**Philosophy Department Assessment Report for 2009-10**

*Courses in which assessment of Philosophy senior Majors was conducted*:

In keeping with our assessment plans for 2009-10, the Philosophy Department conducted assessment in relation to specific courses in which we had graduating senior philosophy majors this spring, as distinct from a general assessment conducted independent of specific courses in the past. The courses were: Phil 301 Environmental Ethics, Phil 302 Leadership Ethics, Phil 315 Knowledge, Truth and Reason, and Phil 380 Aristotle: A Western Foundation.

*When the assessment was conducted:*

Each faculty member carried out the assessment in her/his course towards the end of the spring semester of 2010, between the last week of classes and the day before commencement.

*Methods/data sources and instruments used for assessment of Philosophy senior Majors*:

In relation to each of the above-mentioned courses, the faculty member responsible for the course used **student portfolios of her/his senior majors** to collect evidence of their achievement related to the learning objectives in the department assessment plan. **These student portfolios provided data from two sources**: 1**) a course-specific assessment instrument**; 2) the **student’s analytical essay**.

**The course-specific assessment instrument mentioned in 1) above included at least two of the following three procedures**: ***problem analysis*** (to measure whether our students have developed the skills necessary to conduct a logical analysis); ***assessment questions*** (to measure whether our students have developed a sense of intellectual heritage, including familiarity with major philosophers and their contributions to the field); and ***self-assessment questions*** (to measure whether our students have developed the ability to conduct logical analysis, conceptual analysis, and philosophical research with confidence). An in-class exam assigned as work for the course was used as an assessment instrument in some cases if it met the above description.

**The student’s analytical essay mentioned in 2) above** is used to measure our students’ ability to conduct research in the field – i.e., to approach problems philosophically and conduct philosophical analysis in research papers.

Cumulatively, student portfolios of senior majors enable us to measure whether they have achieved the following Learning Outcomes: Student Outcome 1: Students will be able to analyze the complexity of an issue by identifying possible multiple viewpoints inherent in the issue; Student Outcome 2: Students will be able to construct arguments inherent in each of these viewpoints – i.e., identify implicit or explicit premises and generate conclusions from these premises; Student Outcome 3: Students will be able to examine merits and demerits of these arguments and viewpoints by examining amongst other things their validity, soundness, etc.; Student Outcome 4: Students will be able to clearly and precisely express their views in writing; and Student Outcome 5: Students will be able to gain familiarity with major philosophers and their contributions to the field.

*Summary of Data Collected in Spring, 2010*

*Summary of Data Collected for Phil 301 [Number of graduating senior majors = 3; Number of responses = 3]:*

**Student Outcome 1: Students will be able to analyze the complexity of an issue by identifying possible multiple viewpoints inherent in the issue.**

**Assessment Procedure Passing [70% or above] Failing [below 70%]**

Analytical Essay 30

**Assessment Procedure Strongly Agree/Agree Disagree/Strongly Disagree**

Self-Assessment Question 3 0

**Student Outcome 2: Students will be able to construct arguments inherent in each of these viewpoints – i.e., identify implicit or explicit premises and generate conclusions from these premises.**

**Assessment Procedure Passing [70% or above] Failing [below 70%]**

Analytical Essay 3 0

**Assessment Procedure** **Strongly Agree/Agree Disagree/Strongly Disagree**

Self-Assessment Question 3 0

**Student Outcome 3: Students will be able to examine merits and demerits of these arguments and viewpoints by examining amongst other things their validity, soundness, etc.**

**Assessment Procedure Passing [70% or above] Failing [below 70%]**

Analytical Essay 3 0

**Assessment Procedure** **Strongly Agree/Agree Disagree/Strongly Disagree**

Self-Assessment Question 3 0

**Student Outcome 4: Students will be able to clearly and precisely express their views in writing.**

**Assessment Procedure Passing [70% or above] Failing [below 70%]**

Analytical Essay 3 0

**Assessment Procedure** **Strongly Agree/Agree Disagree/Strongly Disagree**

Self-Assessment Question 3 0

**Student Outcome 5: Students will be able to gain familiarity with major philosophers and their contributions to the field.**

**Assessment Procedure Passing [70% or above] Failing [below 70%]**

Analytical Essay 3 0

**Assessment Procedure Passing [70% or above] Failing [below 70%]**

Assessment Questions 3 0

**Assessment Procedure** **Strongly Agree/Agree Disagree/Strongly Disagree**

Self-Assessment Question 3 0

*Summary of Data Collected for Phil 302 [Number of graduating senior majors = 3; Number of responses = 3]:*

**Student Outcome 1: Students will be able to analyze the complexity of an issue by identifying possible multiple viewpoints inherent in the issue.**

**Assessment Procedure Passing [70% or above] Failing [below 70%]**

Analytical Essay 30

**Assessment Procedure Strongly Agree/Agree Disagree/Strongly Disagree**

Self-Assessment Question 3 0

**Student Outcome 2: Students will be able to construct arguments inherent in each of these viewpoints – i.e., identify implicit or explicit premises and generate conclusions from these premises.**

**Assessment Procedure Passing [70% or above] Failing [below 70%]**

Analytical Essay 3 0

**Assessment Procedure** **Strongly Agree/Agree Disagree/Strongly Disagree**

Self-Assessment Question 3 0

**Student Outcome 3: Students will be able to examine merits and demerits of these arguments and viewpoints by examining amongst other things their validity, soundness, etc.**

**Assessment Procedure Passing [70% or above] Failing [below 70%]**

Analytical Essay 3 0

**Assessment Procedure** **Strongly Agree/Agree Disagree/Strongly Disagree**

Self-Assessment Question 3 0

**Student Outcome 4: Students will be able to clearly and precisely express their views in writing.**

**Assessment Procedure Passing [70% or above] Failing [below 70%]**

Analytical Essay 3 0

**Assessment Procedure** **Strongly Agree/Agree Disagree/Strongly Disagree**

Self-Assessment Question 3 0

**Student Outcome 5: Students will be able to gain familiarity with major philosophers and their contributions to the field.**

**Assessment Procedure Passing [70% or above] Failing [below 70%]**

Analytical Essay 3 0

**Assessment Procedure Passing [70% or above] Failing [below 70%]**

Assessment Questions 3 0

**Assessment Procedure** **Strongly Agree/Agree Disagree/Strongly Disagree**

Self-Assessment Question 3 0

*Summary of Data Collected for Phil 315 [Number of graduating senior majors = 4; Number of responses = 3]:*

**Student Outcome 1: Students will be able to analyze the complexity of an issue by identifying possible multiple viewpoints inherent in the issue.**

**Assessment Procedure Passing [70% or above] Failing [below 70%]**

Analytical Essay 30

**Assessment Procedure Passing [70% or above] Failing [below 70%]**

Problem Analysis 30

**Assessment Procedure Passing [70% or above] Failing [below 70%]**

Assessment Questions 30

**Student Outcome 2: Students will be able to construct arguments inherent in each of these viewpoints – i.e., identify implicit or explicit premises and generate conclusions from these premises.**

**Assessment Procedure Passing [70% or above] Failing [below 70%]**

Analytical Essay 30

**Assessment Procedure Passing [70% or above] Failing [below 70%]**

Problem Analysis 30

**Assessment Procedure Passing [70% or above] Failing [below 70%]**

Assessment Questions 30

**Student Outcome 3: Students will be able to examine merits and demerits of these arguments and viewpoints by examining amongst other things their validity, soundness, etc.**

**Assessment Procedure Passing [70% or above] Failing [below 70%]**

Analytical Essay 30

**Assessment Procedure Passing [70% or above] Failing [below 70%]**

Problem Analysis 30

**Assessment Procedure Passing [70% or above] Failing [below 70%]**

Assessment Questions 30

**Student Outcome 4: Students will be able to clearly and precisely express their views in writing.**

**Assessment Procedure Passing [70% or above] Failing [below 70%]**

Analytical Essay 30

**Assessment Procedure Passing [70% or above] Failing [below 70%]**

Problem Analysis 30

**Assessment Procedure Passing [70% or above] Failing [below 70%]**

Assessment Questions 30

**Student Outcome 5: Students will be able to gain familiarity with major philosophers and their contributions to the field.**

**Assessment Procedure Passing [70% or above] Failing [below 70%]**

Analytical Essay 30

**Assessment Procedure Passing [70% or above] Failing [below 70%]**

Problem Analysis 30

**Assessment Procedure Passing [70% or above] Failing [below 70%]**

Assessment Questions 30

*Summary of Data Collected for Phil 382 [Number of graduating senior majors = 3; Number of responses = 3]:*

**Student Outcome 1: Students will be able to analyze the complexity of an issue by identifying possible multiple viewpoints inherent in the issue.**

**Assessment Procedure Passing [70% or above] Failing [below 70%]**

Analytical Essay 30

**Assessment Procedure Passing [70% or above] Failing [below 70%]**

Problem Analysis 3 0

**Assessment Procedure Passing [70% or above] Failing [below 70%]**

Assessment Question 3 0

**Student Outcome 2: Students will be able to construct arguments inherent in each of these viewpoints – i.e., identify implicit or explicit premises and generate conclusions from these premises.**

**Assessment Procedure Passing [70% or above] Failing [below 70%]**

Analytical Essay 30

**Assessment Procedure Passing [70% or above] Failing [below 70%]**

Problem Analysis 3 0

**Assessment Procedure Passing [70% or above] Failing [below 70%]**

Assessment Question 3 0

**Student Outcome 3: Students will be able to examine merits and demerits of these arguments and viewpoints by examining amongst other things their validity, soundness, etc.**

**Assessment Procedure Passing [70% or above] Failing [below 70%]**

Analytical Essay 30

**Assessment Procedure Passing [70% or above] Failing [below 70%]**

Problem Analysis 3 0

**Assessment Procedure Passing [70% or above] Failing [below 70%]**

Assessment Question 3 0

**Student Outcome 4: Students will be able to clearly and precisely express their views in writing.**

**Assessment Procedure Passing [70% or above] Failing [below 70%]**

Analytical Essay 30

**Assessment Procedure Passing [70% or above] Failing [below 70%]**

Problem Analysis 3 0

**Assessment Procedure Passing [70% or above] Failing [below 70%]**

Assessment Question 3 0

**Student Outcome 5: Students will be able to gain familiarity with major philosophers and their contributions to the field.**

**Assessment Procedure Passing [70% or above] Failing [below 70%]**

Analytical Essay 30

**Assessment Procedure Passing [70% or above] Failing [below 70%]**

Problem Analysis 3 0

**Assessment Procedure Passing [70% or above] Failing [below 70%]**

Assessment Question 3 0

*Analysis of the data*

The Philosophy Department wishes to know whether its students learn to approach a problem philosophically. Our graduating majors’ portfolios have demonstrated that desired student outcomes have been achieved both in relation to course-specific assessment instruments and students’ analytical essays.

Course-specific assessment instruments demonstrate that our graduating majors have achieved proficiency in relation to all 5 student outcomes listed above. In addition to course-specific assessment instruments, there is, to our minds, no substitute for an analytical essay in which a wide spectrum of skills are deployed *in an appropriate way*, given the problem at hand. By the time our majors are seniors, there is ample evidence that our approach is productive. Our graduating senior majors’ portfolios exhibit the reflective, critical perspective we hope to convey. The five student outcomes identified above are demonstrated in a wide variety of ways: Our students deploy distinctions demonstrating an appreciation of precision; they routinely consider the arguments presented by a text, distinguishing the logical properties from the rhetorical components of these arguments; they attempt to provide counter-examples, advance their own positive arguments, and even consider counter-examples to their own arguments – this demonstrates skill in philosophical analysis and also shows that they are properly reflective and critical, even of their own assumptions and beliefs, which sets them apart from those who approach problems ideologically. This is distinctively philosophical and especially important to the Department. Their analytical essays also consider historical approaches to the problem they are working on and demonstrate a sense of intellectual heritage.

*Curricular Changes Proposed as a Result of the Above Analysis*

At present, no curricular changes are being considered by the Department as a result of the above analysis. Even though we are a much smaller department compared to other schools in the GLCA and ACM, we are doing an excellent job of training our students philosophically and have a long record of placing them in top-notch graduate and professional programs. A recent retirement of faculty member whose position is not going to be replaced in the immediate future will necessitate our looking for ways to meet the evolving needs and interests of our student body through offering new and innovative courses despite our limited resources. We also plan to keep better track of our majors and gather evidence of our effectiveness via their post-graduate performance.