Recent and proposed Curriculum and Course Changes for the  
M.A. and Ph.D. Programs  
Department of Philosophy  
October, 2016

Master of Arts (M.A.) program

1. We recently introduced a "distribution" requirement for course-work for the M.A. degree. The new distribution requirement is that students complete one course each in the following areas: Value Theory, History of Philosophy, and "Philosophical Problems".

2. We reduced the number of required seminar courses from 2 to 1.

Rationale for these changes:  
Assessment tools revealed that an increasing number of students in the Philosophy M.A. program plan to continue their education in programs other than the Ph.D. program in Philosophy at Wayne State University. (This is especially true for students in the new AGRADE M.A. program.) M.A. students with such aims are better served by program requirements that ensure a broad-based background in philosophy. The new distribution requirements contribute to giving students such background. Previously, M.A. students were required also to complete two seminar courses. Such courses typically cover narrower topics in Philosophy in more depth. So, reducing the number of seminar courses required from two to one also serves the aim of providing a more broadly-based education in philosophy in the M.A. program.

Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) program

1. Reduced the Logic requirement for the Ph.D. program to 2 courses from 3. Previously there was an Elementary Logic requirement as well as an Advanced Logic I and Advanced Logic II requirement. The new requirement is for Elementary and Advanced Logic, where Advanced Logic is equivalent to the previous Advanced Logic I.

Rationale for this change:  
Assessment tools revealed that most of our current Ph.D. students both have difficulty with Advanced Logic II, and plan to write dissertations on topics such that Advanced Logic II will likely not make a large contribution to the topic.

2. Introduced a new course, PHI 7990, “Directed Study in Philosophy”.

3. (Proposed) (a) Introduce a number of courses at the 7000-level that will "meet with" current courses that are numbered at the 5000-level. (b) Renumber current 7000-level courses to corresponding numbers at the 8000-level. (c) Rewrite the current Ph.D. program requirements to require completion of 6 seminar courses. The changes (a)-(c) proposed here are currently under development and require a significant reworking of the Philosophy Department’s graduate curriculum.
Rationale for these changes:
The new 7990 Directed Study course was introduced in the beginning Fall 2016 as a first, easier step toward achieving the aims of the more extensive changes proposed in (3)(a-c). These program changes will decrease the time-to-degree for Ph.D. students; and they will achieve that end by achieving the independently desirable end of increasing the range of graduate courses available for Ph.D. students to take. At present, all (and only) “seminar” courses in Philosophy are numbered at the 7000-level (with the exception of the new 7990). This Departmental practice, together with the University requirement that Ph.D. students complete 30 credits of course-work at the 7000-level, has the effect that Ph.D. students must complete 8 seminar courses. Assessment tools revealed that the combination of this Departmental practice and the University requirement can force students into taking seminar courses that cover topics outside of the student’s main areas of interest, and cover them at a level of detail that does not contribute to student’s progress toward the Ph.D. degree. The proposed changes in allow Ph.D. students to take two fewer seminar courses, and thus to take two more courses that contribute directly to their progress toward their degree.