2016

398 399 Thesis Review

Michelle Brady
brady@xavier.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://www.exhibit.xavier.edu/philosophy_syllabi_fall_2016

Recommended Citation
http://www.exhibit.xavier.edu/philosophy_syllabi_fall_2016/3
Thesis Review

The primary aim of these courses is to prepare seniors majoring in Philosophy or enrolled in the Philosophy, Politics and the Public program to write their senior thesis projects. We will work together on the process of deciding on a thesis topic, developing strategies for research, formulating a thesis and argument, and writing the thesis itself.

In the fall semester, students will decide on a thesis topic, begin to work with a thesis advisor on research, produce an annotated bibliography containing relevant sources, submit a formal proposal and draft a section of the thesis. We will meet weekly, and considerable class time will be set aside for work on these elements and peer reviews of each others’ work.

In the spring semester, we will meet much less frequently. Students will work primarily with an advisor in completing the writing and revision of the thesis, and then they will present and defend that thesis orally.


Grading:

PHIL 398 (1 credit) PHIL 399 (2 credits)

- Annotated bibliography 25% Written thesis 75%
- Research Proposal 25% Oral defense 25%
- Section Draft 25%
- Seminar Participation 25%

PHIL 398

Your grade for this class will be based on the quality of your performance in the thesis course: the written work you submit and your general engagement in the course (both during class and in your general dedication to the thesis project). Assignments will be graded satisfactory (2), late or unsatisfactory (1) or incomplete submission (0).

**Annotated bibliography:** This document should contain bibliographic information and annotations for at least ten relevant secondary sources. For each relevant source, you will provide:
- a brief sketch of its argument, including its primary thesis,
- a brief statement of the source’s relevance to your project, including any key points you want to include in your own argument.

**Research proposal:** This document will contain a clear statement of your project’s thesis, a brief outline of its argument, and a review of the relevant secondary research on which you will draw. It should be about 6-8 pages long and will require the signature of your thesis advisor. You will turn in TWO versions of this proposal: one to your advisor and one on Canvas, two weeks later, that includes reflections on your advisor’s response.
**Section draft:** You will be required to submit a draft of a portion of your thesis (8-10 pages). You will have an opportunity in class to discuss this draft in one-on-one meetings with your classmates, and with the group at large.

**Participation:** In addition to your written work, students are expected to attend class, contribute to discussions and engage in group work.

- This portion of your grade will include occasional short assignments to prepare you for class discussion or peer review.
- Beginning Sep. 15, you will also submit a weekly progress report. Bring to class a short, type-written summary of what you accomplished that week on your project and what you need to do next.
- Submission of 85% or more of these short assignments and progress reports will be satisfactory, 65-84% will be unsatisfactory, fewer than 65% will be incomplete.

**PHIL 399, Philosophy majors:**

**Written thesis:** Your final written thesis should be between 20-40 pages long. You will write it primarily in consultation with your thesis advisor. You will also be required to find two additional readers for your thesis committee. The written thesis must consider a specific philosophical topic in light of relevant primary and secondary research.

- A completed draft of your thesis must be submitted to your advisor no later than **Friday, Jan. 27.**
- Your final draft is due to your committee no later than one week before your scheduled defense.

**Oral defense:** Late in the spring semester, we will schedule an oral defense for your thesis. You will present a brief, 5-10 minute account of the primary argument and significance of your thesis. Following your summary account, your advisor and readers will have about 45 minutes to ask questions of you. Defenses will probably be scheduled the week of **April 17-21.** (I will have more concrete information for you early in the Spring semester.)

**PHIL 399, PPP Majors:**

**Written Thesis:** Your final written thesis should be between 25-40 pages long. You will write it primarily in consultation with your thesis advisor. Your written thesis will concern a topic of your choosing from any relevant discipline, though it must also contain some significant philosophical content. You will be expected to conduct research into primary and secondary sources.

- A completed draft of your thesis must be submitted to your advisor no later than **Friday, Jan. 27.**
- Your final draft is due to your advisor no later than one week before your oral presentation.

**Oral Defense:** On the day of the “Celebration of Undergraduate Student Research,” you will be required to give a brief, 10 minute presentation of your thesis’ argument and significance. Any members of the public who attend your defense will have about 15 minutes to ask questions about it. Your advisor will award a grade based on the quality of your presentation and your responses. I will inform you of the date of this year’s Celebration once it is scheduled.
PHILOSOPHY DEPARTMENT, HONORS TRACK

The departmental honors track (instituted Fall 2015) enables students who are so inclined to prepare themselves better for graduate study in philosophy, or to pursue a more challenging undergraduate course of study in philosophy. Students choosing departmental honors have a number of requirements in addition to the standard requirements for the major. Those relevant for this class are:

- **Honors Thesis:** to receive departmental honors, a student must receive a minimum grade of B+ on his or her senior thesis.
- **Written Comprehensive Exam:** candidates for departmental honors will take a written comprehensive exam consisting of four questions. One question will come from each course in the student’s nine-hour history of philosophy sequence, and one will come from a course of the student’s own choosing. The exam will be taken in two phases: two questions during the first semester of senior year, two during the second.
  - Written exams will be held on the Friday of finals week or the Monday of the following week. On exam day, you will be given a choice between two questions for each course, and you will be expected to write about a page for each course.

If you would like to pursue the honors track, please see me as soon as possible to discuss the requirements.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

This course satisfies the Humanities elective requirement in the core curriculum. Study of the humanities has always been at the heart of a Jesuit education. Xavier’s Humanities elective can be fulfilled by taking a course in addition to the designated E/RS Focus course in any of the following disciplines: Classics, Modern Languages, English, History, Philosophy, or Theology. In this course you will encounter significant issues about the broad range of human experience. You will learn to recognize and evaluate various ways in which people understand and express the human experience.

This course is part of the Xavier Core Curriculum, which aims to develop people of learning and reflection, integrity and achievement, in solidarity for and with others. It addresses the following core learning objectives at the intermediate level:

1a: Students recognize and cogently discuss significant questions in the humanities, arts, and the natural and social sciences.
2a: Students find, evaluate, and logically convey information and ideas in written and oral presentations.
COURSE POLICIES

Attendance: While you are expected to keep up with your research and writing at home, much of the work of the course takes place in the classroom.

- We will often do group work and peer reviews in class. If you must miss class, you will not be given the opportunity to make up that work.
- Your participation grade will depend on active engagement in the class, which requires you to be in class, on time. Regular absences will lower your participation grade.

Late/missed work: Work submitted directly to me should be submitted through the Assignments on Canvas. Work submitted to your advisor should be submitted in whatever format your advisor specifies.

- The deadlines for your section draft and the final draft of your thesis are hard deadlines. Other people are depending on you to complete this work on time, so extensions will not be given.
- Weekly progress reports and other short weekly assignments are due at the beginning of class and will not be accepted late.
  - Please bring a typed hard copy of your progress report to class.
  - For other work, I will let you know when I give the assignment whether you should submit it on Canvas before class or bring a hard copy to class.
- Your annotated bibliography and research proposal are due on the dates indicated on the syllabus. You may request an extension of up to one week. These requests must: 
  - be made at least 24 hours in advance of the assignment deadline;
  - explain how many extra days you need and why;
  - be accompanied by a current draft of your work, demonstrating what you have already done on the assignment.
  - NOTE: An extension on your research proposal must be approved by your advisor as well as by me.
- Technical problems are not an adequate excuse for submitting work late. Submit your work early enough that you have time to address any technical problems that come up.
- Since most of your work will be submitted electronically, it is your responsibility to ensure that it has been submitted correctly. You will receive a receipt from Turnitin.com for anything submitted there.

Plagiarism: You will be expected to follow the policy for academic honesty as outlined in the Xavier University Catalog. Violation of this policy will result, at minimum, in an F on the assignment. A second violation of this policy will automatically result in an F for the course.

- All papers will be submitted to turnitin.com, a service that checks papers against those on the web and in its database. If you have any questions or concerns, please see me.
- Working with other students does not constitute plagiarism, but copying another student’s work does. If you work with your classmates or with other students who have taken my class in the past, be sure anything you turn in is written in your own words.
- Consulting a website such as Sparknotes does not constitute plagiarism. Cutting and pasting from a website, however, is plagiarism, even if you rephrase occasional passages. Any time you use someone else’s words, you must provide an adequate citation.
Course Schedule

The following is a preliminary schedule of the topics we will cover. For most of the semester, we will only meet once a week. Please try to keep this time period free on both Tuesdays and Thursdays, in case something comes up that will require us to meet twice in a particular week.

Week 1: Tues., Aug. 23  Syllabus, Choosing a topic       Turabian, ch 14 (131-132),
                              ch 1-2 (p. 5-23)
Week 2: Tues., Aug. 30  Locating sources       Turabian, ch 3 (p. 24-36)
Week 3: Tues., Sep. 6  Locating sources (Librarian visits)
Week 4: Tues., Sep. 13  Annotated bibliography: evaluating sources
Week 5: Tues., Sep. 20  Effective reading and note taking       Turabian, ch. 4 (37-48)
Week 7: Tues., Oct. 4  Building an argument       Turabian, ch 5 (49-62)
Week 8: Tues., Oct. 11  Drafting: organizing       Turabian, ch 6 (63-72)
                DUE, Oct. 14, by midnight: Research proposal to advisor
Week 9: Tues., Oct. 18  Drafting: beginning to write       Turabian, ch 7 (73-83)
Week 11: Tues., Nov. 1  Peer review of section drafts       DUE Nov. 6, by 5pm Section draft
Week 12: Tues., Nov. 8  Peer review of section drafts
Week 13: Tues., Nov. 15  Peer review of section drafts
Week 14: Tues., Nov. 22  Peer review of section drafts
Week 15: Tues., Nov. 29  Looking ahead       Turabian, ch. 9-10 (100-121)
Week 16: Dec. 6, 8  Conferences as necessary