Part 1

To be completed by the course coordinator:

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

Students will be able to recognize the interrelation of the physiological, social/cultural, and psychological factors on their development across the lifespan.

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

The interrelation of the physiological, social/cultural, and psychological factors on their development across the lifespan were explored through studying texts such as: *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, *The Flying Man* by Ibn Sina, Plato’s *Symposium* and *On Female Bodies Experience*, by Iris Young.

Prof. Giddings started with the *Epic of Gilgamesh* and discussed the bodies of men, the psycho-social factors in the time of Gilgamesh, power, social structures, and male sexual power used against women in this story. Gilgamesh used his position of power to rape women who were betrothed and this crossed moral boundaries as well as body boundaries. Students discussed in groups, then in open discussion, and written reflections.

In a more contemporary context, Young’s book allowed both women and men in the class to speak about women's bodies, how men view women and their bodies, menstruation and how women feel about it in regards to socio-cultural norms and how men feel about a woman bleeding. It made for rich discussions and written reflections. I was amazed at how many men talked about their grandmother's and their aging bodies or their mother's and menstruation; and, how many men asked women in the class about how they feel men 'see' them. It was amazing.

Prof. Giddings’ reports being impressed by the deeply serious and systematic many of the students were in question related to this SLO. Students talked about their respective socio-ethnic influences especially from an ethnic point of view, and the human physiological and psychological effects that make them the persons they are.
To a query about his teaching of this SLO Anthony Korsund writes The interrelation of the physiological, social/cultural, and psychological influences on human development throughout the lifespan is a central theme throughout the course, though from a philosophical perspective of course. One way this is achieved is through the various ways philosophers have addressed the relationship of mind and body. For instance, I address this is by starting with Plato's conception of the soul (nous) and its dualistic relationship to the body as a separate entity. I emphasize how this dualistic view can be found in various ways in Western traditional views about the self/person, and how it often goes unchallenged. We then contrast this with Aristotle's non-dualistic treatment of the soul in relationship to the body through his "materio-formal" account (or *hylemorphism*), as something which is not distinct as an entity, but rather simply another aspect by which to understand our existence as human beings.

We talk about how Aristotle’s criteria help us to distinguish the uniqueness of human beings from other living things (further analysis of personality comes later). Students come to understand Aristotle’s treatment of the soul as another aspect (formal/actual) of the embodied (material/potential) existence of living things, by coming to appreciate our differing capacities as a species from other species. This falls into Aristotle’s tripartite distinction between the nutritive, sensitive and rational levels or degrees of souls. This nested hierarchy helps students to appreciate from a philosophical perspective the differing degrees of “soul” in Aristotle based on the varying physiological capacities of living organisms as represented by their formal cause, or organizing principle in Aristotle’s model. We use Aristotle’s traditional distinctions between formal and material causes, as well as actual and potential activities as a way to understand how human capacities are unique from other living things, not to mention distinct from non-living things.

Using this idea of differing physiological capacities as a way to understand what Aristotle meant by the soul as the formal and potential aspects of human existence, we go on to challenge Aristotle’s system of classification for accuracy and inclusivity. I address this with the question: “Did Aristotle go far enough in his classification?” The class is invited to discuss a wide-range of social identifiers in relationship to our embodied experience based on age, race, gender, mental/physical ability, as well as socio/ethnic background, and spiritual/religious value systems, etc. This is usually a very rich discussion and students have a lot to say. This turns into a discussion about the development of human existence from infancy to adulthood, and later the elderly stages of life. I further explore this idea by introducing the idea of neuroplasticity of the brain. At this stage we discuss neuroplasticity in a very general way. It’s much later in the semester, after addressing the relationship of mind-body from other philosophical perspectives—e.g., in the work of Descartes, Locke, Brentano, etc.—that I reintroduce the idea of neuroplasticity through the article “Aristotle and Agent-Directed Neuroplasticity” by Eric LaRock. I use this contemporary reading as a way to help students further analyze the debate between materialism and dualism with regard to how we view the mind/body relationship. The article discusses current research in neuroscience to explain agency in terms of the brain’s physiological role (materialism) in personal development, but without reducing or equating agency to purely physiological brain states on the grounds of the unity of experience. Further, it recognizes, in Aristotelian terms, that the agent possesses (formal) causal power to affect (i.e., influence/organize) the brain on grounds of agent-directed neuroplasticity. In other words, the social, cultural, and personal experiences an agent has, in conjunction with certain rational decisions made about those experiences and adopted habits, can have an organizing influence on the physiological health and function of our brains (material). This gives students a lot to think about and a topic by which they can exercise the insights they have learned throughout the semester, as they decide for themselves their own views regarding the mind-body relationship.

The way I assess student learning in this area is through a 1200 word essay, prompted by the following essay prompt:
Essay Prompt:
In LaRock’s article “Aristotle and Agent-Directed Neuroplasticity” what insights do you find at play regarding Aristotle’s “materio-formal” account of the soul? Would you characterize LaRock’s view as materialistic and/or dualistic? How so? Do you agree or disagree with LaRock’s view and why? Do other thinkers addressed in class (e.g., Descartes, Locke, Brentano, etc.) help to inform your opinion? How so?

(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.)

No modifications are planned at this time.

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 (GELOs), Content, Support, and Assessment? If they are not, what actions are planned?

Yes, Janet Stemwedel, Chair, Department of Philosophy

(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 GELOs for writing.

This course is in Area E which is not listed here.