Part 1
To be completed by the course coordinator:
(1) We assessed SLO 2: Students shall be able to identify the historical context of ideas and cultural traditions outside the U.S. and how they have influenced American culture.

(2) In both sections of the course, students learned about the historical development of the idea of objectivity as displayed in the development of anatomy texts in ancient Greece and in Renaissance Europe and in the disputes about the proper methodology for science that raged in 17th century Europe. As well, students explored the different strategies for achieving objective results in primatology that arose independently among Japanese primatologists and U.S. primatologists, and how these distinct methodologies have come to influence each other as an international community of primatology emerges. The students also considered how the objectivity of modern science has been called into question because of gender and racial biases. We used a reading response essay to gauge students’ grasp of these historical developments and their influence on the present culture of American science.

We used another essay assignment and a case study response to gauge students’ ability to explain the historical and cultural influences on attitudes in the U.S. and elsewhere regarding biomedical research with human subjects, paying special attention to the Hippocratic Oath (ancient Greece), medical experiments in Nazi Germany, recent clinical trials in modern sub-Saharan Africa, and more recent revelations of U.S.-led research on vulnerable populations in Guatemala. We used embedded questions on exams to assess students’ ability to explain how current ethical regulations in the U.S. respond to cultural considerations from human populations outside the U.S., and to explain why certain segments of the American public express distrust in the biomedical establishment despite these regulations.

The course instructor, Stemwedel, felt that the majority of the student work assessed indicated that students were able to identify the historical context of ideas and cultural traditions involved in the development of scientific methodology and responding to the practice of science, and to identify their influence on American culture, both within and without the tribe of science. As might be expected, 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 – Peter Hadreas, Department Chair

(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. 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 historical and cultural context of the treatment of human subjects by physicians in the Hippocratic tradition, by Nazi doctors in the medical experiments prosecuted in the Nuremberg trials, in the Tuskegee syphilis experiment, and in the prophylactic AZT trials in sub-Saharan Africa. Describe how the different assumptions about the duties of physicians and scientific researchers towards human subjects influenced the statements of ethical commitments in the Nuremberg Code, the Declaration of Helsinki, and the Belmont Report.

Describe the historical and cultural factors that shaped the research agendas of Japanese primatologists and of U.S. primatologists in the middle of the 20th century, and discuss how these factors led to distinct – and conflicting – views about the proper methodology for field research on primates. Discuss how these different understandings of what counts as “objective knowledge” have shaped the methodologies used as the community of primatologists has become a functioning international scientific community.