

PHI 4997 – Capstone Research

Monsoon 2026, Mondays 17:00 to 18:30 AC03 317

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Office: AC03 316 | **Office Hours:** By appointment

About this Course: Topics and Goals

You're going to write your thesis and this seminar is going to help you.

Below are the **goals** for this course:

- Support your thesis writing through helping you develop the relevant research and writing skills and through giving you feedback on your in-progress writing
- Teach you how to conduct research in philosophy
- Develop your skills at writing and presenting philosophy, especially substantial research papers
- Develop your skills at receiving and providing feedback on work in progress writing

Course Content

Readings and other care on Google Classroom: <https://classroom.google.com/c/ODU0ODk0OTMzNDc5>.

Assignments

There are two main things due at the end of the semester (December 12): an **annotated bibliography** and a **prospectus**.

The **annotated bibliography** is a list of sources you have read for your thesis (articles, book chapters, books, etc.). Each entry on the list should have three things:

1. Complete and accurate bibliographic information for the source (any citation style okay; Chicago, MLA, Harvard, or APA recommended)
2. A short paragraph summarizing the source
3. (Optional, but recommended) A short paragraph summarizing how the source is likely to fit in to your thesis.

By the time this is due, a bibliography should typically have a minimum of 10-15 entries. For most theses, more is better.

The **prospectus** is an outline of the thesis. It describes in as much detail as possible what the thesis will contain. The prospectus should probably be around 500 to 1500 words long, although if possible, longer is typically good. The prospectus is not set in stone: the final thesis can look very different from the outline in the prospectus.

There will be **drafts** of the annotated bibliography and prospectus due November 9 (bibliography) and November 16 (prospectus).

We will have **reading assignments** in some weeks which cover some aspects of writing a thesis.

Periodically you will give an in-class **presentation** of about 10-15 minutes on the state of your thesis.

You will give two rounds of **peer feedback**, one on a draft of a peer's annotated bibliography and the other on a draft of a peer's prospectus.

Grading

Your thesis advisor assigns you a letter grade at the end of the semester reflecting the work you have done throughout the semester on your thesis.

This letter grade is then automatically modified by **missing** or **late assignments** and **absences**.

There are 8 assignments: annotated bibliography, prospectus, drafts of both, two presentations, and two peer feedback assignments. For every **two assignments late**, your grade is reduced by 1/3rd of a letter (e.g. from an A to an A-).

For each **missing assignment**, your grade is reduced by 1/3rd of a letter grade. Missing assignments are also late, too, so missing (e.g.) two assignments reduces the letter grade one full grade.

For each **absence** beyond 4, your grade is reduced by 1/3rd of a letter grade.

Office Hours and Email

My office hours are held in AC03 316 and happen via appointment, which you can schedule via the link on the course website or via email.

Disabilities

If you have disabilities which require some form of accommodation, contact me ahead of time.

Schedule

This is a six credit course, which means it will take up four and a half hours of class time each week.

However, we only meet once each week. This means that no matter how much other stuff you have going on, you will always have three hours each week to get some thesis work done.

Week 1 (24 August): Overview of thesis process, how to write a thesis, and how to research **Reading:** Prof. Danny's research guide

Week 2 (31 August): Writing an annotated bibliography

Week 3 (7 September): Writing a prospectus

Week 4 (14 September): Progress updates

Week 5 (21 September): Writing a thesis **Reading:** 10 Commandments of Philosophical Writing by Adrian Piper

Week 6 (28 September): Writing a thesis **Reading:** Prof. Kranti's writing guide

Week 7 (12 October): Citation styles and citation managers **Reading:** Chicago Manual of Style

Week 8 (19 October): Staying on schedule

Week 9 (26 October): Sample presentation by Prof. Danny

Week 10 (2 November): Practice presentations

Week 11 (9 November): Progress updates

Week 12 (16 November): Peer feedback on annotated bibliography

Week 13 (23 November): Peer feedback on prospectus