

# 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 (<https://guide.berkeley.edu/archive/2024-25/graduate/degree-programs/mathematics/>), or in Berkeley's interdisciplinary program leading to a PhD in Logic and the Methodology of Science (<https://guide.berkeley.edu/archive/2024-25/graduate/degree-programs/logic-methodology-science/>), to which the Philosophy Department has close ties.

## Admission to the University

### Applying for Graduate Admission

Thank you for considering UC Berkeley for graduate study! UC Berkeley offers more than 120 graduate programs representing the breadth and depth of interdisciplinary scholarship. The Graduate Division hosts a complete list (<https://grad.berkeley.edu/admissions/choosing-your-program/list/>) of graduate academic programs, departments, degrees offered, and application deadlines can be found on the Graduate Division website.

Prospective students must submit an online application to be considered for admission, in addition to any supplemental materials specific to the program for which they are applying. The online application and steps to take to apply can be found on the Graduate Division website (<https://grad.berkeley.edu/admissions/steps-to-apply/>).

### Admission Requirements

The minimum graduate admission requirements are:

1. A bachelor's degree or recognized equivalent from an accredited institution;

2. A satisfactory scholastic average, usually a minimum grade-point average (GPA) of 3.0 (B) on a 4.0 scale; and
3. Enough undergraduate training to do graduate work in your chosen field.

For a list of requirements to complete your graduate application, please see the Graduate Division's Admissions Requirements page (<https://grad.berkeley.edu/admissions/steps-to-apply/requirements/>). It is also important to check with the program or department of interest, as they may have additional requirements specific to their program of study and degree. Department contact information can be found here (<https://guide.berkeley.edu/archive/2024-25/graduate/degree-programs/>).

### 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 a foreign language requiring the translation of 300 words in 90 minutes with the use of a dictionary. The language can be any foreign language containing a significant philosophical

literature, provided that a faculty member qualified to administer the examination is available. An examination in an approved language may be waived upon approval of the Graduate Division if native ability in the language can be demonstrated through secondary school or university transcripts. A course sequence of four semesters (or six quarters), whether taken at UC or elsewhere, will be accepted in lieu of the language examination if the sequence was completed within four years of admission to Berkeley and the student earned an average grade of C or better.

## 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

### PHILOS 200 First-Year Graduate Seminar 3 Units

Terms offered: Fall 2025, Fall 2024, Fall 2023

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

#### 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.

### PHILOS 290 Seminar 3 Units

Terms offered: Fall 2025, Spring 2025, Fall 2024

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

#### 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.

### PHILOS 295 Dissertation Seminar 2 Units

Terms offered: Fall 2025, Spring 2025, Fall 2024

Presentations by graduate students of dissertation research in progress.

#### 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

## **PHILOS 299 Independent Study 1 - 12 Units**

Terms offered: Fall 2025, Spring 2025, Fall 2024

### **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.

## **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.

### **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.

## **PHILOS 375 Graduate Student Instructor Teaching Seminar 3 Units**

Terms offered: Fall 2025, Fall 2024, Fall 2023

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

### **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