General Education Annual Course Assessment Form

Course Number/Title: PHIL 104 “Asian Philosophy”       GE Area: V

Results reported for AY: 2017-2018       # of sections: 6       # of instructors: 4

Course Coordinator: Bo Mou       E-mail: bo.mou@sjsu.edu

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 September 1 of the following academic year.

The two-page report of PHIL104 (for the 2017-18 academic year)

Part 1 - To be completed by the course coordinator:

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

We assessed SLO 1: “Students shall be able to compare systematically the ideas, values, images, cultural artifacts, economic structures, technological developments, or attitudes of people from more than one culture outside the U.S.” To achieve this objective, the course takes a comparative approach in philosophy. Before indicating how SLO 1 is assessed, let me first briefly explain how a philosophical comparative examination distinguishes itself from comparative examination in social sciences and even some other disciplines in humanities in some important aspects. Philosophical comparative examination does not lie in a purely historical description but enquires into how, via reflective criticism and argumentation and under adequate guiding principles, distinct approaches (different views, visions, and methodological resources) from different traditions can learn from each other and make joint contributions to our understanding and treatment of a range of issues or topics of philosophical significance, which can be jointly concerned through appropriate philosophical interpretation and from a broader philosophical vantage point. In view of this and of the typical constitution of the students of this GE class (most of them are neither philosophy major nor have taken any philosophy classes before), to have the students well-prepared for effectively carrying out the comparative examination in this philosophy class (though the class is cross-referenced as religious studies 104 and Asian studies 104, the class is on Asian philosophy, instead on Asian religion or Asian thought), some modifications concerning the class contents and its assessment activities have been suggested. (1) As needed preliminaries, the instructor is expected to briefly introduce the nature, foci, and characteristic features of philosophical inquiries, explain the relation between philosophy and Asian philosophy, and clarify the connection and distinction between philosophical inquiry and religious thinking in examining Asian philosophy. (2) As needed methodological guidance to help the students think philosophically in such comparative examination: the instructor is expected to explain to the students the distinction and connection between purely historical description and philosophical interpretation regarding how to understand ancient Asian thinkers’ ideas/texts especially when they are compared with some relevant philosophical ideas/resources from other traditions and/or from contemporary philosophy. (3) In view of the nature and goal of this GE class, the comparative analysis in cross-tradition philosophical engagement is encouraged to focus either on distinct methodological approaches or models from some Asian philosophical tradition and some other Asian or non-Asian philosophical tradition (say, the Western tradition) or on distinct substantial approaches from the different traditions on some issues in philosophy that are jointly-concerned through philosophical interpretation. These contents are intended to help the students philosophically reflect on the relevant differences and similarities between distinct approaches under comparative examination, which might be introduced first in a historical descriptive way, and whose recognition by the students might be tested by such difference/similarity-identifying questions in exams like true-false questions, multiple-choice question questions and
short-answer questions that, however, cannot show the students’ comparative analysis and argumentation for the sake of the aforementioned philosophical engagement. To test and assess the students’ capacity and understanding of philosophical comparative examination that involves philosophical interpretation and comparative analysis beyond merely identifying the difference/similarity between the distinct approaches under comparative examination, assessment via essay question and term paper assignment [expected to go with the instructor’s feedback to the students’ work in these connections in some form(s)] is more adequate to serve that purpose, though some well-designed true-false or multiple-choice questions could also serve the purpose. In this way, in this academic year, it has been suggested that the assessment questions concerning the aforementioned expected contents be included to assess the SOL 1. Generally speaking, during the current 2017-18 academic year with focus on SOL 1 assessment, the instructors are expected to assess SOL 1 primarily via an essay question or term paper involving the aforementioned three contents that can test the students’ understanding and capacity of philosophical analysis and argumentation in comparative examination at this advance-level GE class (together with or without true-false/multiple-choice questions).

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

Bo Mou taught two sections of PHIL104 during Spring 2018 (one in-classroom section and one online section with the total 56 students). Mou gave the term paper assignment that asks the students to explain, compares and apply two representative methodological models from Chinese and Western philosophical traditions (i.e., the Yin-Yang model, together with its Daoist elaboration, and the Hegelian model) to look at distinct approaches to one issue in philosophy or in the student’s own area of study or in public areas of contemporary times. In this way, the instructor encouraged and helped the students to actively apply the methodological resources and philosophical visions that they learn from this class to treat distinct approaches to the real issues in their lives with the guidance of adequate methodological guiding principles. To give the students due feedback, Mou asked the students to first complete the first versions of their term papers and then, based on the instructor’s feedback comments on the first versions, complete the final versions. The result of Mou’s assessment is this: (1) among first versions of the term papers (20 points), around 22 students received the “satisfactory”-level assessment (“A+”, “A”, “A-”, “B+” and “B”), while the others needs substantial improvements (“B-” and lower than “B-“); (2) among the final versions of the term papers (10 points), after the substantial improvement in response to the instructor’s feedback comments on the first versions, 48 students received the “satisfactory”-level assessment.

Chanh Phan taught two sections of PHIL104 during Fall 2017 (with the total 28 students). The Fall 2017 GE Assessment Test on SLO1 (50 points) consisted of an objective test on background information (30 points) and a subjective test giving a comparative analysis of some metaphysical issue [“How had all things come being?”] and its related methodological issue in view of Daoist and Hinduist resources respectively from the Chinese and Indian philosophical traditions] (20 points). For the total 28 students, the following grade breakdown is given: "A" Grade Range (50 points): 2 students; "B" Grade Range (40-49 points): 10 students; "C" Grade Range (30-39 points): 14 students; "D" Grade Range (20-29 points): 2 students.

Anthony Korsund taught one section of PHIL104 during Spring 2018 (with the total 35 students). Activities for mastering SLO1 included a series of three writing assignments which required students to examine in written format the distinctive approaches not only within Asian philosophy, but also from different (Asian and Western) philosophical traditions. Assessment of SLO1 was accomplished through various paper assignments, addressing the following questions: “How were early forms of Chinese Buddhism derived from Indian Buddhist philosophy? How did the Mahayana movement within Indian Buddhism develop and change over time in China? In other words, how was Mahayana Buddhism from India received, translated and later transformed by native Chinese traditions of thought, such as Yi-jing philosophy, Daoism and Confucianism? How did the development of later Chinese Chan Buddhism influence the development of Zen thought in feudal Japan?” Together the three paper assignments accounted for 75% of each student’s overall performance in the course. Assessment results for SLO 1 are as follows: 11 students received a "very good" (A-, A or A+) assessment; 21 received a "good" (B-, B or B+) assessment; and 2 received a "satisfactory" (C) assessment.

Tony Nguyen taught one section of PHIL104 during Fall 2017. To fulfill SLO1, he compared some ideas in Asian philosophy to their western counterparts and use history to understand the real world conditions that sparked these ideas; he also showed contemporary versions of these philosophies in the everyday culture and symbols today (i.e. the Doaist symbols in the Korean flag, the influence of Indian Epics in Bollywood movies, Zen/Bushido Ethics in Anime series like Bleach or Naruto). Students wrote two term papers and a longer final paper. The short papers asked students how
different philosophers their theories would solve a philosophical problem or issue. A complete paper would have to draw from different traditions.

(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.)

In view of the aforementioned considerations, in the 2019-20 academic year when the SOL1 is focused on again, all the instructors are expected to follow the unified procedure of assessment with the due coverage of the suggested SOL1-related contents as specified in (1) above. To assist all the instructors of PHIL104 to effectively fulfill SOL 1 in the philosophical-comparative-examination setting of PHIL104, Bo Mou as the PHIL104 GE coordinator plans to hold several meetings with the other instructors (collectively and/or individually) during the 2018-19 academic year (Spring 2019) on how to more effectively implement SOL1 in teaching PHIL104.

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: Prof. Stemwedel, 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.

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.