**General Education Annual Course Assessment Form**

Course Number/Title: Phil 133/Ethics in Science  
GE Area  V

Results reported for AY 2014/2015  
# of sections  2  
# of instructors  1

Course Coordinator:  Janet D. Stemwedel  
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Department Chair:  Janet D. Stemwedel  
College: Humanities & Arts

**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.

**Part 1**  
To be completed by the course coordinator:

(1) 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.**

(2) In both sections of the course, students learned about the ideas and attitudes of people from multiple cultures towards science, its methodologies, and its goals, and examined how these ideas and attitudes are shaped by other cultural values.

We used an essay assignment to gauge students’ ability to compare the ways cultural context led to very different attitudes about biomedical research with human subjects in Germany during World War II and in modern sub-Saharan Africa. We used embedded questions on exams to assess students’ ability to compare how particular historical circumstances and cultural values drove attitudes towards scientific development in the Soviet Union during the period of “Lysenkoism” in post-colonial India, and in post-Apartheid South Africa. We used embedded questions on exams to compare the ways cultural contexts led to different attitudes about research with human subjects in a study of orphans in post-Ceaușescu Romania and in recent tests of Ebola vaccines in West Africa.

We felt that the majority of the student work assessed indicated that students were able to compare ideas and attitudes towards science and scientific methodology and to understand the cultural contexts that shape these ideas and attitudes. As we have seen historically, the students became more articulate in their explanations of these connections as the term went on.

(3) We feel that our current course design and methods of assessment are working for us, and plan no modifications 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 (SLOs), Content, Support, and Assessment? If they are not, what actions are planned?

Yes – Janet D. Stemwedel, Department Chair
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. The instructor of record, 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. The Instructional Student Assistant 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 the philosophy at issue. Whenever an Instructional Student Assistant (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. The instructor of record then, if so requested by a student, must reread, provide additional feedback, and regrade the written assignment, if a grade revision is warranted."
Sample exam questions:

Explain the assumptions about the duties of scientific researchers towards human subjects reflected by the conduct of the “Nazi doctors” and the defense of their conduct offered at the Nuremberg trials. Compare these assumptions to the current assumptions about the scientific duties of scientific researchers towards human subjects in clinical trials of AIDS drugs in sub-Saharan Africa. *In your comparison, be sure to explain the ways historical context and cultural values shape these attitudes about the ethics of research with human subjects.* (Also, be sure to explain the different attitudes that the researchers and the human subjects bring to their interaction.)

Different societies have different views of what scientific research is good for. Compare the national agendas for scientific research and development that emerged as India gained independence after British colonial rule and as South Africa emerged from Apartheid. Describe the cultural values and attitudes towards science (both what it had done and what it might accomplish) that drove these agendas, and discuss the historical and cultural contexts that you think are most important to understanding the differences in these agendas.
Date: November 13, 2015  
From: Janet D. Stemwedel, Chair, Department of Philosophy

In AY 2014-2015, PHIL 133 had three sections, two of which were 9 students over the limit and one of which was 70 over the limit. All of the faculty members teaching PHIL 133 require more than 3000 words in written work from their students, write extensive comments on papers, and provide sufficient time before the end of the semester for students to benefit from the comments. Our practice has to assign frequent short assignments (e.g., 500 word essays, 300 word initial responses to case studies, 700 word analyses of scholarly scientific and popular sources) starting early in the term, with comments returned to students on each assignment before the subsequent assignment is due. Faculty encourage students to turn in a rough draft to receive comments before the final paper. In addition, faculty with a load of over 130 students total for the semester are provided with ISAs, graduate students or senior philosophy majors, to help with grading. ISAs are trained by the faculty members in best practices for grading written work. Faculty for PHIL 133 go over ISA work themselves to keep an eye on quality, and provide additional comments in the process.

Each section of PHIL 133 (including the largest) is interactive and allows plenty of room for student involvement and class discussion, both in Socratic dialogue with instructor and based on small group work in class. In addition, PHIL 130 has students utilize online discussion groups to work through the first case study assignment. The online discussion groups introduce an element of peer review in addition to the written feedback students receive from the instructor.

As is departmental policy, PHIL 133 instructors make students aware of our “Guidelines on Writing Papers in Philosophy,” a shared set of guidelines made available on our department website. In addition, they encourage students to make use of our Writing Center, which is staffed by ISAs for three days a week with the sole function of providing students who come in with feedback on writing. This is a supplement to faculty office hours, which themselves are devoted to providing writing feedback among other things.