

**CAL STATE LA
MA PROGRAM IN PHILOSOPHY**

Welcome to the Cal State LA MA Program in Philosophy!

These pages contain important information about our program, as well as College and University regulations.

There are two ways to complete our program, the *Thesis Option* (page 2), and the *Comprehensive Exam Option* (page 3).

Students who do not intend to continue in philosophy past the MA (either because they are studying simply to satisfy their curiosity, or because they plan to teach at the Community College level) almost always take the comprehensive exams, which are designed to test for competence across major subfields of the discipline.

Students who wish to continue their studies in a PhD program can either write a thesis, or take the comprehensive exams and register for a 1- or 2-unit course to work intensively with a faculty member on a writing sample. (This second option is becoming increasingly popular.)

Whichever option you choose, you must complete at least 45 units, with a GPA of at least 3.0. If you choose the Comprehensive Option, all of these units will be in course work. If you choose the Thesis Option, 40 units will be in course work, and 5-8 in thesis preparation and writing.

In addition to reading this pamphlet, we require that you familiarize yourself with the University and College of Arts and Letters Graduate Handbooks, PDFs of which may be found on line:

University:

<http://www.calstatela.edu/academic/aa/gsr/assets/cadatalog/gshandbook.pdf>

College of Arts and Letters:

<http://www.calstatela.edu/academic/al/Graduate%20and%20Postbaccalaureate%20Student%20Handbook.pdf>

☞ *You are responsible for knowing the rules, procedures and deadlines of the department, the college and the university.*

THESIS OPTION

<http://www.calstatela.edu/dept/phil/thesis.php>

- ☞ Students must have a GPA of 3.7 or better in the first 36 units of course work in order to qualify for the Thesis Option.

NOTE: Students who choose the Thesis Option are required to take two fewer courses than students who choose the Comprehensive Exam Option. This is due to the fact that 8 units are assigned to thesis preparation (Phil 598) and writing (Phil 599), and 0 units are assigned to comprehensive exams (Phil 596). *Hence, if you change from the Comprehensive Exam Option to the Thesis Option, you will need to delete two courses from your program.*

Once you have decided on a topic, identify appropriate faculty as *main advisor* and two additional *readers*, and request their participation.

Prospectus (Phil 598, 2 units): 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 598 requires a departmental permit. Have your advisor inform the department secretary that you need a permit before you attempt to register.**

Thesis (Phil 599, 1-6 units): 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 599 requires a departmental permit. Have your advisor inform the department secretary that you need a permit any time you intend to register for Phil 599.*

- ☞ You must leave sufficient time (typically, at least 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.

Theses are limited to 50 pages, not including endnotes and references. Once the thesis is done, it must be filed with the library. Instructions on format, deadlines, etc. may be found here:

<http://www.calstatela.edu/library/guides/thesisprep.htm>

* Note that Phil 598 is *also* the designation for 4-unit Directed Study courses. You may have up to *two* such courses on your program. (In addition to the 2-unit Thesis Preparation 598.) Registration for 4-unit Phil 598 Directed Study requires instructor permission and a departmental permit. Have your advisor inform the department secretary that you need a permit before attempting to register for a 4-unit Phil 598.

COMPREHENSIVE EXAM OPTION

<http://www.calstatela.edu/dept/phil/comps.php>

In order to take a comprehensive exam you must be registered for Phil 596, which is a 0 unit course, and requires a permit. Have your advisor inform the department secretary that you need a permit any time you want to register to take a comprehensive exam. *You must inform the coordinator for your exam (see the department website for a list of coordinators) of your intention to take it before the end of the second week of the quarter.*

NOTE: Students who choose the Comprehensive Exam Option are required to take two more courses than students who choose the Thesis Option. This is due to the fact 0 units are assigned to comprehensive exams (Phil 596), and 8 units are assigned to thesis preparation (Phil 598) and writing (Phil 599). *Hence, if you change from the Thesis Option to the Comprehensive Exam Option, you will need to accumulate at least 5 more units (many students take two 4-unit courses, but one 4-unit and one 1-unit course will suffice).*

You must take a total of *three* comprehensive exams, in three of four general areas listed on the department website. You may take anywhere from one to three exams in a given quarter. If you spread the exams out over more than one quarter, 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 submit a Change of Grade form).

Comprehensive exams are given in the fifth and ninth weeks of the quarter, on Wednesday and Thursday. Exact times will vary depending upon faculty availability for proctoring. Each exam lasts 2 hours and 15 minutes. No exam is repeated in any quarter (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), and you may answer at most one such question.

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 must be taken in a subsequent quarter. Students who have attempted and failed a comprehensive exam may *not* switch to the thesis option.

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

MA PROGRAM ADVISEMENT MILESTONES

When:	What:
Upon admission to the program:	Initial Advisement Appointment: Fill out and file Program Plan: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Choose Comprehensive Exam or Thesis Option• Choose tentative courses*
Within the first two quarters:	Take Writing Proficiency Exam (UNIV 400)
If you deviate from MA program plan:	Notify graduate advisor of changes (<i>before</i> the end of the quarter in which changes are made*)
After 16 units (WPE done, ≥ 3.0 GPA):	Advancement to Candidacy (fill out and file Form GS-10)
When course work is complete:	Fill out and file Form GS-12 (Thesis) or Form GS-12a (Comprehensive Exams)
When comprehensive exams are done:	Fill out and file Report of Comprehensive Exam
When thesis proposal is completed:	Fill out and file Form GS-14
When thesis is completed:	Fill out and file Form GS-13
3-6 months <i>prior to</i> graduation:	Apply for graduation (fill out and file form; pay fee)

* The university requires graduate students to choose a complete program of courses up front. (Filing your program is also a way of getting yourself “in the system.”) You’re free to change your mind as you go along; however, **it is absolutely essential that you inform your advisor of any changes you want to make.** If you take a course that’s not on your program and a Change of Program Form is not filed *before* the end of the quarter in which you take the course, the University is under no obligation to count that course toward your degree. Only courses officially on your program will get counted.

☞ GS forms mentioned above are available in the department office, and on line at http://www.calstatela.edu/academic/aa/gsr/cal_la/form/form.html