

Virginia Tech



Department of Philosophy

Graduate Student Handbook

2016-2017





Source: Google Images

University Policy On Harassment, Discrimination, and Sexual Assault

2.1 University Statement on Non-Discrimination

Virginia Tech does not tolerate discrimination or harassment on the basis of age, color, disability, gender (including pregnancy), gender identity, gender expression, genetic information, national origin, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, veteran status, or any other basis protected by law. Such behavior is inconsistent with the university's commitment to excellence and to a community in which mutual respect is a core value as articulated in the Virginia Tech Principles of Community. The prohibition against discrimination and harassment applies to all levels and areas of university operations and programs, to undergraduate and graduate students, administrators, faculty, staff, volunteers, vendors and contractors.

3. Scope

The university's jurisdiction includes on-campus incidents and off-campus incidents that cause continuing effects on campus and includes complaints filed by students or employees, or others on their behalf, alleging discrimination or discriminatory harassment (including sexual harassment and sexual violence) carried out by faculty, staff, other students, or third parties. Virginia Tech is also committed to the free and vigorous discussion of ideas and issues. This policy does not allow curtailment or censorship of constitutionally protected expression, nor does it attempt to address behaviors that do not constitute discrimination or harassment. Offensive behavior that does not violate this policy should be addressed by the appropriate supervisor or administrator.

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General Information

Life at Virginia Tech

The Locale

Virginia Tech is located in Blacksburg, in the scenic New River Valley of southwestern Virginia. The area is well known for its natural beauty, healthy atmosphere, and year-round outdoor recreational opportunities. The town of Blacksburg is noted for its progressive planning and high quality of life. Blacksburg has three main shopping areas within easy reach of the campus. Regularly scheduled local bus service is available to Virginia Tech students as part of their student services fee. Non-students are charged a nominal fee. There are dedicated bicycle lanes, and many apartments allow for bicycle or walking commutes. In 2011, *Businessweek* named Blacksburg the “Best Place in the U.S. to Raise Kids.”

The Roanoke metropolitan area (pop. 288,000) is 40 miles east of the campus. Several airlines maintain scheduled flights from Roanoke Regional Airport (ROA) to most major US cities. United Airlines has direct flights to Washington, D.C. and New York. The Smart Way Bus offers Blacksburg-Roanoke bus service, including stops at Squires Student Center and the Roanoke Airport (www.smartwaybus.com). MegaBus has service from the Blacksburg area to Washington, D.C. HomeRide bus has weekend service to several area universities, including Virginia Beach (www.homeride.com/). Amtrak has trains from Lynchburg and Charlottesville to D.C. and to New York, and on to destinations in the US and Canada.

The University

Virginia Tech is a diversified university with an enrollment of about 30,000 students. Since its founding as a land grant university in 1872, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, now officially known as Virginia Tech, has become the state’s largest university and a major research institution.

The university offers 65 bachelor’s degree programs and over 145 master’s and doctoral programs, through its nine colleges and graduate school. Virginia Tech conducts more than \$200 million per year in externally funded research; in terms of research expenditures it is consistently ranked as one of the nation’s top fifteen universities (among those without medical schools). See www.vt.edu/about/.

The Library

Carol M. Newman Library has more than 2 million volumes, over 5 million microforms, subscribes to more than 22,000 journals and is designated as a repository for US government documents. The library is a member of the Association of Research Libraries and the Southeastern States Library Network.

Graduate students are provided access to the full range of computer facilities available on campus. Newman library offers a web-based version of *The Philosopher’s Index*, many other valuable databases including JSTOR, and electronic copies of journals. The publicly available website philpapers.org is a major source of research leads.

The Graduate Life Center

Conveniently located near the library, Squires Student Center, academic buildings, and downtown Blacksburg, the Graduate Life Center (GLC) provides space and venues that meet the unique needs of graduate and professional students. The GLC is the hub of graduate student life, providing students with opportunities to meet and collaborate with faculty and peers across disciplines, develop skills for academic and professional success, and maintain a healthy work-life balance. The programs and services offered in the Graduate Life Center encourage and facilitate active participation in the graduate community. For more information, please go to graduatelifecenter.vt.edu.

Recreation

Numerous recreational facilities are available to students at Virginia Tech, including those found in the War Memorial Gym and the McComas Center (swimming pool, racquetball and basketball courts, weight rooms, and much more), and the Squires Student Center (bowling, billiards, table tennis, video games). Equipment for outdoor recreation is available for rental through the University Union. The University Golf Course is also available for student use. The Appalachian Trail is within easy reach and the area has numerous biking opportunities. In addition, the university attracts a variety of nationally and internationally recognized cultural events each year and has an active performing arts program.

The Philosophy Department

The Department of Philosophy at Virginia Tech is internationally recognized for its research-oriented faculty. The department has nine regular faculty members (not counting visiting faculty) covering a broad range of fields, with particular strengths in ethics, the history and philosophy of science, and the history of modern philosophy through Kant. For more information about faculty, see our website.

Departmental Activities

The Philosophy Faculty sponsors a year-long lecture series and an annual Spring conference.

Some conference topics: "The Role of Experiment in Scientific Change" (1990); "To Honor Marjorie Grene - A Conference on the Occasion of her 80th Birthday" (1991); "Six Objectors to Descartes' Six Meditations" (1992); "Book VI of the *Nicomachean Ethics* and Aristotle's Theory of Intellectual Virtue" (1997); "Kant and the Sciences" (1998); "Wittgenstein and Biography" (1999); "Kuhn Reconsidered" (2000); "Objects and Artifacts: An Issue in Philosophy of Technology" (2001); "The Metaethics of Moral Status: Perspectives on the Nature and Source of Human Value" (2003); "Scientific Images: Learning From Pictures (2006); "The First Symposium on Philosophy, History, and Methodology of E.R.R.O.R. (Experimental Reasoning, Reliability, Objectivity & Rationality: Induction, Statistics, Modeling)" (2006); "Wittgenstein" (2007); "Meaning and Modern Empiricism" (2008); "Ethics in Democracy" (2010); "Ontology and Methodology" (2013).

Past speakers in the colloquium series include Patricia Kitcher, Jeffrey Bub, Don Howard, William G. Lycan, Clark Glymour, Cosma Shalizi, David Depew, Carol Gould, and Judith Lichtenberg.

Since 2005, our graduate students have held a Graduate Conference in the fall, featuring keynote addresses by Anjan Chakravartty, Christine Korsgaard, Helen Longino, Fred Dretske, Simon Blackburn, Geoffrey Sayre-McCord, Jesse Prinz, Michael Friedman and Graciela De Pierris. The keynote speakers for the 2015 conference, on the theme of "Contemporary Analytic Metaphysics," were Ted Sider and Joshua Spencer. The conference has attracted graduate student presenters from leading Ph.D. programs across the country and has become an important part of department life.

The MA Program

Procedures and Policies

Note -- some of the provisions described here are contained in the Department's Graduate Program Standards and Policies (Appendix).

The Masters of Arts Program in Philosophy at Virginia Tech welcomed its first students in the fall of 1993. The two-year MA program is designed to provide students with a solid grounding in Philosophy in the broadly analytic tradition. It is well-suited to students with a variety of interests: many transfer to a Ph.D. program in philosophy after obtaining the MA, but others go on to further studies in other areas of academia or in law, and others seek to broaden their liberal education through advanced study. See our website for information: <http://www.phil.vt.edu/ma/ma.html>.

What follows is a statement of procedures and policies in chronological order, from application to graduation. For credit and course requirements, see the next section.

Key Department Personnel 2016-17

GPD: Prof. Lydia Patton, Graduate Program Director (critique@vt.edu)

GC: Terry Zapata, Graduate Coordinator (tzapata@vt.edu)

Costs and Financial Aid

For tuition and fees, see www.bursar.vt.edu/tuition. Graduate assistantships are available on a competitive basis. For additional funding opportunities, please consult graduateschool.vt.edu/financial/funding_opp/index.html. The GPD is committed to helping unfunded (and funded) students to find additional and alternative sources of funding. The GPD runs a blog, <http://fundingengine.blogspot.com/>, dedicated to posting information about funding. Students are invited to join the blog, and to find and post opportunities there. If you have not received an invitation, please let the GPD know.

Application Procedures

The department maintains a page with complete information for applicants at <http://phil.vt.edu/ma/ma.html>. Please consult this page before submitting an application. Applicants are strongly advised to apply for admission and financial assistance by **February 1**, though later applications can be considered in special circumstances at the Department's discretion (see Appendix below).

Applications are done **entirely** online through the Graduate School's website: graduateschool.vt.edu/admissions/applying/index.html. **Do not** send anything directly to the department. There is no limit to the number of documents you can attach in the online application process.

Applicants **MUST** submit (online):

- 1) A completed application
- 2) An undergraduate transcript. Upload one copy of your scanned official transcript for each institution from which you have earned or will earn an undergraduate or graduate degree. Please do not mail your official transcripts to the Graduate School until you have received an offer of admission from Virginia Tech.
- 3) Three letters of recommendation. Complete the Letter of Recommendation section and click “yes” at the “Recommend on-line” column. This will trigger an automated email to the recommender detailing how to access the recommendation form.
- 4) A writing sample
- 5) GRE scores
- 6) Applicants from institutions where English is not the primary language must also submit an official record of scores on the Test of English as a Foreign Language.

Requests for further information should be directed to the GPD.

Applicants will normally be notified of the status of their application by April 1, and usually earlier. Unless an admitted applicant has accepted the offer by writing to the GPD and GC by **May 1**, the offer will be rescinded.

After Admission

1. Please go to: graduateschool.vt.edu/admitted and familiarize yourself with the relevant links on that page. These will help you with everything from getting your PID set up to finding housing to registering for classes, and they contain important information about such things as health insurance and campus life. As soon as you get your PID and e-mail address, inform the GPD and GC. If you have a GTA-ship, please inform the GPD and GC of your PID by **May 20**.

2. When you arrive on campus, please make sure you check in promptly with the GC. Be sure to give the GC your local address, phone number and VT email address. She will help with the necessary paperwork, give you your office keys, etc. The GPD will send information on office assignments in August.

3. You must enroll for classes *prior* to the Friday of the first week of classes, and should do so *before* classes start. New students must first obtain a VT “PID” (user id that lets you use all VT electronic facilities) from “Hokie Spa” on the section of the university’s main web page for current students (www.vt.edu). You’ll need your VT ID, which was in the letter of admission from the graduate school. (If you’ve lost this, or if you have questions, please contact the GC.) With a PID, you can register for courses from the Hokie Spa beginning August 4. Please enroll online as soon as possible (usually the first week or two of August) and alert the GPD right away if there are any problems with course overlaps or conflicts between your grad seminars and the class you are TA-ing for.

4. You can get course listings from the timetable of classes: (https://banweb.banner.vt.edu/ssb/prod/HZSKVTSC.P_DisRequest). Although the university catalog lists prerequisites for several of our graduate seminars, **these do not apply to you**. You may take any graduate seminar in Philosophy you like without concern over prerequisites (with the possible exception of sequenced courses, such as 5505 and 5506, the latter of which might presuppose the former).

*****IMPORTANT: All funded students are required to enroll for 12 hours each semester.** To satisfy this requirement, sign up for your regular classes (usually 3/semester for the first year) and then

add on Project and Report hours to bring the total up to 12. **If you're not enrolled for 12 hours, it will hold up your paychecks, so be sure to take care of this!**

For unfunded students: this requirement does not apply to you. Note, however, that 12 credit hours is defined as an 'FTE,' i.e., as the minimum load for one to be considered a full-time student for some legal purposes. There might be extrinsic reasons – having to do with student loans or other concerns – that would make it advisable for you to register for Project and Report to get your credit hours up to 12.

Note that Project and Report (and Research and Thesis) do not meet. Registering for Research and Thesis requires that you be engaged in a research project with a faculty member (including independent studies), or writing a thesis. The exception is the Pro-seminar (Brown Bag), discussed below.

It is not necessary to take three seminars each semester. Over the two year-year period, you need to take either 8 seminars/24 credit hours (for thesis students) or 9 seminars/27 credit hours (non-thesis), registering for 3 hours of Project and Report (if non-thesis) or 6 hours of Research and Thesis (if writing a thesis) for a total of 30 credits. As long as you ultimately get to 30 credits, meeting the above criteria (27 from classes for non-thesis, 24 for thesis), you'll be able to graduate.

5. Logic (5505): One of the requirements for the MA is Logic. You must satisfy this requirement by taking Phil 5505. **TAKE LOGIC in the Fall of your first term.**

INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS WITH AN ASSISTANTSHIP

6. Anyone with a GTA-ship **MUST** show the GC either (1) a passport OR (2) a driver's license AND a social security card before classes start, so she can get the necessary paperwork completed. The passport need not be current except for international students, but it needs to be an *original* and not a copy, as does the social security card if you use that instead. If you do not have the required documents, contact the GC for possible alternatives.

7. The Graduate School's GTA Training Workshop: This workshop is **MANDATORY** for first-year students with Graduate Teaching Assistantship funding. Phase I typically takes place the **Monday and Tuesday before** classes start. Phase II sessions are spread throughout the fall semester. Please go to http://graduateschool.vt.edu/academics/resources_teaching for more information. Note that the GC **must** enroll you in this workshop.

8. GTA's should consult with the professor teaching the course before making any travel plans for winter break, to determine when the final grading meeting will be held. Please do not make any travel plans without first checking with the professor for whom you are a GTA.

INFORMATION FOR UNFUNDED STUDENTS

9. Attending as an unfunded student at Virginia Tech requires assuming a certain financial burden. The tuition burden for the M.A. is approximately half of what it would cost an unfunded Bachelor's student to obtain a B.A. It is in your interest to plan your graduate studies carefully so you do not encounter financial difficulties. Make sure to calculate and to be aware of the total cost of each year's study, including tuition and fees, living expenses in Blacksburg, health insurance, and travel to visit family. Depending on your circumstances, there will surely be additional expenses to consider. Please consult with the GPD or with the Graduate School if you have questions about tuition, fees, health insurance, or other costs associated with attending Virginia Tech.

10. Please check with the GPD about funding sources. Also, please consult the frequently updated site graduateschool.vt.edu/financial/funding_opp/index.html. The GPD sponsors a blog for exchange of information about funding: <http://fundingengine.blogspot.com/>. There are several community colleges, colleges, and universities in the Blacksburg area. These may be sources of employment for summer

teaching, online teaching, tutoring, or part-time work during the term (depending on distance). Ask questions and get a signed contract before accepting any offer of employment. Also, please ask a faculty member for advice before taking on any employment during the term.

Fall Semester, 1st Year

Orientations and Department Meeting

1. During the first week of classes, the department holds a formal orientation meeting for all graduate students. At this meeting, students are given, among other things, general information about departmental requirements and procedures, plans of study, office procedures and privileges, advising, thesis preparation, and timetables for meeting course requirements and completion of the thesis. The students are also introduced to the faculty and to continuing graduate students at this meeting. Departmental policies concerning review of student progress and expectations for adequate progress are specified at the orientation meeting. Please read the faculty bios on the website and come prepared with a choice of provisional advisor.
2. The Graduate School holds its own orientation, usually the Friday before classes begin. Please go to graduateschool.vt.edu/orientation for information. You will meet the Dean of the Graduate School, learn about university services available to graduate students, learn about various activities, and meet current students.
3. On the Friday before classes begin, the Philosophy Department typically holds a meeting in the atrium of Major Williams Hall for ALL faculty and graduate students. The main purpose is to introduce students and faculty to each other. The GPD will distribute more information as the date approaches.

The Advisory Committee

4. Before completing 12 credits, in consultation with his or her advisor, each student should form an Advisory Committee. The Advisory Committee is normally composed of a total of **three** faculty (one Chair and two members), the majority of whom must come from the Department of Philosophy. The Advisory Committee is responsible for overseeing the student's Plan of Study and thesis. The Advisory Committee is officially formed when the student completes a provisional Plan of Study (see below). During the Spring term, Advisory Committees will normally be asked to forward to the Department Graduate Committee a statement of the student's progress (see Annual Evaluation below). Advisory Committees have final approval authority within the program for recommendations of granting the MA degree in Philosophy. Advisory Committees are responsible for forwarding these recommendations to the Graduate School.
5. Changes in a student's Advisory Committee will be granted only on approval of all proposed Committee members and the Department Head.

The Pro-seminar (Brown Bag)

The department runs a series of brown bag sessions each fall. At these sessions, faculty lead discussions on topics ranging from applying to PhD programs to publishing. You must attend these meetings, as part of satisfying the graduate school's Scholarly Ethics and Integrity Policy. A test will be administered. (See Requirements below). In the spring, the sessions serve as thesis defense sessions for 2nd year students. Attending these sessions is required for assignment of a passing grade in Research & Thesis.

Policy on Incompletes

Students should ask for incompletes only in extraordinary circumstances. All incomplete work for a course must be submitted by the final exam date of the student's first subsequent term of enrollment. Incompletes not removed during the designated time are changed to F.

Spring Semester, 1st Year

Thesis Proposal

All students planning to write a thesis must submit a proposal before submitting the Annual Evaluation, which is due by **April 15**. The proposal should include a description of the specific research to be undertaken. It should also include a review of the relevant literature and, in addition, explain the relationship of the current project to the work of other scholars in the same area. The proposal should include a bibliography, comprised of a list of articles and books, with complete citations, which are the basis for the research project.

The proposal should indicate clearly the significance of the study and the contribution it will make to the field, as well as a plan of work and a timetable, indicating the dates and times to be spent on the various aspects of the project. While this timetable will be only an estimate, it will give the student and the committee a measure of the manageability of the project within the time period designated. Thesis Proposals should not exceed seven (7) pages, where about one page is dedicated to a reading list, one page to a timeline, and three to five pages to a description of the plan of work.

Non-Thesis Option

If a student plans to take the non-thesis option, this should be declared by April 1 of the first year, when the evaluations are due; and it should be indicated on the evaluation. This option must be discussed with the student's Advisory Committee. Students planning to go on to doctoral study in Philosophy or in other humanities disciplines are discouraged from taking the Non-Thesis option.

Annual Evaluation of Graduate Students

1. In the Spring semester of each year, the Graduate Committee will meet in order to make general evaluations of all students. This evaluation will be based on a consideration of the student's grades, reports from the course professors, the annual evaluation by the student's Advisory Committee, reports on the student's work as a Teaching Assistant, a student self-assessment letter (see section 3 below), and any other material the student wishes to submit. The evaluation will be shared with the Department. The student may contact the GPD for any desired feedback. Note that the Graduate School requires that funded students maintain at least a 3.0 overall GPA.
2. Note that GTA contracts are valid for a year, and must be renewed for a second year. While we expect

that incoming GTAs will have two years of funding, this funding is contingent on a variety of factors, including (but not limited to) the student's performance as a Teaching Assistant and progress to the degree. Note that the Department endorses Virginia Tech's Principles of Community (www.vt.edu/diversity/principles-of-community.html) and expects its students to act in accordance with them, especially with reference to professional conduct as a GTA. The Department reserves the right to decline to enter into a new contract with a student whose performance is lacking in these or other relevant areas. In some cases, as determined by the Department, the contract may be canceled during the academic year.

3. By **April 1**, submit your Letter of Self-Evaluation, along with an extra copy of your Plan of Study, if you're a second year, **BOTH to your advisor and to the GPD**. Address your letter to the Graduate Committee, and discuss the following points:

- How do you presently stand with respect to meeting the MA program requirements (i.e., 30 hours total, GPA, logic requirement, core requirements--see handbook)? Do you have any concerns about satisfying all the requirements within the normative time frame? **List all course grades so far.**
- Have you formed your committee and filed the necessary forms? For first years, have you formed your committee? For second years, have you filed your Plan of Study with The GC?
- If thesis track, then for first years: have you submitted your thesis proposal to all of your advisors, and have they approved it? Does this proposal outline (1) the reading list for your thesis, and (2) a plan for writing a full draft by August 31 of your second year? For second years: did you submit all drafts of your short thesis by the deadlines? How much have you shown your advisor, how much have you completed, what is your thesis defense date? Any other relevant information?
- If you have a GTA-ship, how do you evaluate your experience so far—both your own performance and what you've gotten out of it that is relevant to your studies and professional goals?
- How do you feel you've been doing in your coursework and (if applicable) thesis work?
- Is there any feedback you'd like to share with the department, reflecting any concerns you might have relevant to your pursuit of the MA degree? (This could be anything, such as concerns or requests involving course offerings, departmental procedures, etc.)

The length of the letter is up to you. As long as you cover all of the above points, the letter may be quite short. In other cases, you may wish to write more to address issues that may be of concern to your advisor or the committee.

Appeals

1. Appeals of the outcome of the evaluation must be made in writing to the Department Head within two weeks of the written notification of the evaluation.

2. In the event of an appeal, the Department Head will appoint an *ad hoc* committee, composed of three faculty members. Members of the student's advisory committee and the GPD are not eligible to serve on this committee. The *ad hoc* committee will reevaluate the materials and make a recommendation

regarding the claims in the appeal to the Department within two weeks of being appointed. The Department Head will render the final evaluation of the student in these cases.

Thesis or Non-Thesis Track?

By the end of the second semester, you should decide which track to pursue. It may be in the best interest of some students to forego the writing of a thesis in order to pursue additional course work. In lieu of writing a thesis, students exercising the Non-thesis Option must successfully pass a set of written exams covering the core areas.

Declaration of Option

The Non-Thesis Option must be officially declared before the student completes 27 hours of course work at the graduate level in Philosophy. The decision to pursue the Non-Thesis Option must be made in consultation with the student's Advisor and Advisory Committee, and must be approved by the student's Advisor and Advisory Committee. It is suggested that this option be discussed with the Advisor by early Summer between the second and third semester, since this is when preparation for work on a Thesis usually begins.

A Master's degree candidate is allowed to change from the Thesis to the Non-Thesis option (or vice versa) once.

If the Non-Thesis option is exercised, Research and Thesis hours (5994) are *not* included in the Plan of Study. It is therefore imperative for students to ensure they have sufficient *regular* course hours to meet degree requirements if they think they may end up switching from a thesis to a non-thesis track.

Fall Semester, 2nd Year

1. All returning students must attend the Department Meeting, usually held the Friday before classes start, and the Graduate Orientation meeting, usually held during the first week of classes.

2. Thesis Students - Draft

A full draft of the thesis must be submitted by August 29 of the second year. Therefore, the summer between the first and second year should be set aside for writing the thesis, including independent research and background reading.

Spring Semester, 2nd Year

The Plan of Study

1. All Graduate Students must submit an approved (signed) *Plan of Study* (www.phil.vt.edu/ma/programofstudy.pdf) **by February 2** of the second year. Prior to the development of the Plan of Study, each student must select an advisory committee (see above). The Plan of Study must meet the minimum required for the designated degree, and must be approved by the student's advisor and advisory committee in consultation with the GPD, and, in addition, the department head, and the Graduate School.

1.2 Students are responsible for completing the Plan of Study form and for obtaining the required signatures, then submitting the form to the GC before the deadline noted above.

1.3 Any change in the Plan of Study must be approved by the student's department head, advisory committee in consultation with the GPD, and the Graduate School. Once a course on the Plan of Study is taken for a grade, it must remain on the Plan of Study.

Annual evaluation

See above, Spring Semester, 1st year.

How to Graduate

1. Go to http://graduateschool.vt.edu/academics/degree_completion and review all the material on that page—such as the **Table of Deadlines**, info about application for degree, final exam request form, ETD approval form and submission deadlines (for thesis students), etc. You should also print out the **Master's Check List** that is linked on that page just under the table of deadlines, and use this as you complete your degree this semester.

2. *All graduating students, thesis or non-thesis*, must submit either:

(i) **REQUEST TO ADMIT CANDIDATE TO FINAL EXAM**, or the

(ii) **REQUEST TO ADMIT CANDIDATE TO FINAL EXAM—NON-THESIS**

to the Graduate School at least **two weeks before** the defense or examination. Both forms are available at: <http://graduateschool.vt.edu/academics/forms>.

3. You should file the **APPLICATION FOR DEGREE** with the Graduate School by **March 1** (see instructions at the page linked above). Missing the **final June deadline for all work and paperwork** (including ETD for theses) will result in failure to graduate in this year's class, which would mean having to pay a lot of money out of pocket in order to enroll and graduate during the summer session.

4. **NON-THESIS STUDENTS**

Non-thesis students must take the **MA Comprehensive Final Exam**. The Comprehensive Exam will have 5 or 6 sections (depending on whether or not the logic section is waived). Each section corresponds to a course listed on your plan of study as satisfying the CORE requirement. A complete exam looks like this:

- (1) Ethics
- (2) History of Philosophy I
- (3) History of Philosophy II
- (4) One of: Metaphysics, Epistemology, or Philosophy of Science
- (5) Another of: Metaphysics, Epistemology, or Philosophy of Science
- (6) Logic

The logic portion of the exam, however, will be *waived* for those who (a) passed 5505 with a 'B' or higher, or (b) placed out of the 5505 requirement by getting a 'B' or higher in 3505 **and** 3506.

Each section will consist of *two questions* that are comparable to final exam questions in the relevant course you are counting toward meeting that core requirement. You will *pick one* question from each

section and write a substantial essay within a 90 minute time frame. Typically the exam is given over two days, with 3 sections one day and 2 sections the next (assuming logic is waived).

4.1 In order to construct each exam, the GPD solicits exam questions from the professors who taught the courses you are counting as your core courses on your Plan of Study. This means that the GPD needs to get from each of you, **by a date determined by the GPD**, a LIST that includes:

- The **core courses** (numbers and titles) from your Plan of Study, on which your final exam will be based;
- The **professor** who taught each course;
- The **semester** in which each course was taken. (This is important, since course content can vary considerably from year to year, and I don't want to guess!)
- Also, list the **members of your advisory committee** (= advisor/chair + two other members, *as listed on your plan of study*).

If you have taken more core area courses than you needed for the core—e.g., three history seminars—then you may choose on which of them you wish to be tested. But you may not substitute other courses for core requirements without explicit permission from the GPD to make the substitution. See the graduate handbook for which courses typically count or may be substituted. If you wish to make any substitutions then you should meet with me immediately to discuss it; if we have already discussed such a substitution, please remind me when you give me your list. **NOTE:** Once you submit this list, you *cannot* make any changes.

4.2 Examinations will be scheduled in consultation with the Graduate Program Director. They may take place at any time during the Spring term, but in no case will an exam be scheduled after May 1 (this includes during the summer term).

4.3 Grading: To pass an exam, a student must have a favorable vote from a majority of the Examining Committee, which *for departmental purposes* consists of the people who contributed questions. But note that it is the Advisory Committee that signs the card.

4.4 In case of a borderline result, the Department reserves the right to require follow-up work or to add an oral session to the examination. Results of the Exam will be made available in a timely manner. If a student fails the Exam, there must be a lapse of one full semester (a minimum of 15 weeks) before rescheduling the Examination. The student is allowed no more than two opportunities to pass the Exam.

5. **THESIS STUDENTS**

5.1 Thesis students need to make arrangements for their *thesis defense*, and should do that soon, including filing the **REQUEST TO BE ADMITTED TO FINAL EXAM** (at least two weeks prior to the defense). Note that your committee members will have to sign an agreement as part of that form *saying that the thesis is ready for defense*, which means that you will have had to give them a substantial draft of the thesis well *before* that time. Your thesis defense will serve as a session of that semester's Pro-Seminar (see above).

5.2 Please see the MA thesis check sheet referred to earlier (linked on the graduate school website given above) for other details. Pay special attention to the *ETD submission deadline*: missing that will also now require enrolling again during the summer to graduate. And don't forget about details such as the **ETD approval form**, and the **archiving fee**, which can hold up completion of degree.

5.3 It is the responsibility of the student to work with his or her Committee Chair and Advisory Committee to coordinate approval of a Thesis Proposal, communicate with the Committee members,

and to participate in arranging the date of the Thesis Defense. The first person to contact on all matters pertaining to the process should be the Chair of the student's Advisory Committee.

5.4 Each candidate for a master's degree must pass a final examination. This examination will take the form of an oral defense of the thesis. The date of the Thesis Defense will be determined by mutual agreement among the members of the student's Advisory Committee, the GPD, and the student. The scheduling of the Defense will be understood by the student and his or her Committee to indicate that the written draft is substantially complete and significant revisions are not anticipated. The purpose of the Defense is primarily to ensure the student's working familiarity with the details and implications of the thesis project. However, other topics may be explored in the Defense, within reason and at the discretion of the Committee Chair. The Student must be registered during the semester in which the final examination is administered.

5.5 The oral defense is scheduled through the Graduate School. The student is responsible for scheduling the oral defense and obtaining all necessary forms and permissions. Forms are available at the Graduate School's website: <http://graduateschool.vt.edu/academics/forms>. Requests to schedule a Defense should be received **at least two weeks** before the date requested. Students shall obtain the **examination card** from the Graduate School on the day of the Defense, and return the signed card to the Graduate School office as soon as possible after the Defense. To pass a Thesis Defense the student is allowed at most one dissenting vote from the members of the Committee.

5.6 A copy of the draft of the thesis must be given to all members of the Thesis Committee and a copy must be placed on deposit in the Department of Philosophy Office **at least two weeks** prior to the date of the Defense. It is the student's responsibility to make and distribute all copies of the thesis.

5.7 If a student fails the Defense, there must be a lapse of one full semester (a minimum of 15 weeks) before rescheduling the examination. The student is allowed no more than two opportunities to pass the Thesis Defense. The defense of the thesis will be open to the faculty, and faculty members are encouraged to attend and participate in such meetings.

5.8 Following a successful defense the student is responsible for seeing that one hard bound copy of the thesis is deposited in the Department of Philosophy library, and that a properly formatted electronic copy of the thesis (ETD) is submitted to the Graduate School, along with the accompanying forms and archiving fee.

Note on Forms

To ensure completeness of our records, students are required to submit originals of *all completed* forms by the appropriate deadlines (e.g., Selection of Advisory Committee Members, Plan of Study, etc.) to the GC. Forms are available online at www.phil.vt.edu/HTML/forms/gradforms.html. Students should retain a copy for their personal files, noting the date of submission. Letters of self-evaluation go directly to the GPD.

Requirements for the MA Degree

The MA degree requires a minimum of 30 semester hours of graduate-level coursework. Up to 6 of these hours can be from 4000-level courses in cases where the areas in question are not covered at the 5000 or 6000 level. Students may complete the degree by selecting either a *Thesis* or a *Non-thesis* track. Students who wish to pursue either option must petition to do so after consultation with their advisors. If the student chooses the thesis option, this choice should take place *by the end of the second semester of study*, so that a plan of independent research can be set up for the summer and a draft of the thesis can be presented to the student's advisor by early fall of the second year. Late petitions may be considered after the summer, at the faculty's discretion, but generally *not after the first month of the fall semester of the second year*.

Requirements for the two tracks:

- Thesis track students must include 6 hours of Research and Thesis toward their 30 hours, and may enroll in up to 12 hours of Research and Thesis (PHIL 5994), but *no more than 6 of those hours may be counted toward the 30 hour requirement*. There will thus be a minimum of 24 hours of regular coursework for the thesis track. At least 21 hours must come from graded classes; independent studies, Research and Thesis, and Project and Report are Pass/Fail and hence do not count as graded classes. The completed thesis will be evaluated by the student's advisory committee and must be successfully defended before that committee in an oral examination (see details below).
- Non-thesis track students may enroll in up to 12 hours of Project and Report (Phil 5904), but at least 27 of the 30 hours required for the degree must consist of ordinary coursework (including independent studies). At least 21 hours must come from graded classes; independent studies are Pass/Fail and hence do not count as graded classes. Students on this track must successfully pass a comprehensive examination consisting of exams in each of the core areas (see details below).

Note: The Graduate School requires that at least 20 of these hours represent graded coursework. There is a maximum of 9 credits total in courses taken pass-fail, including Project and Report and Research and Thesis, that may appear on the student's plan of study.

The P/F option for graduate students is available only for courses outside of the major, and may not be used for courses counting toward the 30 hour degree requirement (except for independent studies, research and thesis hours, project and report hours, etc., which are all P/F but can count up to the limits given above.)

Scholarly Ethics and Integrity Requirement

You must attend all brown bag sessions the fall of your first year, pass a test, and have the GPD sign the plan of study you submit in January of the 2nd year. (See fall of the 1st year, above.)

Logic Requirement

All students, whether thesis or non-thesis track, must either take 5505 (logic) in the fall of their first year. Those who take 5505 must either pass it with a 'B' or better, or sit in on the course (or relevant parts of it) the following fall and take the comprehensive exam in logic--preferably at the end of the fall semester. Note that thesis track students, who do not generally have to take comprehensive examinations, may thus have to take this one if they do not get a 'B' or higher in 5505.

Basic Requirements

Students must complete all course requirements listed below.

To be eligible to continue in the Master's Program, a student must maintain a minimum GPA of 3.0 (B average). Students whose GPA falls below this level may be placed on academic probation for one semester. After this semester, the student's GPA must remain 3.0 to remain in the program.

Curriculum

All students must complete the Core [see (a) below] and take a minimum of twelve hours from a list of approved courses [see (b) and (c) below]. In some cases, students will be permitted to take appropriate courses in cognate disciplines with the prior approval of the Graduate Program Director. Students should be aware that not all courses are offered every year.

a. The Core

(1) **LOGIC:** *PHIL 5505 (Symbolic Logic)*

(2) **METAPHYSICS, EPISTEMOLOGY, PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE:** Courses from **TWO** of the following three core areas:

(a) *Metaphysics: PHIL 5214G (Intermediate Metaphysics)*

(b) *Epistemology: PHIL 5224G (Intermediate Epistemology)*

(c) *Philosophy of Science : PHIL 5614G or PHIL 5604G (Phil. of Biology) or PHIL 5305/6 (Themes in Phil. of Science and Technology) or PHIL 6334 (Adv. Topics in Phil of Science)*

(3) **HISTORY: TWO** of the following courses:

PHIL 5204 (Topics in History of Phil.)

PHIL 5344 (History of Ethics)

*PHIL 6204 (Adv. Top. in Hist. of Phil.)**

PHIL 6314 (Hist. of the Phil. of Science)

(4) **VALUE THEORY: ONE** of the following courses:

PHIL 5324 (Metaethics)

PHIL 5334 (Normative Ethics)

PHIL 5344 (History of Ethics)

*PHIL 6324 (Adv. Top. in Ethics/Political Phil.)**

***NOTE:** The same "Topics" course number (e.g., Phil 6204) may be used twice to satisfy a core area requirement provided that the content is different for the two courses. Also, Phil 6014, and certain courses in STS and ASPECT may be substituted where appropriate, *subject to approval by the Graduate Program Director.*

b. *Additional Courses*

PHIL 5204G Intermediate Philosophy of Mind
PHIL 5214G Intermediate Metaphysics
PHIL 5224G Intermediate Epistemology
PHIL 5304G Intermediate Topics in Social and Political Philosophy
PHIL 5604G Intermediate Philosophy of Biology
PHIL 5614G Intermediate Philosophy of Science

(NOTE: the above 5000G-level courses are conjoint courses that overlap with corresponding 4000-level courses for class meetings.)

Philosophy 5204 (Topics in the History of Philosophy)
Philosophy 5305-6 (STS 5305-6) (Main Themes in the Philosophy of Modern Science and Technology)
Philosophy 5324 (Contemporary Metaethics)
Philosophy 5334 (Contemporary Normative Ethics)
Philosophy 5344 (History of Ethics)
Philosophy 5506 (Symbolic Logic)
Philosophy 5904 (Project and Report)
Philosophy 5974 (Independent Study)
Philosophy 5984 (Special Study)
Philosophy 5994 (Research and Thesis)
Philosophy 6014 (Special Topics in Philosophy)
Philosophy 6204 (Advanced Topics in the History of Philosophy)
Philosophy (ASPT) 6224 (Distributive Justice)
Philosophy 6314 (STS 6314) (History of the Philosophy of Science)
Philosophy 6324 (Advanced Topics in Ethics and Political Philosophy)
Philosophy 6334 (STS 6334) (Advanced Topics in Philosophy of Science)
Philosophy 6504 (Advanced Logic)
Philosophy 6514 (STS 6514) (Cognitive Studies of Science and Technology)

(ALL COURSES ARE SUBJECT TO DEPARTMENT REVISION.)

Equivalent Courses

1. Virginia Tech undergraduates admitted to the MA program in Philosophy who have already taken a required course and obtained a grade of B or better will not be required to repeat the course to satisfy the core requirement. The course may not, however, count toward the 30 hour requirement, i.e. it may not be 'double counted' for that purpose (except as allowed in cases involving the 5-year BA/MA program). Any student may petition to have courses taken at other institutions satisfy the requirement for a specific required course provided he or she presents adequate information on the course to the Graduate Committee. The Graduate School limits transfer credits to 20% of the total credits required; this means a maximum of six credits for the Philosophy Masters.
2. Specifically designated graduate courses in Metaphysics, Epistemology, or Philosophy of Science may be taken instead of Philosophy 4214, 4224, and 4614, respectively.

Substitutions

1. Substitutions for required courses may be granted only with the approval of the Student's Advisory Committee in consultation with the GPD and the Department Head.

In those cases where there is no Advisory Committee for the student, substitutions may be granted only with the approval of the Advisor, the GPD, and the Department Head. The GPD will coordinate appropriate consultations.

2. In order to make course substitutions, a student will usually fill out a Course Substitution Form. In cases where no substitution form is employed, the student should have some written indication of this substitution entered into his or her file.

3. Incoming students with a strong background in logic have the option of taking an exam, the passing of which will allow the requirement of Phil 5505 to be waived. Those wishing to pursue this option should arrange with the GPD to take the exam *prior to the first week of classes*.

Students who have taken *both* Phil 3505 and Phil 3506 at Virginia Tech, and passed with a 'B+' or better, are exempt from the 5505 requirement. Students who have taken 3505 but not 3506 may wish to consider taking the preliminary exam to waive the requirement for 5505.

Note: The Department wishes to encourage breadth in philosophical training. Course substitutions that significantly diminish achieving this objective are discouraged.

Ph.D. in the STS Program - Philosophy Track

Students who wish to continue their studies in philosophy at the Ph.D. level may consider the Graduate Program in Science and Technology Studies - Philosophy Ph.D. Track (STS/Philosophy). The STS program is a cooperative venture of the departments of Philosophy, History, Sociology, Political Science, and the Center for Science and Technology Studies. Students taking the STS/Philosophy Track complete basic courses in the STS core (see below) and then can devote the remainder of their studies to philosophical topics. Additional requirements include knowledge of a foreign language, preliminary examinations and a dissertation. For more information see the STS website.

Degree requirements for STS Philosophy Track Ph.D.

I. STS Core Requirement - 18 Credits

- 5305, 5306: Main Themes in the Philosophy of Modern Science and Technology
- Select four from:
 - STS 5105, 5106: Contemporary Issues in Science and Technology Studies
 - STS 5205, 5206: Main Themes in the History of Science and Technology
 - STS 5614: Introduction to Science and Technology Policy

II. STS Track Requirement - 6 Credits

Select 2 courses from the following list:

- STS/PHIL 6314: History of the Philosophy of Science
- STS/PHIL 6334: Advanced Topics in Philosophy of Science
- STS/PHIL 6514: Cognitive Studies of Science and Technology
- STS/PHIL 6634: Advanced Topics in Natural Philosophy
- Any STS course classified by instructor as a history course (may be taken more than once)

III. Other Track Requirements - 12 Credits

Select 4 courses in philosophy, including 1 course in history of philosophy, 1 course in ethics, and 1 course in either metaphysics or epistemology

IV. Elective Courses - None

V. Additional STS Requirement - 6 Credits

- One additional STS course not in II. (any field)
- STS capstone seminar

VI. Exit Requirement

- Logic (by exam or coursework)

VII. Research and Dissertation

- STS 7994

Office Procedures

Offices and department facilities

All graduate students will be provided with office and desk space (given availability) as well as access to an internet connection. Priority in the daily use of offices will be given to Teaching Assistants meeting with their undergraduate students. Otherwise, graduate students are welcome to use office space for study and other class related activities and are free to enter the building at any time (keys are provided).

- Offices and other department facilities (computer lab, copy room, and rooms 225 and 227) must be kept locked when not occupied. It is not allowed to prop any door open.
- **Only Philosophy department faculty and graduate students are authorized to have regular access to the computer lab, copy and mail rooms, and Rooms 225 and 227. Graduate students are required not to allow anyone else, including undergraduate students at Tech, access to these rooms or the keys to these rooms. Failure to observe this policy could result in loss of your own key privileges, or in prosecution by the University if theft of University property results.**

Copying and Printing

Students are given access to the department's copy machine as well as laser printers connected to computers in Graduate Student offices. **Students are asked to use laser printers sparingly and only for class or research material. Use the copier if possible, and please make double-sided copies.**

Mail and Fax

Students are assigned mailbox space and can send and receive professional mail, **but no personal mail**, through the department. There is a bin for outgoing mail in the main office. On-campus mail may be sent with the department's or individual's name and the four-digit on-campus mail code. On-campus envelopes are available in the main office. Philosophy's code is 0126. The department mailing address is:

Department of Philosophy
Virginia Tech
220 Stanger Street
229 Major Williams (MC0126)
Blacksburg, VA 24061-0126

The department fax number is 540-231-6367, and is for department business **only**. (Faxing official paperwork to an on-campus office, such as Student Services, is allowed.) Ask a staff person for instructions when first using the machine.

Computers and the Computer Lab

Graduate students have access to the facilities of the department Computer Lab. The computers in the graduate lab and graduate offices are shared. The computers are not backed up, and the department reserves the right to delete any file from these computers at any time. It is up to each student to provide a backup system for their own materials, usually a flash drive, a hard drive, or the cloud. Over the summer, older lab and office computers may be replaced and contents may not be transferred.

- **Please do not save your files on the lab computers; keep them on your backup drive. Files on lab computers may be deleted.**
- **Please keep these facilities clean!**

FAQ

Mail

- 1) How should we list our departmental address (for job applications, conferences, etc)?

Your Name
Department of Philosophy
Virginia Tech
220 Stanger Street
229 Major Williams (MC0126)
Blacksburg, VA 24061-0126

All UPS, FedEx, and other such deliveries are made directly to the main office (229). If the items fit in your box (a single desk copy, for example), the front desk will put them in your mail bin and, if they have time, will let you know by email. If the package is too large for the mailbin, they will let you know by email that you have a package in the office.

- 2) How do we send (work and school related) mail to other places, both on and off campus?
 - On-campus: use name, department name, and 4-digit mail code. You can use a regular envelope or inner-office mailing envelope.
 - Off-campus: Address mail as you would normally. Put in “outgoing mail” bin; the main office will attach paperwork for postage. The department provides this for professional business only, not personal mail. We do not keep stamps in the main office.

Trash Collection and Cleaning

- 3) How does the trash collection for our offices work? Once a week for most rooms; put any food items, including empty containers, in the restroom trashcans as those are emptied daily. Restrooms and classrooms are cleaned daily (facilities staff for the latter work at night by contract). Offices are supposed to be swept once a week, on Thursdays.
- 4) How does it work for the common rooms (Copy room, Mail room, Seminar room)? Housekeepers empty the trash and sweep (I think!) on a regular basis. They mop/wax the floors once or twice a year. The rest is up to us.
- 5) What places/things are we responsible for cleaning? Everything except as mentioned above.

Printing and Copying

- 6) What are we allowed to print and copy? Academic items (class, research). Please follow copyright laws.
- 7) Is there color printing/copying available for university activities (class, discussion sections, conference)? Yes, see Holly and Terry.
- 8) How does the paper work, i.e. which paper is for which machine? Read the signs (Leisa will explain).
- 9) Is there a fax machine available for official, school-related use? Yes, in main office. The number is (540) 231-6367.

Rooms, Keys and Library

- 10) What doors do my keys open?
- a. CLM1-2 Room 225, the seminar room
 - b. 85-2 Outside doors
 - c. 85-PG Pass key to mailroom, library, Rm. 227 (conf. rm.), copy/work room
- 11) What if I lose my key(s)? First, try to find them—see Holly, check with Squires, Police Dept., housekeepers, and department offices on the floor where you think you lost them. If you can't find them after looking in these places, see Holly for replacements.
- 12) Can I reserve the seminar/conference room, and if so, how?
- Yes. Sign in on dept. calendar, located on Holly's desk in the main office.
- All use of these rooms should be noted on the calendar.
- 13) What is the policy for borrowing from the Monad?
- Currently, it's on the honor system. (But this may change this year: we will keep you posted.) Return items to their proper space. A copy of the library inventory is available on the M.A. Scholar site.

Registration and Rosters

- 14) What if I need/want to take a graduate seminar but it is full? Contact the professor for permission. Once given, email Terry (tzapata@vt.edu) with the necessary info. CRN is needed!
- 15) How many hours do I need to be registered for?
- It depends. See above, Procedures and Policies.
- 16) As a GTA, how can I obtain class rosters for my recitation sections?
- Consult with the professor teaching the course and supervising the TA's. There is an older format provided as a paper copy that some like to use for attendance, especially during the first week. Holly can provide these, given adequate notice.

Appendix

Graduate Program Standards and Policies

Department of Philosophy

What follows is the Department's official Standards and Policies on file with the Graduate School. *This document is pursuant to Presidential Policy Memoranda 126/152 (April 27, 1992, April 3, 1995).*

I. Statement of Non-Discrimination

Virginia Tech does not discriminate against employees, students, or applicants on the basis of race, color, sex, sexual orientation, disability, age, veteran status, national origin, religion, or political affiliation.

The University is subject to titles VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act, the Vietnam Era Veteran Readjustment Assistance Act of 1974, Federal Executive Order 112146, Governor Allen's State Executive Order Number Two, and all other rules and regulations that are applicable. Anyone having questions concerning any of those regulations should contact the Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Office.

II. Faculty Roles and Duties

1. The GPD will serve as liaison with appropriate college deans. In his/her absence, the Department Head will serve in this capacity.

2. Advising. All faculty with Ph.D. degrees are eligible to serve on student advisory committees and thesis committees. The responsibilities of particular members of advisory and thesis committees will be negotiated among the members of the committees and the student, in consultation, when necessary, with the Department Head and GPD. All faculty with Ph.D. degrees are expected to make themselves available to serve on advisory and thesis committees, but the department makes every effort to ensure that no faculty member is over-burdened with advising duties. Any questions regarding the make-up or procedures of advisory committees should be referred to the Department Head (or, if necessary, to the GPD).

III. Admissions Procedures and Requirements

1. The department requires that all applicants to the Graduate Program supply the following materials:

- (i) Completed Graduate School application form;
- (ii) Undergraduate transcripts;
- (iii) Three letters of recommendation;
- (iv) Graduate Records Exam (GRE) scores; and
- (v) One writing sample.

Materials listed under ii-v may be waived at the department's discretion in special cases.

2. Applications requesting financial assistance in the form of a Graduate Assistantship should be received by February 1, though in special circumstances the Department will consider applications submitted at a later date. Applications for admission to the program without financial support may be considered at any time prior to the beginning of the semester in which the student wishes to enter the program.

The Department makes its decisions both about admission to the program and Graduate Assistantships based on undergraduate and other graduate performance, GRE scores, letters of recommendation, the student's answers to particular questions on the graduate application, and the quality of the writing sample. All faculty participate in decisions concerning admissions and Graduate Assistantships.

IV. Orientation

Prior to the beginning of the Fall semester, the Department holds a formal orientation meeting for all students. At this meeting, students are given, among other things, general information about the following: Departmental requirements and procedures, plans of study, office procedures and privileges, advising, thesis preparation, and timetables for meeting course requirements and completion of the thesis. The students are also introduced to the faculty and to continuing graduate students at this meeting.

Departmental policies concerning review of student progress and expectations for adequate progress are specified at the orientation meeting. A provisional advisor is assigned to each student at this meeting. Subsequently, the student may choose to change his or her provisional advisor.