

PHILOSOPHY CAPSTONE AND INDEPENDENT LEARNING GUIDE (Updated Fall 2023)

THE CAPSTONE FOR THE PHILOSOPHY MAJOR

The Capstone is a requirement of the Simmons PLAN curriculum. Students must complete 4-8 credit hours in the Capstone for their major.

The Capstone requirement of 4 credit hours for the Philosophy Major is:

- **PHIL 390: Seminar**

The philosophy seminar is shared among the faculty in the department and may cover different topics each time it is offered. The course consists of an in-depth examination of a problem in philosophy (e.g., the problem of free will), a particular philosopher's perspective (e.g., Nietzsche, De Beauvoir), or a sub-field in philosophy (e.g., philosophy of language). The course may be taken more than once.

The Capstone requirement may also be fulfilled with:

- **PHIL 350: Independent Study**
- **PHIL 355: Senior Thesis**
- **HUM 370: Internship in Humanities**
- **Seminars in WGST and CRGC in topics relevant to philosophy (upon prior approval by the philosophy chair)**

PHIL 350, PHIL 355, and HUM 370 are independent learning courses that emphasize student initiative, planning, and implementation under the supervision of faculty. See below for the guidelines for these courses.

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PHIL 350: INDEPENDENT STUDY

Normally, students engage in independent study for one semester for four credit hours. Independent study will be conducted and evaluated according to the following guidelines:

1. The semester before they start their independent study, interested students should identify a Simmons philosophy professor who agrees to serve as their independent study advisor. Prior to registering for independent study, students must provide that professor with a proposal containing the following information:

- A brief (1-2 page) background description of the topic area
- A preliminary annotated bibliography. Annotations should describe the relevance of each citation to the topic area
- A preliminary outline of the independent study topics
- A preliminary timeline for the project.

Following approval of the proposal by the professor, students may register by consent for the agreed upon number of credit hours of independent study.

2. During the semester, students will meet regularly – normally bi-weekly – for discussion with their independent study advisor.

3. Writing will be arranged jointly by the student and their independent learning professor. Normally, students will write a 15–20-page paper.

5. The independent study will be evaluated by the independent study advisor according to the following criteria:

- Clarity
- Focus
- Quality of critical, philosophical reflections on issues
- Overall performance of independent work.

Examples of independent studies in Philosophy:

- “Using Philosophical Analysis to Look at Fiction.”
- “The Ethical Issues Behind Celebrity Culture.”
- “The Oppression of Children and Childhood Education.”
- “An Examination of Imam al-Ghazali’s Contributions to Philosophical Thought through the Sufi Mystic Lens.”
- “The Pedagogy of Symbolic Logic.”
- “Art and the Absurd.”
- “Should Confucianism or Buddhism Be Classified as a Religion?”
- “A Materialist Feminist Analysis of Surrogacy.”
- “The Problem of Universals in Indian Philosophy: A Comparative Essay on Nyaya Realism and Buddhist Nominalism.”

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PHIL 355: THESIS

Students may engage in thesis work for one or two semesters, and for four to eight credit hours in any one semester. Normally, thesis work will be conducted and evaluated according to the following guidelines:

1. The semester before they start their theses, interested students should identify a Simmons philosophy professor who agrees to serve as their thesis advisor. Prior to registering for thesis work, students must provide that professor with a proposal containing the following information:

- A brief (1-2 page) background description of the topic area
- A clear, concise statement of the question to be addressed by the thesis
- A preliminary annotated bibliography. Annotations should describe the relevance of each citation to the thesis question
- A preliminary outline of the thesis topics
- A preliminary timeline for the project, noting deadlines for completion of research and writing. The timeline should be coordinated with the outline.

Following approval of the proposal by the thesis advisor, students may register by consent for the agreed upon number of credit hours of thesis work.

2. During the semester, students will meet regularly – normally bi-weekly – for discussion with their thesis advisor.

3. The thesis will be submitted in triplicate to the Philosophy Department on a date to be arranged jointly by the student and their thesis advisor. Theses are normally in the range of 40 - 60 pages.

4. Each thesis student will give a presentation and defense of their thesis to the Philosophy Department faculty on a mutually agreed upon day and time.

5. The thesis, its defense, and its presentation to faculty will be evaluated by the thesis advisor according to the following criteria:

- Clarity
- Focus
- Quality of critical, philosophical reflections on issues
- Overall performance of independent work.

Examples of theses in philosophy:

- “Understanding Intersectionality Through the Framework of Fuzzy Logic. A Postmodern Approach.”
- “The Abject and Terrorism.”
- “Northern Irish Literature, Violence, and The Ethics of Ambiguity.”
- “Between Chatter and Silence: A Comparison of Earlier and Later Heidegger’s Conception of Language.”

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HUM 370: HUMANITIES INTERNSHIP

HUM 370 serves as the internship course for students majoring in English, History, Modern Languages, Philosophy, and Women's & Gender Studies. The goal of the course is to enable students to apply the knowledge and skills of their majors to an internship while they develop the professional competencies that can lead to a successful career. The course is taught by an Ifill professor in coordination with the professional staff of the Simmons Career Education Center. Normally, students identify the internship that interests them and contacts the Ifill professor in charge of HUM 370 for the semester to prepare for enrollment in the course.

For help in finding internships related to philosophy, visit the Simmons Library Guide site:

<https://simmons.libguides.com/c.php?g=372006&p=2513708>

Examples of internships in philosophy:

- Unitarian Universalist Service Committee
- Boston Mobilization
- Center for New Words
- Brigham and Women's Hospital Ethics Committee