the student's participation in the course.

The final step students will take in the fall will be revising and expanding their initial one-page thesis proposal, turning it into a compelling 2-3 page proposal, which they will write upon completing and submitting their literature reviews and annotated bibliographies. The Department as whole will then review the revised proposals, as well as the completed literature reviews and bibliographies, and decide whether to accept or reject each proposal. Those students whose proposals are accepted will advance to PH 455 (Senior Thesis). To be accepted, a student will need to complete PH 435 with a grade of B+ or higher.



PH 455: Senior Thesis. PH 455, which will be a 1.5 unit course meeting during half-block and block 5, focusing on writing an in-depth, carefully crafted philosophical essay of 25-30 pages, informed by the research conducted during the fall semester. Emphasis will be placed on careful drafting and redrafting of the argument, along with attention to scholarly form (substantial reference to philosophical scholarship and the use of standard academic documentation, particularly). In addition, the course will aim to give students practice in presenting their work orally. The final essay should be a polished work, which then will be summarized in a public presentation. Prerequisites: Successful completion of PH 435 with a minimum of a B+ grade and departmental approval of a revised project proposal.

Writing a polished senior thesis will take time, and PH 455 is designed to give students the time to draft their thesis, discuss their drafts in depth with their readers, and rewrite or even rethink their work. Accordingly, the course will require students to return to campus for half-block in order to dive into the challenge of drafting, and then to spend much of block 5 rethinking, redrafting, and refining their essays.

Effective writing also requires learning how to engage audiences and accept criticism. Consequently, during half-block, students will work with the thesis coordinators and their fellow students, sharing drafts, offering and receiving criticism, and more generally seeking support as they work through complex arguments. By the end of half-block a rough draft or at least a partial draft and solid outline of the thesis should be complete.

At the beginning of block 5, students will consult with their readers, and devise a schedule for submitting revisions and for meeting with their committees. Students should aim to meet with their committees at least once per week. A full draft of the thesis will be due no later than the end of the second week, giving at least one and one-half weeks for complete revision and polishing of the essay.

A key element in the process will be public presentation. After completing their theses, students will give short talks to the College community in block 6, explaining their arguments, at a reception in honor of their work. Practice in making public presentations will be arranged by the thesis coordinators. Finally, students will submit a polished copy of their theses to Tutt Library for binding and cataloguing by block 7.

12 May 2008 revision. Subject to revision at the discretion of the instructors and Department.

**PH 435 ADVANCED RESEARCH & PH 455 SENIOR THESIS  
SCHEDULE AND CHECKLIST**

a. Blocks 1-2: Admission to PH 435 and Direction

*Week 1*

- 3.5 GPA in the major at the end of the junior year, or petition approval by first Friday
- Identify initial topic area; thesis coordinators suggest two additional prospective readers

*Week 2*

- Consult with the two prospective readers, gaining consent to work on the initial proposal
- Inform thesis coordinators about who consented to be prospective reader

*Week 3*

- Submit a draft one-page thesis proposal to thesis coordinators and two suggested readers

*Week 4 to week 1, block 2*

- Submit a revised one-page proposal to PH 435 thesis advisor, no later than first Wed. of block 2
- Department approves or disapproves proposal and assigns two readers, end of week 1, block 2

b. Blocks 2-3: Directed Research

*Block 2, weeks 1-2*

- Meet with readers to devise reading list for blocks 2-3
- Submit schedule for writing short reviews of works to be read

*Block 2, by end of week 2*

- Meet with readers to discuss first reading or readings
- Schedule at least two meetings per block to discuss readings with readers

*Block 3, week 1*

- Complete first partial draft of annotated bibliography by first Friday

*Block 3, weeks 2-3*

- Discuss annotated bibliography with readers in preparation for writing review essay
- Complete 1st draft of review essay & 2-3 page revised thesis project proposal by start of week 3

*Block 3, weeks 3-4*

- Discuss drafts of review essay and revised thesis project proposal with readers
- Revise and submit review essay and annotated bibliography by end of block

c. Block 4: Thesis Project Review and PH 455 Admission

- Submit revised 2-3 page thesis project proposal to readers for review, no later than first Monday
- Meet or correspond with readers to discuss revised thesis project proposal
- Submit final proposal no later than first Wednesday
- Department approves or disapproves of proposal by second week

d. PH 455 – Half-Block and Block 5

*Half-Block*

- Partial draft due first Thursday
- Class workshop and individual meetings, first Friday
- Additional partial draft due second Thursday
- Class workshop and individual meetings, second Friday

*Block 5 and beyond*

- Meet with readers to discuss partial drafts and schedule block 5 weekly meetings, first week
- Complete draft of thesis due, second Friday
- Meet with readers to discuss thesis draft, no later than third Wednesday
- Submit revised final version of thesis by end of block
- Present thesis at public forum in block 6 and file final copy at Tutt Library by block 7

## KEY TERMS DEFINED

Thesis coordinators:	Faculty members who coordinate PH 435 and PH 455 – Dennis McEnerney and Judith Genova in 2008-2009.
Prospective readers:	Two faculty members who are suggested by the thesis coordinators at the start of block 1 as possible readers on students' projects to help them refine their initial thesis proposals. Prospective readers may or may not be assigned to be on a student's thesis committee when the Department finalizes readers at the start of block 2.
Readers:	Two faculty members who direct a student's research starting in block 2, after his or her initial thesis proposal is accepted by the Department. One will be either of the two thesis coordinators. The other will be one of the two prospective readers. Either assigned reader may serve as primary or secondary reader.
Primary reader:	The reader who will grade any thesis written. The primary reader should also take the lead role in helping the student work through his or her research and thesis writing.
Secondary reader:	A reader who provides a second perspective on a student's research and writing. The secondary reader may only suggest a grade on a thesis.
(Thesis) Committee:	A collective name for the two readers assigned to a research and thesis project.
Initial thesis proposal:	A one-page proposal written during block 1, outlining the thesis the student wishes to investigate.
(Revised) Thesis proposal:	A 2-3 page revised version of the initial thesis proposal, completed by the beginning of block 4 and submitted for consideration for admission to PH 455.
Annotated bibliography:	A bibliography in which each entry is followed by a one-paragraph summary of the work. An edited version of the annotated bibliography will serve as the bibliography for the thesis.
Literature review:	An 8-10 page critical review of the works appearing in the annotated bibliography. In some cases, a revised version of the literature review may serve as a first chapter of the thesis.
Public presentation:	A short public talk summarizing the thesis, given in block 6, after the thesis is completed.