General Education Annual Course Assessment Form

Course Number/Title: Philosophy 61: Moral Issues  
GE Area: C2

Results reported for AY 2016-2017  
# of sections: 14  
# of instructors: 9

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Department Chair: Janet Stemwedel  
College: H & A

Instructions: Each year, the department will prepare a brief (two page maximum) report that documents the assessment of the course during the year. This report will be **electronically submitted**, by the department chair, to the Office of Undergraduate Studies, with an electronic copy to the home college by Oct. 1 of the following academic year.

**Part 1**

To be completed by the course coordinator:

1. What SLO(s) were assessed for the course during the AY?

SLO 3: “Letters courses will enable students to write clearly and effectively. Writing shall be assessed for correctness, clarity, and conciseness.”

In this course, students engage contemporary moral issues using moral/ethical theories presented in class. Students are expected to apply these theories in research-based analyses that showcase insight into the issue in question and engagement with a historically important moral theory. Instructors can assign one or several papers in which students take a position on the issue and present their argument, which itself must be cogent and valid. The paper requires students to engage in library or online database research and the final version of the paper must include at least five sources. The final version of the papers is heavily scrutinized for clarity, correctness, conciseness, and originality.

2. What were the results of the assessment of this course? What were the lessons learned from the assessment?

Instructors evaluated this SLO with a mix of in-class written essays and formal argumentative essays. Michael Jordan had students do both. The in-class essays were based on specific issues related to the specific topic for the week. Formal out of class essays were tied to an in-class group assignment. Students were provided with a rubric in advance and were allowed to turn the essay in early to be reviewed prior to the due date. The average grade for both in-class and formal assignments was a B+, which Prof. Jordan reports is higher than last semester, which averaged a B. Prof. Brown and Bashaw, Osborne and Gullion, evaluated the SLO with formal end-of-the year papers related to a topic of the student's choice. Generally speaking, instructors report that student writing improved from the beginning of the semester to the end, so that their papers showcased a much refined and clearer argumentative style.

In measuring attainment of the SLO, instructors considered: (1) students’ understanding of the topic in question, (2) their understanding of the history of philosophy or of the history of the topic, and (3) their ability to assess the arguments presented and an ability to defend their position, (4) their ability to apply secondary source material to their personal analysis, and (5) a measured improvement in writing skills over the course of the semester. More specifically, evaluation of the papers showed that over 80% of students had a clear grasp of the subject about which they chose to write; over 60% could adequately situate their subject within the history of philosophy; 80% could clearly and articulately assess the arguments presented and defend their position; and a little under 70% could apply secondary source material to their personal analysis. What was clear, however, was that by the end of the semester over 90% of students who had turned in their papers have achieved a greater familiarity with their chosen topic.
(3) What modifications to the course, or its assessment activities or schedule, are planned for the upcoming year? (If no modifications are planned, the course coordinator should indicate this.)

There are no planned modifications for the evaluation of this SLO. Writing research-based papers in philosophy courses is standard and so is evaluating these for clarity, originality, and rigorous scholarship.

**Part 2**

To be completed by the department chair (with input from course coordinator as appropriate):

(4) Are all sections of the course still aligned with the area Goals, Student Learning Objectives (SLOs), Content, Support, and Assessment? If they are not, what actions are planned?

Yes - Janet Stemwedel

(5) If this course is in a GE Area with a stated enrollment limit (Areas A1, A2, A3, C2, D1, R, S, V, & Z), please indicate how oral presentations will be evaluated with larger sections (Area A1), or how practice and revisions in writing will be addressed with larger sections, particularly how students are receiving thorough feedback on the writing which accounts for the minimum word count in this GE category (Areas A2, A3, C2, D1, R, S, V, & Z) and, for the writing intensive courses (A2, A3, and Z), documentation that the students are meeting the GE SLOs for writing.

The instructor of record provides feedback and grades all writing assignments and welcomes, if not requires, first drafts of all writing assignments and provides feedback on drafts. If sections are exceptionally oversized they are graded by the instructor of record with the assistance of an Instructional Student Assistant (ISA). The ISA must be approved both by the Instructional Assistant Coordinator and the Philosophy Department Chair for their excellence in both composition and their expertise in the field of philosophy at issue. Whenever an ISA aids in the grading of a large course, s/he provides feedback along with grading. In all cases, when the help of an ISA is employed, the instructor of record must explicitly notify the students of the class that some writing assignments have been graded and feedback has been provided by an ISA. If a student is unhappy with an ISA grade the instructor of record will reread the paper, provide additional feedback, and regrade the assignment (if that is warranted.) Generally speaking, any instructor who is teaching more than 100 GE students in a semester receives ISA help.