

University of South Carolina
Department of Philosophy

Graduate Guidebook
2020–2021



UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH CAROLINA

**ARTS &
SCIENCES**
university of south carolina

DEPARTMENT OF PHIL  SOPHY
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

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Life as a Philosophy Graduate Student at UofSC

Welcome to the UofSC philosophy department! The aim of this guidebook is to answer some questions that you might have regarding the norms and expectations of the philosophy department and to let you know more about what life in Columbia, SC is like more generally. It is written largely by current graduate students and includes much of what they consider important to know as you begin your journey as a Ph.D. student.

1. Life in the Department

❖ I have some questions about course requirements, travel, my paycheck, etc. Who should I talk to?

There is one point that is worth highlighting up front: **whenever you have questions about any aspect of department life, you should not hesitate to ask somebody in the department:** your advisor, some faculty member that you trust, the Department Chair, the Director of Graduate Studies, an upper-level graduate student, etc. That said, there are certain questions that are best directed to particular members of the department.

In addition to the faculty who teach your courses, and who make up your Advisory Committee, there are four people in the department that will help to answer various questions, two on the Faculty and two on the Staff.

The Department Chair is the person to go to with any questions about available funding for research-related travel or other academic events.

The DGS, or Director of Graduate Studies, is the person to contact for any questions about graduate requirements. (The term “DGS” is not unique to this department, or this university. Most graduate departments in most disciplines in the United States have a DGS who plays roughly the same role.)

The Program Coordinator, a member of the Department Staff, is in charge of (among other things) keeping all of the records for the graduate students. So, if you have a question about a form in your file, or how to submit some piece of paperwork concerning your teaching or your coursework, this is the person to consult.

The Department Administrator, a member of the Department Staff, is in charge of (among other things) the department budget. So, for

questions about your paycheck, or about getting reimbursed for various departmental expenses, this is the person to consult.

❖ **How many departmental events am I expected to attend?**

All of them! Of course, there may be scheduling conflicts that make it difficult for you to attend a particular event. That's understood. However, since you are now a member of the department, it is expected that you participate in departmental events, including colloquia and conferences. It's important for your own intellectual development, but it's also important for the intellectual environment of the department as a whole.

Some examples of department events: Queen St. Symposiums, the Departmental Colloquium Series, guest speakers, dissertation defenses (if the defender is open to outside viewership), social outings, etc.

❖ **How much outside reading, unrelated to coursework, should I be doing?**

There is no one right answer to this question and you should discuss this more with your advisory committee. However, there are a couple of important points to keep in mind. It is crucially important that you devote the necessary time to your coursework. You will be expected to have closely read the required texts for each class and that can take a lot of time.

That said, browsing recent journal issues is one of the best ways to find topics of interest to you, to get a sense of what a publishable paper looks like, to get a sense of what sorts of papers different journals publish, and to develop a breadth of knowledge about philosophical issues that may end up informing your other work.

Talk to your committee if you have questions about which journals to look at and be sure to familiarize yourself with [Phil Papers](#).

❖ **Is it okay to request an extension for a term paper at the end of the semester?**

This is a question to ask the instructor of the course for which you would like an extension. While it is often possible to request an extension at the end of the semester, and while there are circumstances where it makes good sense to do so, generally speaking,

we expect you to finish your term papers by the deadlines set by your instructors at the end of the semester. Moreover, we strongly recommend against requesting more than one extension at a time. It can be easy to fall behind in your classes in a given semester, if you have to spend time making up work from a previous semester.

❖ **When should I start submitting papers to journals?**

You should submit papers to journals when they are publishable (as is, or with revisions), but the question is really how soon into your graduate career should you have publishable papers written. This is a good question to discuss with your advisory committee. But there are some general points that can be made here.

Publishing takes a really long time. It takes a long time to write a publishable paper, in large part because a publishable paper makes an original contribution to the literature on the subject matter. So, writing the paper in a way that makes clear that the contribution is original requires mastery of the relevant literature, and acquiring that mastery takes a lot of time, in addition to the time it takes to develop the original ideas.

It can also take a long time for a journal to deliver a decision on a paper (the quicker journals sometimes take two or three months, though rejections are sometimes made more quickly; the slower journals can take six months to over a year). Most papers are not accepted for publication. Many are not rejected outright, but are instead given what is known in academia as an “R&R” or “Revise and Resubmit”. In this case, you’re given comments on how the paper would need to be revised in order for it to be considered for publication. After you revise the paper, you can then resubmit it. But it will take more time for the journal to review the resubmission, and it may not be accepted for publication, in which case you can send it to another journal. It can easily take years for a particular paper to find a home in a journal.

For that reason, you don’t want to wait too long to begin the process of trying to publish your work. Having some publications in reputable journals is increasingly viewed as essential on the academic job market.

However, it is worth mentioning that this rush to publish is a relatively recent development of the profession that some think is unfortunate. When you go through the process of writing a dissertation, you naturally end up with a mastery of the literature on a particular topic, and you have time to develop an idea that makes a genuine contribution to the literature, one that is worthy of publication. It is difficult to rush this process. In addition, the amount of time that it

takes to write (and revise) a publishable paper is time that could be spent learning about different topics, which might ultimately be more intellectually beneficial to you.

❖ **When should I start submitting papers to conferences?**

This is also a good question to discuss with your advisory committee. There are a lot of good reasons to start submitting papers to conferences early on in your career as a graduate student. It is significantly easier to get a paper accepted to a conference than it is to get it published. By presenting your work, you'll get feedback on the paper which can help to get it published down the road. You'll also meet other people interested in similar topics and learn about interesting work.

There are annual regional conferences and national conferences. The regional conferences are smaller and, if relatively local, cheaper to attend. There is an annual conference hosted by the [South Carolina Society for Philosophy](#) (though every other year, the conference is held jointly with the North Carolina Philosophical Society).

There are also smaller conferences that concern a particular sub-discipline or topic. Some of these are relatively prestigious within their respective subdiscipline. There are also many graduate conferences, which—apart from a keynote speaker—are limited to graduate students. While some of these are better than others, the benefits you get from attending them may not outweigh the costs, both monetary and temporal. So it is a good idea to talk to your advisory committee about whether a given conference is worth attending.

In addition to the smaller regional conferences, there are three annual national conferences in the United States, corresponding to the three regions of the [American Philosophical Association](#): the Eastern, the Central, and the Pacific. These conferences are typically more expensive to attend, but they are widely attended in the discipline.

The APA website contains information about each of the conference dates and locations, including the types of submission, the deadlines, and the requirements. Knowing the deadlines well in advance will help to give you enough time to put together a worthy submission. Also, check [PhilEvents](#) to find Calls for Papers (CFPs) for all of the above types of conferences.

2. Life in the University of South Carolina

Campus Information: [Map](#) [Thomas Cooper](#) [Library](#) [Russell House](#) [Health Services](#) [The Grad School](#)

[Student Health Insurance](#)

All graduate students taking at least 6 credit hours or anyone with a graduate assistantship is required to have health insurance. The insurance offered by the school is pretty good and usually partially subsidized each semester. Figuring out health insurance can be daunting, especially for international students. Student Health Services offers some helpful information [here](#)!

[Mental Health Services](#)

All Graduate students are eligible for 10 free consultations during the course of their degree program.

[Graduate Student Association](#)

A student organization on campus dedicated to graduate students. They occasionally organize social events.

[Center for Teaching Excellence \(CTE\)](#)

The CTE is a great resource for teaching on campus. They hold many seminars throughout the semester on a variety of topics relevant to teaching (e.g. grading tips, how to get students to read the readings, how to deal with unruly students, etc.). You can view their video archive of seminars [here](#). They also have additional resources, like syllabus templates, that may be very useful.

3. Life in Columbia, SC

Downtown Columbia

[Five Points](#) [The Vista](#) [Main Street](#)

Main Areas Outside of Downtown Columbia

[West Columbia](#) [Cayce](#) [Lexington](#) [Irmo](#) [Columbia](#)

Housing

https://sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/off_campus_living_and_neighborhood_relations/index.php

This link is for off-campus housing for students in general (which means it is geared more towards undergraduate students). There is some helpful information about neighborhoods and places to start looking. The best source of information for housing though will come from current graduate students. We highly recommend reaching out to your peers before moving to Columbia, SC to find out what kinds of places and where the current graduate students live. There also might be a couple of students looking for roommates or housemates. Make sure to check out the public transportation available as well as it is one way to live further out from downtown (i.e. less expensive housing rates) without having to own a vehicle.

Transportation

The city of Columbia and the University of South Carolina have a variety of public transportation options available. Below are some links.

[Campus Shuttle:](#)

This service is free of charge and does not require you to show your ID to ride. There is also a phone app you can download to track current locations of shuttles. Make sure to pay close attention to the schedules though. There are different shuttles and options available during the day versus after 6 pm.

[COMET:](#)

The COMET is a bus that travels around Columbia and nearby areas. Use the link to check out available routes, schedules, and fare information.

Entertainment

Nature - [West Columbia/Cayce Riverwalk](#) [SC Trails](#) [SC National Park Services](#) [Congaree National Park](#)

Sports - [U of SC Sports](#) [Columbia Fireflies](#)

Local Festivals - [Columbia Greek Festival](#) [Columbia Korean Festival](#) [Irmo Okra Strut](#) [Other Festivals](#)

Farmers Markets - [Soda City Market](#) [Other Markets](#)

Music and the Arts

Museums

[Columbia Museum of Art \(CMA\)](#) has a strong presence in Columbia's community, putting on an excellent quarterly 'Arts and Draughts' event where the whole museum becomes a live music venue with interesting interactive exhibits and workshops. It is a must-see part of living in Columbia.

[Nickelodeon Theatre](#)

Non-profit art house theatre that puts on Columbia's yearly film festival, Indie-grits.

[The Koger Center](#)

[Historic Tours of Columbia](#)

Live Music Venues

Curiosity Coffee Bar

Relaxed, intimate, good for seeing acoustic/folk shows. Greg, the owner, is long time member of the music scene and is always looking to put on something interesting.

New Brookland Tavern

Grungy, genuine, dive bar-ish, puts on a variety of shows. This is Columbia's best smaller venue, putting on impressive acts west of the Congaree.

White Mule

Similar sized venue to New Brookland, similar vibe except a little more clean and polished around the edges. Closer to the college bar scene in 5points.

The Senate

If a well known band comes to Columbia this is likely where they will play, if not at some of the many outdoor events the city hosts through the year.

Art Bar

Quirky style and a dive bar vibe with a twist. There are robots everywhere and the sort of people you find here vary in exciting and nuanced ways. You can catch metal show, hip hop, folk and anything in between.

Hunter Gatherer Hanger

Old hanger repurposed into a comfortable and spacious outdoor bar/brewery that puts on a good show every now and then.

Community Organizations of Interest

COLATown Bike Collective

Local bike coop where you can find cheap bicycles, cheap labour for tune-ups and bike enthusiasts who put on community ride through the city. They also throw cool parties.