Pedagogical Training Plan - Department of Philosophy

Overview

The Department of Philosophy views the pedagogical training of its students as an integral part of its PhD program. Doctoral students are required to provide instructional assistance to the faculty in undergraduate-level courses and to participate in a number of pedagogical training and mentoring activities, all with the aim of becoming excellent teachers of philosophy. The teaching experience that our students acquire while in our program sets them apart and helps them to succeed in their professional lives post-graduation. To meet with success on the academic job market, philosophy PhDs must compete for positions in diverse institutions of higher education. Many of these positions are teaching intensive, but even faculty positions at research-oriented institutions have a significant teaching component and favor applicants with solid teaching experience and pedagogical training. Above and beyond its role in professional academic life, however, the Department of Philosophy views the teaching of philosophy as standing in a symbiotic relation of mutual support with the activity of philosophizing itself. For this reason, even those doctoral students who decide not to pursue a career in academia will benefit greatly from having acquired the complex social, communication, and organizational skills that underwrite good teaching.

Our Pedagogical Training Plan has been designed to ensure that all graduates of our PhD program are able to:

- design and teach introductory courses in philosophy
- design and teach upper-level undergraduate courses in their field of specialization
- create instructive assignments for students and provide helpful and constructive feedback on their work
- effectively facilitate in-class discussion
- deliver effective lectures
- cultivate and maintain an inclusive classroom environment
- describe their own approach to the education of students and provide thoughtful rationales for their pedagogical choices

PTP Requirements

The following table provides a timeline for the completion of the requirements all PhD students must meet in accordance with the Department of Philosophy’s Pedagogical Training Plan. In addition, the table includes recommendations and suggestions for pedagogical training events and optional, beneficial teaching opportunities that students are encouraged to take advantage of. All items not marked as “optional” are required.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Teaching Experience</th>
<th>Pedagogical Training and Mentoring Activities</th>
<th>Objectives for Pedagogical Knowledge and Skill Development</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>• Continue to acquire basic knowledge of philosophy through departmental coursework</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| 2 | None | • Department of Philosophy Pedagogy Workshop\(^1\)  
• Pedagogies of Writing (HUMA 50000 or an equivalent number of Writing Center workshops) *(optional)* | • Continue to acquire basic knowledge of philosophy through departmental coursework  
• Acquire initial practice presenting philosophical material in an instructional capacity and discuss various subject-specific pedagogical issues with faculty members  
• Develop skills in writing instruction, evaluating written work and providing constructive feedback |
|---|---|---|---|
| 3 | 2 Course Assistantships | • Teaching@Chicago Conference – CCTL\(^2\)  
• Department of Philosophy CA Training Workshop  
• Department of Philosophy Classroom Climate Workshop  
• Observation and feedback from faculty member during CA assignment  
• Fundamental of Teaching in the Humanities – CCTL *(optional)* | • Learn about available resources to assist with teaching undergraduates at the University of Chicago and reflect on initial experiences in the classroom  
• Learn from more experienced CAs the strategies and best-practices for generating and maintaining productive discussions and organizing discussion sections  
• Learn strategies for establishing an inclusive and welcoming classroom climate and for dealing with implicit bias and stereotype threat  
• Acquire knowledge of general methods for leading effective discussions, assessing student learning, grading practices and norms  
• Practice teaching and receive constructive feedback on classroom instruction |
| 4 | 2 Course Assistantships | • Course Design and College Teaching (CCTE 50000) - CCTL  
• Develop a syllabus for a self-taught course in consultation with the DGS and the student’s dissertation committee chair | • Learn to design an inclusive and well-conceived course, based on meaningful learning objectives, informed by active learning methods and assessment practices appropriate to the discipline |

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\(^1\) Note to Faculty: This is just a placeholder term to refer to some (as yet to be determined) department-organized pedagogy programming.

\(^2\) Chicago Center for Teaching and Learning ([https://teaching.uchicago.edu/](https://teaching.uchicago.edu/))
<table>
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<tr>
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<th></th>
<th><strong>5</strong> Course Assistantships (*)</th>
<th><strong>6</strong> Course Assistantship (*)</th>
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</table>
|   |   | • One guest lecture in a departmental course  
|   |   | • Observation and feedback from faculty member during CA assignment  
|   |   | **8** | **10** |
|   |   | • Practice teaching and receive constructive feedback on classroom instruction  
|   |   | **8** | **10** |
|   |   | • Practice teaching and receive constructive feedback on classroom instruction from both philosophy faculty and specialists in teaching and learning  
|   |   | • Design a philosophy course suitable for a mixed undergraduate class  
|   |   | • Develop a draft statement of the student’s teaching philosophy reflecting their past teaching experiences  
|   |   | • Department of Philosophy Placement Workshop  
|   |   | • Observation and feedback from faculty member during CA assignment  
|   |   | • Complete any remaining requirements for College Teaching Certificate (*)  
|   |   | • Produce a polished teaching dossier (under the guidance of the philosophy department placement director) to be included with applications for academic positions post-graduation  
|   |   | • Practice teaching and receive constructive feedback on classroom instruction  

(*) – Students will have the option to replace one of the required Course Assistantships in their 5th or 6th year with a self-taught course. This course may either consist of a tutorial offered to students enrolled in the intensive track of the undergraduate philosophy major, or it may consist of a section of a

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3 A description of the College Teaching Certificate program can be found at [https://teaching.uchicago.edu/courses-certificates/college-teaching-certificate/](https://teaching.uchicago.edu/courses-certificates/college-teaching-certificate/).
departmental course for which that student has already served as a CA or for which they have demonstrated all competencies required to provide high-quality instruction. The determination as to whether a student should exercise their option to teach a self-standing course and, if so, what course that student should teach will be made by each student in consultation with the DGS and their dissertation committee chair. This determination will be based on three factors: (1) the sample course syllabus submitted to the department during the student’s 4th year in the program, (2) faculty observation and feedback on the student’s prior guest lectures in departmental courses, and (3) a report from the student’s dissertation committee regarding progress towards completing the dissertation.

Additional Notes

- Any student in years 5 or 6 who holds a Dissertation Completion Fellowship (DCF) is not allowed to teach, without special permission. Accordingly, students on a DCF are excused from any teaching requirements under the terms of the department’s Pedagogical Training Plan in the year in which they hold a DCF. All other requirements that do not involve teaching must still be satisfied.
- Any student who successfully defends their dissertation within 5 years of entering the program will be exempted from all subsequent pedagogical training requirements and will be taken to have fulfilled all departmental requirements to receive a PhD.
- In addition to the department’s Pedagogical Training Plan, the department also offers doctoral students the opportunity to participate in an optional Disciplinary Pedagogy Program. To complete this Program, students must fulfill the following components (in addition to the mandatory pedagogical training elements specified above). These additional components can be satisfied at any time:
  - Participation in Course Visitations and Peer Consultation: Students in the Pedagogy Program may team up and discuss practical and pedagogical issues related to their teaching. In a quarter where one of the students is teaching, two others will attend her class or discussion section and provide feedback about her teaching through a joint written report and a subsequent face-to-face conversation. The doctoral student coordinator will facilitate the schedule for visits.
  - Attendance at Two Presentations by Departmental Alumni: At least one of these discussions will be held each year. Each presenter will make available the syllabus for a course they have recently taught at their home institution and lead a discussion of the course design in the context of the kind of institution where they teach, the level of preparation that their students bring, their pedagogical aims, and so on.
  - Attendance at Two Faculty-Led Discussions on Pedagogical Topics: At least one of these discussions will be held each year. Suitable topics include teaching in specific areas of the discipline (e.g., logic, the history of philosophy, contemporary philosophy); lecturing versus leading discussions; gender and the philosophy classroom; developing writing assignments, and so on. Faculty may provide readings in advance of these meetings.

The Pedagogy Program is run by a student coordinator and the Departmental Administrator, William Weaver, under the supervision of the Director of Graduate Studies.