

THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
Graduate Course Outline 2016-17

Philosophy 9900B: Prospectus Course

Winter 2017	Instructor: Prof. Carolyn McLeod
Class time: Th 11:30-2:30	Office: STVH 4133
Classroom: STVH 1145	Office hours: M 3-4, Th 2:30-3:30
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Course description:

The primary aim of the Prospectus Course is to assist PhD students in philosophy in the successful completion of the prospectus for their dissertation. To this end, the course will feature analyses of model prospectuses, discussion of research methods and writing strategies, as well as the presentation and peer-led discussion of drafts of the prospectus (or parts of it). It will be incumbent on presenters to make their materials accessible to a broad philosophical audience, and on each audience member to comment constructively on the work of their peers. It is expected that students will have met regularly with their supervisors prior to taking the course and will continue to meet regularly with them while taking the course. They should begin the course in a position where they could produce an initial draft of the prospectus by about a third of the way through the term.

In addition to its primary aim, the Prospectus course will serve to promote the professional development of students, and prepare them for the academic and non-academic job markets. Students will hear presentations on topics such as academic and non-academic CVs, job interviews, publication, and the translation of philosophical skills for non-academic employment.

Assignments and Activities:

Prospectus: the main assignment for the course is to produce a prospectus that should pass the prospectus defence. A prospectus gives a general outline of the student's dissertation project and summaries of individual chapters (in a maximum of 4500 words, including notes, but excluding a bibliography). Students will work on the chapter summaries one by one, write an introduction to the prospectus, and then merge all of this material together into a defensible prospectus.

Short assignments:

- 1) Reflection papers: each chapter summary in a prospectus should contain the material included in a "reflection paper," which is an assignment that regularly appears on Prof.

McLeod's course syllabi. In a reflection paper, a student identifies a difficult question raised in or by required readings for the course and then explains why the question is difficult.¹ Students in the Prospectus Course will begin their work on their prospectus by producing reflection papers for each of the proposed chapters of their dissertation. These papers will resemble the reflection papers that Prof. McLeod regularly assigns in that they will raise a difficult question (i.e., about how to solve a philosophical problem or interpret a philosophical text) and explain how the question is difficult (and why philosophers have therefore disagreed in how to answer it). But they will differ from a regular reflection paper in that they will include at the end a brief description of what stance the student will take on his/her difficult question and why. The maximum length for these papers is two pages (double-spaced, 12-point font, 1-inch margins), not including a bibliography.

For the classes in which they have a reflection paper due, students will need to upload their paper to Dropbox on our OWL site by midnight the day before the class. They will then work in class with a partner or a group to improve their paper, annotating it with suggestions made by their peers. Finally, they will upload the annotated version to Dropbox for Prof. McLeod to review.

- 2) Introduction to the prospectus: students will write an introduction to their prospectus before completing a full draft of it, and will follow the same procedure outlined above (i.e., for reflection papers) for submitting this assignment, subjecting it to peer review, etc.

Presentations: students will do a short presentation of their prospectus in class near the end of the course and a longer presentation at a conference to which all members of the department will be invited.

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

Tentative Schedule:

<i>Date</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Assignment/Activity</i>
January 12	Introduction to the Course	An analysis of sample

¹ Here is the actual assignment: "Each reflection paper must answer the following, **What, to your mind, is the *most difficult question* raised in or by the required readings assigned for the class on which the paper is due—and why is this question difficult?**

By "difficult," I mean a question for which there is no easy answer. If, after stating the question, you can provide a snappy answer, then the question is not a good one. It is not difficult.

Don't focus on how someone ought to answer the question you raise. Instead, explain why the question is difficult: that is, why reasonable people could easily disagree about the answer. This assignment requires that you take a stance of curiosity rather than criticism.

	and to the prospectus	prospectuses (available on OWL under Resources)
January 19	The academic job market: CVs, interviews, postdocs	Feedback on research statements by department members currently on the market
January 26	Prospectus	Reflection paper
February 2	Prospectus	Reflection paper
February 9	The academic job market: conference presentations, publications, teaching dossier	Discussion with an expert panel
February 16	Prospectus	Reflection paper
Reading Week		
March 2	Prospectus	Reflection paper
March 9	Prospectus	The Introduction
March 16	The non-academic job market	Discussion with an expert panel
March 23	Prospectus	*Full draft of the prospectus due
March 30	Prospectus	Class mini-presentations of the prospectus
April 6	Conference	Conference presentation; *final version of the prospectus due