

The University of Western Ontario
Department of Philosophy
Graduate Course Outline 2024–25
Philosophy 9900B
Prospectus Course

Term: Winter 2025
Instructor: Anthony Skelton

Office Location: Stevenson Hall 4145
Office Hours: M, 3:30–4:30; Th, 10:00–11:00
E-mail: askelto4@uwo.ca

Course Description

PhD students in philosophy are required to produce a prospectus summarising their doctoral dissertation project. They must defend the prospectus in an oral examination held by their Prospectus Committee. This prospectus must present a *clear, coherent, and promising research plan*.

The primary aim of the Prospectus Course is to support PhD students in developing this research plan and drafting a clear and coherent prospectus. In this course we will discuss model prospectuses, research methods, and writing strategies. The primary focus, however, will be on student presentations and peer-led discussion of drafts of parts of the prospectus and of the prospectus as a whole. Accordingly, each member of the course must be prepared to present and share their research in a way that is intelligible to a broad philosophical audience and attend class prepared to comment constructively on the work of their peers. The instructor of this course will facilitate and support the development of the prospectus and ensure that students remain accountable to deadlines.

The course is graded on a pass/fail basis. Regular attendance, participation in in-class activities, and successful and timely completion of assignments will suffice for a pass.

Students enrolled in this course must have a supervisor by the time the course starts and it is highly desirable that they have completed all other degree requirements by the time the course starts. It is expected that students will meet regularly with their supervisor(s) while taking the course.

Objectives

The main purpose of this course is to provide a supportive and collegial environment in which to assist students in writing a draft prospectus document. Information about the Prospectus Requirements are found [here](#) and [here](#).

In sum, the prospectus document is a (maximum, excluding bibliography) 4500-word document (including notes) that provides a summary of the main theses of your dissertation project, the lines of argument relied on to support them, and their philosophical context.

In addition, students who attend class regularly, do the readings, and complete the assignments will

1. Develop some of the skills required for conducting advanced research in philosophy (broadly understood), including the identification, analysis, clarification, and evaluation of debates, theses, and positions.
2. Develop some of the skills required for expressing philosophical concepts, positions, debates, and theses clearly and economically in writing and in conversation.
3. Have ample opportunity to present their work to and to receive feedback from their peers and the instructor and thereby develop important oral presentation skills.
4. Acquire a deeper appreciation of the range of topics subject to philosophical treatment.
5. Learn the painful truth that producing good work in philosophy involves time, effort, and (repeated) revision.

Course Schedule

Week One (January 9): **Organisation and Introduction**

Reading:

- Prospectus Requirements

Week Two (January 16): **Research Questions**

Week Three (January 23): **Research Methodology**

Reading

- Williamson, *Philosophical Method*
- Dever, “What is Philosophical Methodology?”

Week Four (January 30): **Research Methodology**

Week Five (February 6): **Sample Prospectus Documents**

Reading

- Sample prospectus documents in a range of areas of philosophy which will be distributed in advance.

Week Six (February 13): **Putting Things Together & Peer Review**

Week Seven (February 20): **Spring Reading Week: No Classes**

Week Eight (February 27): **Chapter Summary 1**

Week Nine (March 6): **Chapter Summary 1 Revision**

Week Ten (March 13): **Chapter Summary 2**

Week Eleven (March 20): **Chapter Summary 2 Revision**

Week Twelve (March 27): **Chapter Summary 3**

Week Thirteen (April 3): **Chapter Summary 3 Revision**

Requirements

Your grade for this course will be based on the following assignments. You will be graded on a pass/fail basis. When you submit an assignment you will automatically receive a grade of pass. Assignments will be presented and commented on by your peers and the instructor in class. The instructor will *not* provide written feedback on assignments unless invited to do so by the student.

1. Assignment One

Due date: Thursday, 16 January 2025

Length: No more than 800 words

2. Assignment Two

Due date: Thursday, 23 January 2025
Length: No more than 600 words

3. Assignment Three

Due date: Monday, 6 February 2025
Length: No more than 1200 words

4. Assignment Four

Due date: Monday, 13 February 2025
Length: No more than 1400 words

5. Assignment Five

Due Date: Monday, 6 March 2025
Length: No more than 1000 words

6. Assignment Six

Due Date: Monday, 20 March 2025
Length: No more than 1000 words

7. Assignment Seven

Due Date: Monday, 3 April 2025
Length: Length: No more than 1000 words

8. Assignment Eight

Due Date: Monday, 24 April 2025
Length: Length: No more than 4500 words

9. Assignment Nine

Due Date: 25 April 2025

Event: On 25 April 2025, a 3-minute thesis event will be scheduled. All students in the prospectus course this term and all PhD students in the department will be invited to present their 3-minute theses to the members of the department. This is intended to be a proper in-person event with refreshments. The 3-minute thesis is to consist of a single slide that will serve as the basis for a 3-minute description of your dissertation project. Information about the 3MT is located [here](#). A YouTube video of some great and very recent Three Minute Thesis presentations is found [here](#).

here. The competitor guide may be found here. Lots of good information is also found here. Some good tips for success may be found here.