

PHIL 607/682: Pro-Seminar

Topic for Fall 2022

Professional Skills or, What to Expect When You're Expecting (to be a Philosopher)

Seminar Description

In order to succeed in graduate school and have the opportunity for a career in philosophy, one has to develop a plan and cultivate a set of skills. Students have generally been expected to do this on their own. As professional philosophy has become more competitive, however, career planning and professional skills have become so important that they deserve to be a formal part of graduate education. The purpose of this seminar is to identify the skills required for professional success and provide an occasion to develop them.

Objectives

On successful completion of this unit, students will have gained experience in (a) revising a paper for publication; (b) writing an abstract for a conference; (c) giving talks; (d) writing a funding application; (e) writing a CV and preparing a professional website; (f) reviewing submissions for journals and conferences; (g) planning for your academic career in the short and long term.

Seminar structure

The seminar will be different from typical seminars. It will focus exclusively on career planning and professional skills. The work will be “practical”: the primary assignment will be revision of a paper for submission to a journal. Each student will choose a draft paper of their own (e.g., the paper submitted as part of the application to Ph.D. programs) at the beginning of the term. During the term, each student will write a critical review of two papers, and every student will get two reviews. Students will then revise their papers in response to the reviews. They will submit a second draft of the paper together with a report of how they responded to reviewers’ comments at the end of term. Students will be encouraged to submit the paper to an appropriate journal. They will also be encouraged to submit an abstract of the paper to an appropriate conference. As part of the seminar, students will present the paper (with slides and/or handout) in the form of a short talk. Students will also update their CV and create a personal website if they haven’t already done so. In addition, students will produce a 1-year and 4-year work plan following a method to be reviewed in the seminar. The seminar will begin with preparation of an application for a graduate scholarship. During the weekly meetings, we will discuss strategies for approaching the assignments just mentioned as well as other topics—such as teaching and publishing—that are useful for graduate and professional life.

Tentative Schedule

Date	Discussion Topic	Presenter	Assignments Due
31 August	Introduction Work “lifecycle”	Ian	
7 September	Work “lifecycle” (continued) Scholarship applications	Ian	Scholarship application
14 September	Conferences and abstracts	TBA	Scholarship application reviews
21 September	Overview of academic job market CV survey	Ian	Paper – first version
28 September	From now to the job market: career planning	TBA	Abstract
5 October	CV, website	Ian	Abstract reviews
12 October	The publication process	TBA	Critical reflection on teaching article
19 October	Effective teaching and course design	TBA	Conference presentation
26 October	Procrastination Feedback on presentations	Ian	Peer reviews
2 November	Time management Feedback on presentations	TBA	CV survey
9 November	Looking ahead: the candidacy paper and thesis Feedback on presentations	Ian	1-year and 4-year plans
16 November	Feedback on presentations	Ian	CV, website
23 November	Feedback on presentations	Ian	Revised version of paper and responses to reviews

Assessment

Instructors will give detailed feedback on all of the assignments (see Table above) but will not grade them. Instead, a grade for the seminar will be given as a function of the number of assignments that are *completed*. All assignments that require student feedback (scholarship application, paper, abstract, and presentation) are mandatory and are required to obtain a passing grade. A grade of A requires all assignments to be completed on time (i.e. by 11:59 PM on the due date).

There are 14 assignments for the course; these are to be submitted on MyCourses, under the Discussions section of the course website. Further details about the content of the assignments will be covered in class.

- (1) *Scholarship application (due 7 September)*: a two-page draft of an application for an SSHRC or FRQSC doctoral fellowship.
- (2) *Scholarship reviews (due 14 September)*: two half-page reviews of scholarship applications of other members of the seminar.

- (3) *First version of the paper (due 21 September)*: the original paper you have chosen to revise. No revisions are necessary at this stage; you merely have to submit the paper. Please also email your paper to your assigned faculty mentor on the same day that you submit it.
- (4) *Abstract (due 28 September)*: a 500-word abstract and bibliography for the paper you are revising for the seminar for submission to a conference.
- (5) *Abstract reviews (due 5 October)*: two half-page reviews of conference abstracts of other members of the seminar.
- (6) *Reflection on teaching article (due 12 October)*: a one-page critical reflection on an article concerned with teaching methods.
- (7) *Conference Presentation (due 19 October)*: a 20-minute video-recorded conference presentation based on the article you are revising for the seminar.
- (8) *Peer Reviews (due 26 October)*: two two-page reviews of paper drafts of other members of the seminar.
- (9) *Conference Presentation (due 2 November)*: a 20-minute video-recorded conference presentation based on the article you are revising for the seminar.
- (10) *1-year and 4-year plan (due 9 November)*: two plans – academic goals for one year and four years.
- (11) *CV and website (due 16 November)*: your academic CV and a live personal website.
- (12) *Final Draft (due 23 November)*: a revised version of your paper as well as a document summarizing the critiques of you colleagues and your responses to them.

Participation

Participation is not mandatory but is of course encouraged. During the last five meetings (26 October–23 November), students will provide verbal feedback on the conference presentations of their peers. If you are unable to attend these meetings, we will ask for your written feedback instead.

Mentorship

The Department has started a pilot faculty mentorship program for graduate students. Since the instructors are not experts on all (or perhaps any) of the topics students will be working on, one of the roles of faculty mentors will be to provide specialist feedback on student papers. For this reason, students will be asked to submit a copy of their paper to their mentor at the beginning of term (21 September). By agreeing to be your mentor, a faculty member agrees to read your paper and to meet with you once during the Fall term to discuss ways you could improve the paper. It is up to you and the mentor to jointly decide whether you are interested and able to continue your exchange beyond that first meeting.

Meetings

Work for this seminar will take place mostly outside of class. Typically, meetings will include a presentation by the instructors or a guest speaker which will be followed by discussion.

Following completion of the discussion, there will be a “grad lounge” during which time students can continue discussion without the presence of the instructors.

Instructor Contact Details

Ian Gold

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Office hours by appointment

Inclusivity

As the instructors of this course we endeavor to provide an inclusive learning environment. However, if you experience barriers to learning in this course, do not hesitate to discuss them with me and the Office for Students with Disabilities, 514-398-6009.

Academic Integrity

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/students/ for more information).

L’université McGill attache une haute importance à l’honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l’on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l’étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le site www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/students/).

Emergencies

In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University’s control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.

Language

In accord with McGill University’s Charter of Students’ Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.