

Date of Report: May 13, 2010

Semesters or Academic Years the Assessment Report Covers: 2009-10

Division: Arts and Humanities

Department: Philosophy

Faculty: Alan Preti, Michael Thompson

Chair or Person Preparing the Report: Alan Preti

Profile

Number of Majors: 2 double majors

Number of Faculty: 1 FT, 1 PT

Courses Offered in the Assessment Period: Biomedical Ethics, Critical Thinking, Ethics and Social Values, Introduction to Philosophy, Political Philosophy II

Departmental Factors that Affect Assessment: The most serious factor affecting departmental assessment at the moment is the lack of declared majors. With this in mind, this assessment report will focus on the extent to which the outcomes selected were met by **all** students in the classes included in this report.

Learning Outcomes

Outcome 1.1: In either Critical Thinking or Logic: The Art of Reasoning, 80% of philosophy students will earn a final grade in the 'B' range or above (signifying 83% or better out of the total number of possible points).

Outcome 1.2: On a standardized rubric that assesses argument development and cogency, 80% of philosophy students will score from 'satisfactory' to 'excellent.'

Outcome 2.1: On examinations, paper assignments, and research assignments, 80% of philosophy students will score at least 80% out of the total number of points.

Outcome 2.2: On examinations, paper assignments, and research assignments, 80% of philosophy students will score at least 80% out of the total number of points, signifying their ability to demonstrate understanding of the origins of Judeo-Christian philosophical thought and its influence on Western culture.

Outcome 3.1: On the required Senior Thesis, 80% of philosophy majors will, on a standardized grading rubric, score at 'good' or above on each subcategory of the following: a) Writing quality (including grammar, organization, and style); and b) Philosophical quality (including thesis development, supporting evidence, assessment of counter-arguments, and creative philosophical thought).

Outcome 4.1: In any of the ethics courses, 80% of philosophy students will earn a final grade in the 'B' range or above (signifying 80% or better out of the total number of possible points).

These outcomes are made available to students via the iWay

Assessment

I. **Course:** Introduction to Philosophy (Fall 2009)

Learning outcome assessed: Outcome 1.2.

Assessment Measure: Standardized argumentative essay rubric

Results: Out of a total of 19 students, 17 scored from 'satisfactory' to 'excellent' – 2 above the minimally desired outcome.

II. **Course:** Critical Thinking (Spring 2010)

Learning outcome assessed: Outcome 1.1

Assessment Measure: Course grade

Results: Out of a total of 15 students, 5 students earned a final grade in the 'B' range or above – well below the desired outcome.

III. **Course:** Ethics and Social Values (Spring 2010)

Learning outcome assessed: Outcome 4.1

Assessment Measure: Course grade

Results: Out of a total of 25 students, 18 earned a final grade in the 'B' range or above – 2 short of the minimally desired outcome.

IV. **Course:** Senior Thesis (Fall 2009)

Learning outcome assessed: Outcome 3.1

Assessment Measure: Standardized argumentative essay rubric

Results: Excellent – 1

Because the sole philosophy major scored at 'excellent' for each of the subcategories assessed on the grading rubric, the outcome was met.

Changes Based on Assessment

Overall, the results suggest that little to no change is needed in the ethics courses, the introductory course, and the senior thesis. The Critical Thinking course will require some reassessment, either in terms of the material covered or in terms of the expected outcome. Some cooperation with another department, e.g. English, may help with respect to building the core skills associated with this course; the extent to which this is feasible will be explored.

Recommendations for Improving the Assessment Process

I am in the process of reevaluating the way the current assessment plan is structured. The current plan was framed with philosophy majors in mind, and the expectations regarding outcomes were perhaps somewhat more stringent than they should be for non-majors. As mentioned above, the lack of majors necessitates a reconsideration of these expectations.