

# Philosophy

The Graduate Program in Philosophy at Berkeley offers a first-rate faculty, a stimulating and friendly community of graduate students, and the resources of one of the world's finest research universities.

Two features distinguish our profile from that of other leading graduate programs in philosophy:

1. The department has strengths in all the main areas of philosophy, including epistemology, philosophy of mind, metaphysics, philosophy of language, logic, ethics, the history of philosophy, and philosophy of science. We aim at diversity and breadth of coverage, rather than concentration on one or two areas of philosophical activity.
2. Second, the program at Berkeley is structured to give students a high degree of independence in tailoring their studies to their interests.

Those wishing to pursue graduate studies in philosophy can choose among several routes to a PhD at Berkeley:

1. The Philosophy Department's graduate program leads to a PhD in Philosophy.
2. Students with strong interests in Ancient Philosophy may want to take advantage of a special ancient concentration within the philosophy program.
3. Students with strong interests in the History and Philosophy of Science may want to explore the special HPS concentration within the philosophy program.
4. Students with strong interests in formal logic may pursue them in the Philosophy Department, in the Mathematics Department (<http://guide.berkeley.edu/archive/2020-21/graduate/degree-programs/mathematics/>), or in Berkeley's interdisciplinary program leading to a PhD in Logic and the Methodology of Science (<http://guide.berkeley.edu/archive/2020-21/graduate/degree-programs/logic-methodology-science/>), to which the Philosophy Department has close ties.

## Admission to the University

### Minimum Requirements for Admission

The following minimum requirements apply to all graduate programs and will be verified by the Graduate Division:

1. A bachelor's degree or recognized equivalent from an accredited institution;
2. A grade point average of B or better (3.0);
3. If the applicant comes from a country or political entity (e.g., Quebec) where English is not the official language, adequate proficiency in English to do graduate work, as evidenced by a TOEFL score of at least 90 on the iBT test, 570 on the paper-and-pencil test, or an IELTS Band score of at least 7 on a 9-point scale (note that individual programs may set higher levels for any of these); and
4. Sufficient undergraduate training to do graduate work in the given field.

### Applicants Who Already Hold a Graduate Degree

The Graduate Council views academic degrees not as vocational training certificates, but as evidence of broad training in research methods, independent study, and articulation of learning. Therefore, applicants who already have academic graduate degrees should be able to pursue new

subject matter at an advanced level without the need to enroll in a related or similar graduate program.

Programs may consider students for an additional academic master's or professional master's degree only if the additional degree is in a distinctly different field.

Applicants admitted to a doctoral program that requires a master's degree to be earned at Berkeley as a prerequisite (even though the applicant already has a master's degree from another institution in the same or a closely allied field of study) will be permitted to undertake the second master's degree, despite the overlap in field.

The Graduate Division will admit students for a second doctoral degree only if they meet the following guidelines:

1. Applicants with doctoral degrees may be admitted for an additional doctoral degree only if that degree program is in a general area of knowledge distinctly different from the field in which they earned their original degree. For example, a physics PhD could be admitted to a doctoral degree program in music or history; however, a student with a doctoral degree in mathematics would not be permitted to add a PhD in statistics.
2. Applicants who hold the PhD degree may be admitted to a professional doctorate or professional master's degree program if there is no duplication of training involved.

Applicants may apply only to one single degree program or one concurrent degree program per admission cycle.

## Required Documents for Applications

1. **Transcripts:** Applicants may upload *unofficial* transcripts with your application for the departmental initial review. *If the applicant is admitted*, then *official* transcripts of all college-level work will be required. Official transcripts must be in sealed envelopes as issued by the school(s) attended. If you have attended Berkeley, upload your unofficial transcript with your application for the departmental initial review. *If you are admitted*, an official transcript with evidence of degree conferral *will not* be required.
2. **Letters of recommendation:** Applicants may request online letters of recommendation through the online application system. Hard copies of recommendation letters must be sent directly to the program, not the Graduate Division.
3. **Evidence of English language proficiency:** All applicants from countries or political entities in which the official language is not English are required to submit official evidence of English language proficiency. This applies to applicants from Bangladesh, Burma, Nepal, India, Pakistan, Latin America, the Middle East, the People's Republic of China, Taiwan, Japan, Korea, Southeast Asia, most European countries, and Quebec (Canada). However, applicants who, at the time of application, have already completed at least one year of full-time academic course work with grades of B or better at a US university may submit an official transcript from the US university to fulfill this requirement. The following courses will not fulfill this requirement:
  - courses in English as a Second Language,
  - courses conducted in a language other than English,
  - courses that will be completed after the application is submitted, and
  - courses of a non-academic nature.

If applicants have previously been denied admission to Berkeley on the basis of their English language proficiency, they must submit new test scores that meet the current minimum from one of the standardized tests. Official TOEFL score reports must be sent directly from Educational Test Services (ETS). The institution code for Berkeley is 4833. Official IELTS score reports must be mailed directly to our office from the British Council. TOEFL and IELTS score reports are only valid for two years.

## Where to Apply

Visit the Berkeley Graduate Division application page (<http://grad.berkeley.edu/admissions/apply/>).

## Admission to the Program

In reviewing applications, the admissions and fellowships committee looks for evidence that applicants have the training and intellectual characteristics they will need for success in a rigorous graduate program such as ours. Candidates for admission are not required to have majored in philosophy, but applicants who have not taken a considerable number of courses in the subject are unlikely to be admitted. The intellectual characteristics that the committee looks for include the ability to write clear and well organized argumentative prose, the ability to discriminate between promising and unpromising lines of inquiry, the capacity to develop independent arguments and insights, and a nuanced appreciation of philosophical problems and issues.

A complete online application would contain the following:

1. Transcripts for all your undergraduate and graduate study
2. Three letters of recommendation from those familiar with your philosophical work
3. A representative sample of your best written work in philosophy (no more than 20 pages)
4. Your results from the Graduate Record Examination (The Advanced Philosophy test is not required)
5. A personal history statement
6. A statement of purpose (applicants who wish to be considered for the concentration in Ancient Philosophy (<https://philosophy.berkeley.edu/graduate/ancient/>) or History and Philosophy of Science (<https://philosophy.berkeley.edu/graduate/hps/>) should indicate this in their statement of purpose)

## Normative Time to Advancement

Total normative time to advancement is two to three years.

During the first stage of their graduate education, students meet the department's course distribution requirements and prepare to take the qualifying examination. This examination assesses the student's strengths in areas chosen by the student in consultation with supervising faculty.

## Total Normative Time

Total normative time is six years.

## Curriculum

### Philosophy General Concentration

During the first stage of the program, students are expected to acquire a broad background in philosophy and develop their philosophical abilities by fulfilling the following requirements:

### First Year Seminar

PHILOS 200 First-Year Graduate Seminar [3]

### Logic Requirement

There are two components. Both parts of the requirement may be fulfilled by successful completion of equivalent logic courses before arriving at Berkeley. Whether taken at Berkeley or elsewhere, courses taken in fulfillment of the logic requirement do not count towards the eight-course distribution requirement.

1. Completion of Philosophy 12A or its equivalent, with a grade of B+ or better.

PHILOS 12A Introduction to Logic [4]

2. Completion of 140A or 140B with a grade of B+ or better. Courses with a comparable formal component including, in most cases, courses in the 140 series may satisfy this requirement, with the approval of the graduate adviser.

PHILOS 140A Intermediate Logic [4]  
or PHILOS 1Intermediate Logic

### Course Distribution Requirement

Before taking the qualifying exam the student must complete eight courses at the 100- or 200-level completed with a grade of A- or higher. At least four of the eight courses must be graduate seminars. The eight courses must satisfy the following distribution requirements:

Two of the eight courses must be in the history of philosophy: one in ancient philosophy and one in modern philosophy. The courses may be on any individual philosopher or group of philosophers drawn from the following lists:

- Ancient: Plato, Aristotle
- Modern: Descartes, Hobbes, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, Spinoza, Leibniz, and Kant

Four of the eight courses must be in the following areas, with at least one course from each area:

- Area 1: Philosophical logic, philosophy of language, philosophy of science, and philosophy of mathematics
- Area 2: Metaphysics, epistemology, philosophy of mind, and philosophy of action
- Area 3: Ethics, political, social and legal philosophy, and aesthetics

A seventh course may be any philosophy course in the 100 or 200 series except for 100, 195-199, 200, 250, 251 and 299.

An eighth course may be either any philosophy course as specified above or a course from another department that has been approved by the graduate adviser.

In exceptional cases, students may, at the discretion of the graduate adviser, meet one distribution requirement by presenting work done as a graduate student elsewhere: typically a graduate thesis or work done in a graduate-level course. Meeting a distribution requirement in this way will not count as meeting any part of the four-seminar requirement.

### Ancient Philosophy, Joint Program

This program is offered jointly by the Departments of Philosophy and Classics (<http://classics.berkeley.edu/>). It is administered by an interdepartmental committee. It is designed to produce scholars with a broad range of expertise both in philosophy and classics, with the intention of bridging the gap between the two subjects. It provides the

training and specialist knowledge required for undertaking research in ancient philosophy, and at the same time equips students for scholarly work and teaching in either classics or philosophy. Those who complete the program will be fully qualified to work as a member of either one of these disciplines while having developed a broad competence in the other.

Students apply for admission to either of the participating departments in accordance with their qualifications and interests. They are treated accordingly as graduate students fully in either the Department of Classics or the Department of Philosophy. Graduate students in Philosophy are offered the opportunity to develop their knowledge of both classical languages, and to make a thorough study of Graeco-Roman culture. Students and faculty from the two departments meet each other frequently and regularly in seminars, reading groups and colloquia. Seminar offerings from the two departments are designed to give students, during their years in the program, the opportunity to study a wide variety of topics, including the Presocratics, Plato, Aristotle, Hellenistic philosophy and the philosophy of later antiquity.

Those entering the program as Philosophy students will take the broad range of philosophy courses and seminars standardly required for the PhD in Philosophy. This standard set of requirements is, however, modified in the following ways:

- At least three out of the eight required courses should be in ancient philosophy.
- Students should take at least one seminar in the Classics Department.
- Students in the program will have until the end of the fourth year to pass the PhD qualifying examination.
- Two of the three topics for the student's qualifying exam will concern topics in ancient philosophy.
- Students must demonstrate, before advancement to candidacy, proficiency in Greek and Latin. This can be done in either of two ways: (i) by passing a sight translation exam; (ii) by passing (with a grade of A- or A) an upper division undergraduate translation class taught in the Classics Department.
- In addition, students must pass a reading examination in either German, French, or Italian.
- Students should declare their interest in joining the program by the beginning of their fifth semester at Berkeley.

To enter the joint program as a graduate student in Philosophy, prospective graduates should apply to the PhD program in Philosophy and mention their interest in the joint program as part of their statement of purpose. For information about entering the joint program as a graduate student in Classics, please visit the Department of Classics website (<http://classics.berkeley.edu/>).

## Foreign Language

Before taking the qualifying examination the candidate must pass a departmental examination in French, German, Greek, or Latin requiring the translation of 600 words in two hours with the use of a dictionary. An examination in another language may be approved by the graduate adviser if it contains significant philosophical literature related to the student's dissertation work.

## Qualifying Exams

Students should aim to take the qualifying examination by the end of the fifth enrolled semester, and they must take it by the end of the sixth enrolled semester.

In order to take the examination, the student must have fulfilled the department's course requirements and must have passed the language requirement.

## Prospectus Stage

In the semester after passing the qualifying examination the student must take two PHILOS 299 individual study courses of 4 units each with the two inside members of his or her dissertation committee for the purpose of preparing a dissertation prospectus.

The dissertation prospectus should be submitted both to the inside members of the committee and to the graduate advisor by the end of that semester. It should consist of about fifteen pages and outline plans for the dissertation. Alternatively, the prospectus may consist of parts of a possible chapter of the dissertation together with a short sketch of the dissertation project.

Following submission of the prospectus, the candidate will meet with the inside members of the committee for an informal discussion of the candidate's proposed research.

## Additional Requirements

### Teaching

Each student pursuing the PhD degree is expected to serve as a graduate student instructor for at least two semesters. In the first semester as a GSI, students must complete either PHILOS 375 (Graduate Student Instructor Teaching Seminar) or a 300-level course with another department. Other requirements for first-year GSIs are available on the GSI Teaching & Resource Center (<http://gsi.berkeley.edu/>).

### Dissertation Seminar

Students in the first two years after declaring candidacy must register for PHILOS 295 (Dissertation Seminar) for at least one semester each year, during which they must present a piece of work in progress, and are expected to attend the seminar all year. The seminar meets every other week. All students working on dissertations are encouraged to attend the seminar.

## Philosophy

Expand all course descriptions [+] Collapse all course descriptions [-]

## PHILOS 200 First-Year Graduate Seminar 3 Units

Terms offered: Fall 2021, Fall 2020, Fall 2019

A combination seminar and tutorial, required of and limited to first year graduate students in philosophy.

First-Year Graduate Seminar: Read More [+]

### Rules & Requirements

**Repeat rules:** Course may be repeated for credit without restriction.

### Hours & Format

**Fall and/or spring:** 15 weeks - 2 hours of seminar per week

### Additional Details

**Subject/Course Level:** Philosophy/Graduate

**Grading:** Offered for satisfactory/unsatisfactory grade only.

First-Year Graduate Seminar: Read Less [-]

## PHILOS 290 Seminar 3 Units

Terms offered: Fall 2021, Spring 2021, Fall 2020

Advanced study in various fields of philosophy. Topics will vary from semester to semester.

Seminar: Read More [+]

### Rules & Requirements

**Repeat rules:** Course may be repeated for credit without restriction.

### Hours & Format

**Fall and/or spring:** 15 weeks - 2 hours of seminar per week

### Additional Details

**Subject/Course Level:** Philosophy/Graduate

**Grading:** Letter grade.

Seminar: Read Less [-]

## PHILOS 295 Dissertation Seminar 2 Units

Terms offered: Fall 2021, Spring 2021, Fall 2020

Presentations by graduate students of dissertation research in progress.

Dissertation Seminar: Read More [+]

### Rules & Requirements

**Prerequisites:** Restricted to graduate students who are writing dissertations in philosophy

**Repeat rules:** Course may be repeated for credit without restriction.

### Hours & Format

**Fall and/or spring:** 15 weeks - 2 hours of seminar per week

### Additional Details

**Subject/Course Level:** Philosophy/Graduate

**Grading:** Offered for satisfactory/unsatisfactory grade only.

**Formerly known as:** 109

Dissertation Seminar: Read Less [-]

## PHILOS 299 Independent Study 1 - 12 Units

Terms offered: Spring 2021, Spring 2016, Spring 2015

Independent Study: Read More [+]

### Rules & Requirements

**Prerequisites:** Consent of instructor

**Repeat rules:** Course may be repeated for credit without restriction.

### Hours & Format

**Fall and/or spring:** 15 weeks - 1-12 hours of independent study per week

### Summer:

3 weeks - 5-60 hours of independent study per week

6 weeks - 2.5-30 hours of independent study per week

8 weeks - 2-23 hours of independent study per week

### Additional Details

**Subject/Course Level:** Philosophy/Graduate

**Grading:** Offered for satisfactory/unsatisfactory grade only.

Independent Study: Read Less [-]

## PHILOS 301 Professional Preparation: The Teaching of Philosophy 2 - 6 Units

Terms offered: Spring 2021, Fall 2014, Spring 2014

Students will work as teachers under the guidance of a faculty member. They will attend lectures, guide classroom discussion, and participate in a workshop in teaching methods.

Professional Preparation: The Teaching of Philosophy: Read More [+]

### Rules & Requirements

**Prerequisites:** Appointment as a graduate student instructor

**Credit Restrictions:** Course does not satisfy unit or residence requirements for doctoral degree.

**Repeat rules:** Course may be repeated for credit without restriction.

### Hours & Format

**Fall and/or spring:** 15 weeks - 0-0 hours of independent study per week

### Additional Details

**Subject/Course Level:** Philosophy/Professional course for teachers or prospective teachers

**Grading:** Offered for satisfactory/unsatisfactory grade only.

Professional Preparation: The Teaching of Philosophy: Read Less [-]

## PHILOS 375 Graduate Student Instructor Teaching Seminar 3 Units

Terms offered: Fall 2021, Fall 2020, Fall 2019

A hands-on training seminar for new philosophy GSIs that addresses both practical and theoretical issues.

Graduate Student Instructor Teaching Seminar: Read More [\[+\]](#)

### Rules & Requirements

**Prerequisites:** Admission to Ph.D. program

### Hours & Format

**Fall and/or spring:** 15 weeks - 3 hours of seminar per week

### Additional Details

**Subject/Course Level:** Philosophy/Professional course for teachers or prospective teachers

**Grading:** Offered for satisfactory/unsatisfactory grade only.

**Formerly known as:** Philosophy 302

Graduate Student Instructor Teaching Seminar: Read Less [\[-\]](#)