

Philosophy Department Assessment Plan

May 17, 2009

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I. Introduction

The University's Assessment Plan targets seven overarching learning objectives -- scholarship, faith traditions, diversity, community, practical wisdom, critical evaluation of our times, and vocation. These seven goals, which were taken from the *Habits of Inquiry and Reflection* document, are stated below in italics. The Philosophy Department prepares students who major in Philosophy in all seven areas. Consequently, our assessment plan will state goals and measures in all seven areas.

The Department has a Philosophy Assessment Committee. It consists of three tenure-line faculty members, who are each appointed for a term of three years. The terms are staggered so that the Department chairperson appoints a new member in March of each academic year, and the member with the longest tenure automatically assumes the role of Committee chairperson at the same time.

The Philosophy Assessment Committee has three related tasks: (a) to develop and revise, as appropriate, a comprehensive Assessment Plan, (b) to consult with the Department faculty at an early fall term meeting in order to select a learning outcome (or sub-outcome), which will be the target of that year's assessment procedure, and (c) gather data, conduct an assessment, and write an assessment report that goes to the Dean at a specified date in the early summer term. The Committee's prior year assessment report will be discussed by Department faculty in an early fall term meeting. At that meeting, Department faculty will offer suggestions to the Committee regarding appropriate revisions to the Assessment Plan in light of the assessment results.

II. Statement of Goals and Corresponding Measures

1. Scholarship: *All undergraduates will develop and demonstrate advanced habits of academic inquiry and creativity through the production of a body of artistic, scholarly or community-based work intended for public presentation and defense.*

Philosophy majors choose a variety of careers. Many do graduate work in philosophy. Many go to law school. Many go into careers in education, social work, and business. Philosophy prepares them to diagnose problems, to research alternative solutions, and to present their findings in carefully crafted, articulate professional publications of all kinds. Apropos to this general goal, we specify several sub-goals and corresponding measures as follows:

1a. Close, critical reading of primary sources: Graduating Philosophy majors will be able to read primary philosophical sources closely, accurately, and critically.

Measure 1: Instructors for the 400-level seminars and 300-level history of philosophy courses each term will report on each Philosophy major's ability to read closely, accurately, and critically. Students who receive positive reports in at least three seminars or history courses will be considered to have demonstrated appropriate reading ability. Seminar/history course reports each year will indicate that 80% of graduating majors have demonstrated this ability.

Measure 2: Exit surveys of graduating majors will show that 80% agree or strongly agree that they have gained the ability to read primary philosophical sources closely, accurately, and critically.

1b. Logical argumentation: Graduating Philosophy majors will be able to write philosophical essays that exhibit logical skills appropriate for upper-level undergraduate work in philosophy and sufficient for beginning graduate work in a range of areas.

Measure 1: Instructors for the 400-level seminars and 300-level history of philosophy courses each term will report on each Philosophy major's ability to write philosophical essays that exhibit logical skills. Students who receive positive reports in at least three seminars or history courses will be considered to have demonstrated appropriate logical skills. Seminar/history course reports each year will indicate that 80% of graduating majors have demonstrated these skills.

Measure 2: Exit surveys of graduating majors will show that 80% agree or strongly agree that they have gained the ability to write philosophical essays that exhibit appropriate logical skills.

1c. In-depth analysis: The American Philosophical Association's online document, *Statement on the Major*, describes a nested set of central goals of a major in philosophy as follows:

[T]he study of philosophy deals with the interpretation of texts, the balanced exposition and examination of issues, the construction and appraisal of arguments and explanations, and the criticism of doctrines and things commonly taken for granted. ... Perhaps the most important outcome of philosophical study is the ability to engage in thinking that is at once disciplined and imaginatively creative. ... A major in philosophy should develop the capacity for such thinking in at least three respects. One is the practice it affords in criticism—e.g., thinking of counter-examples to questionable generalizations, drawing out consequences entailed by a claim that reduce it to absurdity, and discerning the costs and consequences of practices and policies. Another is responsiveness to concrete cases; imagination is needed to give discriminating and illuminating moral and phenomenological descriptions of experience, to appreciate the thinking expressed in a text or theory, and then to discern its limitations. A third is interpretation and theorizing, which involve constructive justification and relating positions in one area of inquiry to those in another. ... In advanced courses students may further be asked to develop their own critique, positions and arguments in support of them, and to place texts or problems in wider historical and conceptual contexts. Students in advanced courses should

also be encouraged to reflect on the nature of the discipline itself and on the varied paradigms and methods that challenge one another.

<http://www.apaonline.org/publications/texts/statementonmajor.aspx>

(Last revised: May 30, 2006)

Consonant with the APA's understanding of disciplined philosophical thinking, we expect graduating Philosophy majors will be able to write philosophical essays that carry out disciplined in-depth analyses of philosophical problems.

Measure 1: Instructors for the 400-level seminars and 300-level history of philosophy courses each term will report on each Philosophy major's ability to write philosophical essays that carry out disciplined in-depth analyses of philosophical problems. Students who receive positive reports in at least three seminars or history courses will be considered to have demonstrated appropriate analytical ability. Seminar/history course reports each year will indicate that 80% of graduating majors have demonstrated this ability.

Measure 2: Exit surveys of graduating majors will show that 80% agree or strongly agree that they have gained the ability to write philosophical essays that carry out disciplined in-depth analyses of philosophical problems.

1d. Philosophical research: Graduating Philosophy majors will be able to use various print and electronic sources of information effectively when doing philosophical research. (Such sources may include catalogues, books, periodicals, databases, indexes, encyclopedias, and bibliographies.) Graduating majors will also be able to evaluate and analyze information gathered from a variety of sources in the course of their philosophical research.

Measure 1: Students will complete a one credit-hour course, PHL 240: Research Methodologies and Technologies. Completion of the course entails production of a satisfactory annotated bibliography on an assigned research question.

Measure 2: Student evaluation forms completed at the end of PHL 240 will show that 80% agree that they have acquired substantial skills in the use of print and electronic sources of information related to doing philosophical research.

Measure 3: Philosophy instructors who assist PHL majors who are writing Honors theses will be asked to evaluate the quality and quantity of the students' philosophical research. We expect that all Honors theses work will reflect significant quantity and high quality philosophical research.

Measure 4: Exit surveys of graduating majors will show that 80% agree or strongly agree that they have gained the stated abilities in philosophical research.

1e. Presentations and discussion: Graduating Philosophy majors will be able to make oral presentations that adequately reconstruct and offer critical evaluations of arguments

from philosophical texts. Graduating majors will also be able to formulate philosophical questions in seminar discussions and presentations.

Measure 1: Instructors for the 400-level seminars and 300-level history of philosophy courses each term will report on each Philosophy major's course presentation(s) and contributions to discussion. Students who receive positive reports in at least three seminars or history courses will be considered to have demonstrated appropriate abilities. Seminar/history course reports each year will indicate that 80% of graduating majors have demonstrated the stated abilities.

Measure 2: Exit surveys of graduating majors will show that 80% agree or strongly agree that they have gained the stated abilities.

Measure 3: Some Philosophy majors each year will deliver scholarly papers at undergraduate philosophy conferences.

Measure 4: Some Philosophy majors every year will give a poster presentation or participate in a scholarly activity at the annual Stander Symposium.

2. Faith traditions: *All undergraduates will develop and demonstrate ability to engage in intellectually informed, appreciative, and critical inquiry regarding major faith traditions. Students will be familiar with the basic theological understandings and central texts that shape Catholic beliefs and teachings, practices, and spiritualities. Students' abilities should be developed sufficiently to allow them to examine deeply their own faith commitments and also to participate intelligently and respectfully in dialogue with other traditions.*

Identifying courses engaging in intellectually informed, appreciative, and critical inquiry regarding major faith traditions:

The introductory course PHL 103 invites students to a reflective and critical appraisal of the connection between faith and reason.

This engagement is further developed through such courses as PHL 308, (Metaphysics), PHL 311(Philosophy of Religion), PHL 304 (Philosophy of Human Nature), PHL358 (Marxist Philosophy)

Various courses of history of philosophy (PHL 352: Modern Philosophy, PHL 353: Kant and Nineteenth-Century Philosophy, PHL 354: Twentieth-Century Philosophy) offer opportunities for serious reflections on the connection between religion and knowledge

Measure 1: Review of syllabi and related reading materials for the purpose of determining the extent to which the courses deal with the above themes.

Measure 2: Discussions with respective instructors on the concrete manner the above themes are treated in class, the problems they face, and the additional means (conferences, guest speakers, etc.) they use to facilitate the understanding of the themes.

Measure 3: prepare questionnaires to determine how students appreciate discussions on faith and reason.

Identifying courses familiarizing students with the basic theological understandings and central texts that shape Catholic beliefs and teachings, practices, and spiritualities

The courses PHL 351 (Medieval Philosophy), PHL 356 (Christian Philosophy), and PHL 350 (Classical Greek Philosophy) familiarize students with the basic texts of Catholic beliefs and practices.

Measure 1: Review of syllabi and related reading materials for the purpose of determining the extent to which the courses treat the above themes.

Measure 2: Discussions with respective instructors on the concrete manner the above themes are treated in class, the problems they face, and the additional means (conferences, guest speakers, etc.) they use to facilitate the understanding of the themes.

Measure 3: prepare questionnaires to determine how students appreciate discussions on the basic beliefs and practices of Catholic religion

Identifying courses examining one's own faith commitments and participating intelligently and respectfully in dialogue with other traditions

The theme is one of the goals of courses specialized in the study of major cultural traditions. They are: PHL 373 (Philosophy and Cultural Diversity); PHL 355 (Asian Philosophy); PHL 356 (Christian Philosophy); PHL 361 (American Philosophy); PHL 363 (African Philosophy); PHL 365 (Islamic Philosophy and Culture); PHL 364 (Race, Gender, and Philosophy)

Measure 1: Review of syllabi and related reading materials for the purpose of determining the extent to which the courses treat the above themes.

Measure 2: Discussions with respective instructors on the concrete manner the above themes are treated in class, the problems they face, and the additional means (conferences, guest speakers, etc.) they use to facilitate the understanding of the themes.

Measure 3: prepare questionnaires to determine how students appreciate the theme of dialogue among various religious traditions.

3. Diversity: *All undergraduates will develop and demonstrate intellectually informed, appreciative, and critical understanding of the cultures, histories, times, and places of multiple others, as marked by class, race, gender, ethnicity, religion, nationality, sexual orientation, and other manifestations of difference. Students' understanding will reflect scholarly inquiry, experiential immersion, and disciplined reflection.*

The Philosophy Department's curriculum demonstrates its commitment to the promotion of diversity, by which we mean the development of an informed and critical understanding of cultures, histories, times and places of multiple others, as marked by class, race, gender, ethnicity, religion, nationality, sexual orientation, and other manifestations of difference. Almost all of our courses advance some aspect of the diversity goal. Furthermore, we recognize the contribution that a diverse faculty and student body make towards the obtainment of our goal. Thus we strive continually to recruit and retain faculty and majors, who contribute to our appreciation of multiple others.

3a. Diverse and inclusive learning community within the classroom: Appreciation for and understanding of multiple others demands a diverse learning community. The department will promote diversity within its majors.

Measure 1: Philosophy majors do not tend to represent the university as a whole. The department needs to develop recruitment and retention procedures to promote classroom diversity.

Measure 2: Exit survey to assess the classroom climate with respect to diversity.

3b. Diverse faculty: A diverse faculty enables the understanding and appreciation of other perspectives. It also encourages minority students to pursue this discipline. The department will promote and sustain a diverse faculty.

Measure 1: When hiring new faculty, consider who can contribute to a diverse learning community either as a minority or by virtue of their specialization.

Measure 2: Develop recruitment and retention procedures in regards to hiring.

3c. Diverse course content: The philosophy department offers a variety of courses that contribute broadly to our diversity goal. Majors can also choose the Culture and Human Diversity Track.

Measure 1: Identification of courses whose course content encourage critical understanding of multiple others.

Majors can use the following courses to fulfill their nine credit hour elective requirement and to satisfy nearly all of our philosophy tracks.
PHL 304: Philosophy of Human Nature; PHL 310: Social Philosophy;

PHL 311: Philosophy of Religion; PHL 320: Philosophy of Art; PHL 323: Philosophy and Literature; PHL 325: Philosophy of Music; PHL 327: Philosophy of Peace; PHL 328: Philosophy of Punishment; PHL 356: Christian Philosophy; PHL 370: Political Philosophy; PHL 332: Technology and Values; PHL 373: Philosophy and Cultural Diversity; PHL 331: Science, Objectivity and Values.

Measure 2: Review of syllabi and related reading materials for the purpose of determining the extent to which they inculcate appreciation and dialogue between multiple others.

Measure 3: Discussions with respective instructors on the concrete manner the above these are treated in class.

Measure 4: Majors choosing the Culture and Human Diversity Track must take two of the following courses: PHL 307: Philosophy of Women; PHL 355: Asian Philosophy; PHL 361: American Philosophy; PHL 363: African Philosophy; PHL 364: Race, Gender, and Philosophy; PHL 365: Islamic Philosophy and Culture. Review of syllabi and related reading materials for the purpose of determining the extent to which the courses inculcate appreciation and dialogue between multiple others.

3d. Promotion of diversity through lectures:

Measure 1: Description of lectures, colloquia, guest speakers and conference that encourage the appreciation of multiple others. Provide exit survey to attendees with questions regarding the diversity value of the activity.

4. Community: *All undergraduates will develop and demonstrate understanding of and practice in the values and skills necessary for learning, living, and working in communities of support and challenge. These values and skills include accepting difference, resolving conflicts peacefully, and promoting reconciliation; they encompass productive, discerning, creative, and respectful collaboration with persons from diverse backgrounds and perspectives for the common purpose of learning, service, and leadership that aim at just social transformation. Students will demonstrate these values and skills on campus and in the Dayton region as part of their preparation for global citizenship.*

Identifying courses discussing:

acceptance of diversity: PHL 373 (Philosophy and Cultural Diversity), PHL 355 (Asian Philosophy), PHL 356 (Christian Philosophy), PHL 361 (American Philosophy), PHL 363 (African Philosophy), PHL 365 (Islamic Philosophy and Culture), PHL 364 (Race, Gender, and Philosophy), PHL 307 (Philosophy and Women)

reconciliation and peaceful resolution of conflicts: PHL 317 (Ethics and Modern War), PHL 327 (Philosophy of Peace), PHL 371 (Philosophy and Human Rights), PHL 314 (Philosophy of Law), and PHL 328 (Philosophy of Punishment), and PHL 318 (Family Ethics)

the idea of collaboration for the common purpose of achieving a just social transformation: PHL 310 (Social Philosophy), PHL 312 (Ethics), PHL 370 (Political Philosophy), and PHL 375 (Ethical Theory).

professional responsibilities: PHL 313 (Business Ethics), PHL 332 (Technology and Values), PHL 321 (Environmental Ethics), PHL 319 (Information Ethics), PHL 318 (Family Ethics), PHL 316 (Engineering Ethics), PHL 315 (Medial Ethics)

Measure 1: Review of syllabi and related reading materials with the view of evaluating how the courses treat the above themes.

Measure 2: Discussions with respective instructors on the concrete manner the above themes are treated in class, the problems they face, and the additional means (conferences, guest speakers, etc.) they use to facilitate the understanding of the themes.

Measure 3: Evaluate programs inviting students to apply their values and skills in the concrete conditions of communal activities.

Measure 4: prepare questionnaires to determine how students appreciate lectures and discussions on acceptance of diversity, peaceful resolution of conflicts, social change, and professional responsibilities.

5. Practical wisdom: *All undergraduates will develop and demonstrate practical wisdom in addressing real human problems and deep human needs, drawing upon advanced knowledge, values, and skills in their chosen profession or major course of study. Starting with a conception of human flourishing, students will be able to define and diagnose symptoms, relationships, and problems clearly and intelligently, construct and evaluate possible solutions, thoughtfully select and implement solutions, and critically reflect on the process in light of actual consequences.*

Traditionally it is the study of philosophy that guides students towards a life governed by practical wisdom. Practical wisdom is the type of knowledge whose domain is correct action. Theories of practical wisdom delineate the processes, elements and formulas involved in the discernment and achievement of the moral good. Hence, all theories of practical wisdom presuppose a theory of the good. The Philosophy Department encourages its majors to discover for themselves the theory that best exemplifies their moral intuitions.

5a. Develop a conception of human flourishing: All majors will be capable of reflecting critically on the nature of the human good and how to achieve said good.

Measure 1: The philosophy department recently added PHL 375: Moral Theory to its requirements. This course familiarizes students with the Aristotelian, Kantian and Utilitarian conceptions of the good, the three paradigmatic conceptions of human flourishing, and is designed to prepare students for upper level courses in ethical theory. Survey professors teaching the upper level courses in ethics to see whether PHL 375 properly prepares students for their courses.

Measure 2: Identification of courses familiarizing students to conceptions of the highest human good and how best they are obtained.

Majors can use the following courses to fulfill their nine credit hour elective requirement or to satisfy the Ethics and Social Justice track of the philosophy major. PHL 310: Social Philosophy; PHL 327: Philosophy of Peace; PHL 357: Radical Philosophy; PHL 358: Marxist Philosophy; PHL 370: Political Philosophy; and PHL 371: Philosophy and Human Rights.

Measure 3: Review of syllabi and related reading materials for the purpose of determining the extent to which the courses treat the above themes.

Measure 4: Discussions with respective instructors on the concrete manner the above themes are treated in class.

5b. Recognition of real human problems and needs and an ability to reflect critically on solutions to these problems and needs: If critiquing or applying a moral philosophy, a deep understanding of human problems is needed. Graduating philosophy majors have many opportunities to study such problems.

Measure 1: Identification of courses familiarizing students with human problems and needs.

The following courses pertain to five different professional ethics groups: business, computers, engineering, the medical and biological sciences, and military science. Among these include: PHL 313: Business Ethics; PHL 315: Medical Ethics; PHL 316: Engineering Ethics; PHL 317: Ethics and Modern War; PHL 319: Information Ethics; PHL 321: Environmental Ethics; and PHL 332: Technology and Values. Majors can use these courses to fulfill their nine credit hour elective requirement or to satisfy the Ethics and Social Justice track of the philosophy major.

In addition to niche-group courses, we offer courses in social philosophy. These courses include: PHL 307: Philosophy and Women; PHL 310: Social Philosophy; PHL 318: Family Ethics; PHL 364: Race, Gender and Philosophy. Majors can use these courses to fulfill their nine credit hour

elective requirement or to satisfy the Ethics and Social Justice track of the philosophy major.

Measure 2: Review of syllabi and related reading materials for the purpose of determining the extent to which the courses treat the above themes.

Measure 3: Conduct survey to determine whether these courses are taken mostly by students in the professional schools and whether they are at the level to engage philosophy majors.

6. Critical evaluation of our times: *Through multidisciplinary study, all undergraduates will develop and demonstrate habits of inquiry and reflection, informed by familiarity with Catholic Social Teaching, that equip them to evaluate critically and imaginatively the ethical, historical, social, political, technological, economic, and ecological challenges of their times in light of the past.*

Philosophy is particularly important for the development of the critical reflection needed in the contemporary world. Students in our classes often comment that their philosophy courses are one of the few places where they can do their own thinking about what is happening in the world and how best to understand and respond to this world. It is worth noting that the humanities courses in history are also fundamental to achieving this goal. Our majors profit greatly from the courses in history. Moreover, collaboration with other humanities departments as well as with social science faculty has resulted in the development of interdisciplinary minors that address this goal. In particular, the minor, and now the major, in Human Rights enable students to address the social issues of vital importance for contemporary times. Other integrated learning experiences such as Core and SEE have also been supported by faculty in philosophy. In addition, faculty in philosophy have played a key role in developing the minor in Marianist Social Transformation. Our major provides several tracks which especially contribute to the achievement of this goal. These include: “Ethics and Social Justice,” “Science, Technology, and Values,” and “Culture and Human Diversity.”

7. Vocation: *Using appropriate scholarly and communal resources, all undergraduates will develop and demonstrate ability to articulate reflectively the purposes of their life and proposed work through the language of vocation. In collaboration with the university community, students’ developing vocational plans will exhibit appreciation of the fullness of human life, including its intellectual, ethical, spiritual, aesthetic, social, emotional, and bodily dimensions, and will examine both the interdependence of self and community and the responsibility to live in service of others.*

This goal is one that is best achieved through advising and mentoring. It is in close work with faculty in a specific discipline that students begin to make career and life vocation decisions. Our majors are reflective in choosing their careers and life directions. We have students who go on to develop lives in teaching, medicine, law, and community service. Philosophy ultimately pushes one to self-examination. Our immediate practical

goal is to ensure that graduating Philosophy majors will be well prepared for admission to post-baccalaureate degree programs.

Measure 1: Exit surveys of graduating majors will show that 80% agree or strongly agree that they are well prepared for admission to post-baccalaureate degree programs.

Measure 2: 80% of graduating seniors who apply for post-baccalaureate degree programs will be accepted.

Measure 3: Exit surveys of graduating majors will show that 80% agree or strongly agree that they received adequate guidance from Department faculty in selecting and applying to programs of post-baccalaureate study.