

**SJSU Annual Program Assessment Form
Academic Year 2015-2016**

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| Department: Philosophy |
| Program: Philosophy M.A. |
| College: Humanities & the Arts |
| Program Website: http://www.sjsu.edu/philosophy/curriculum/Degree_Programs/MA/ |
| Link to Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) on program website: http://www.sjsu.edu/philosophy/about/ |
| Program Accreditation (if any): n/a |
| Contact Person and Email: Janet D. Stemwedel janet.stemwedel@sjsu.edu |
| Date of Report: May 31, 2016 |

Part A

1. List of Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs)

(PLOs should be appropriate to the degree and consider national disciplinary standards, if they exist. Each outcome should describe how students can demonstrate learning.)

- PLO1 Be able to identify, understand, and critically discuss, both orally and in a sustained major written essay, and in a written exam taken without the benefit of notes, major figures, ideas, methods, and core areas in various historical periods, and in various traditions from around the world.
- PLO2 Have high-level skills in communication, critical inquiry, and the ability to collect and evaluate information successfully, and to use all of these skills in one's own original research.
- PLO3 Have an understanding of the demands of responsible citizenship and an understanding of how to make and defend ethical choices.
- PLO4 Have an understanding of the ways in which culture, race, ethnicity, gender, economic class, sexual orientation, and national membership influence perceptions about reality, knowledge, and value.
- PLO5 Be able to teach and assess all these skills and competencies at the lower division undergraduate level.

2. Map of PLOs to [University Learning Goals \(ULGs\)](#)

(Please indicate how your PLOs map to the University Learning Goals below by listing the PLO under each relevant ULG, or including this map in table form (see examples [here](#)). Use the link above for a full description of each ULG.)

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| ULG 1 – Specialized Knowledge PLO1 |
| ULG 2 – Broad Integrative Knowledge PLO1, PLO3, PLO4 |
| ULG 3 – Intellectual Skills PLO2, PLO5 |
| ULG 4 – Applied Knowledge PLO3, PLO4, PLO5 |
| ULG 5 – Social and Global Responsibilities PLO3, PLO4 |

3. Alignment – Matrix of PLOs to Courses

PLO1 [Phil 290, Phil 291, Phil 292, Phil 293 or Phil 157, Comprehensive exam]

PLO2 [Phil 290, Phil 291, Phil 292, Phil 293 or Phil 157, and the requirements for Plan A, Plan B option 1, or Plan B option 2]

PLO3 [Phil 290, Phil 292, comprehensive exam]

PLO4 [Phil 290, Phil 291, Phil 292]

PLO5 [Supervision of students in ISA and TA positions]

4. Planning – [Assessment Schedule](#)

(Please provide a reasonable, multi-year assessment plan that specifies when a PLO will be assessed (A), when you might plan to implement changes as a result of your assessment (I), and, if applicable, when you might reassess a given PLO (R) to gauge the impact of the change. All PLOs should be assessed at least once during each program planning cycle (usually 5 years). Add rows and columns as necessary.)

| | Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 3 | Year 4 | Year 5 |
|--------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| PLO 1 | A | IC | | | |
| PLO 2 | | A | IC | | |
| PLO 3 | | | | | A |
| PLO 4 | | | | A | IC |
| PLO 5 | | | A | IC | |

5. **Student Experience**

a. How are your PLOs and the ULGs communicated to students, e.g. websites, syllabi, promotional material, etc.?

PLOs are discussed with incoming students and listed on department website. Website redesign is anticipated this summer. Updated website will prominently feature PLOs.

Relevant PLOs will be listed on courses syllabi and in assignment descriptions.

b. Do students have an opportunity to provide feedback regarding your PLOs and/or the assessment process? If so, please briefly elaborate.

We are exploring ways to solicit student feedback on PLOs and how they are assessed.

Part B

6. **Assessment Data and Results**

(Please briefly describe the data collected for this report (e.g., student papers, posters, presentations, portfolios, assignments, exams). The instruments used to evaluate student achievement (e.g., rubrics or other criteria) and actual data (e.g., assignment description or instructions) should be attached as appendices.)

We assessed PLO 1: “Be able to identify, understand, and critically discuss, both orally and in a sustained major written essay, and in a written exam taken without the benefit of notes, major figures, ideas, methods, and core areas in various historical periods, and in various traditions from around the world.”

One primary assessment tool for PLO 1 is our Comprehensive Examination (Comp). Every MA student must take and pass the Comp in order to graduate from our program. The Comp is structured in the following way: each student must familiarize themselves with a Core Reading List made up of Classic texts in the history of philosophy (Plato, Aristotle, Kant, Descartes, Hume, Mill, Berkeley, Hobbes); these texts are discussed in courses offered by our faculty either in the undergraduate or graduate level. Once the student has properly prepared herself by reading the works on the list, she can take the Comps (which are offered on the 3rd Friday of every semester). The student is given a set of 12 questions related to the List, of which she must answer 3. The three answers must be in the form of a well-developed essay that shows an expert knowledge of the figure, his ideas, and methods as well as an ability to interpret, analyze, and articulate those ideas and methods in a clear way. These essays are then read by at least two faculty members (3 if there is no consensus) that look for precision, originality, and mastery of the material.

7. **Analysis**

(Please discuss the findings and evaluate the achievement of PLOs and/or progress on recommended actions.)

Five MA student successfully passed the Comps this past year. In each case, mastery of the

material was evident, as well as an expert ability to discuss complicated ideas in a clear and precise fashion.

8. Proposed changes and goals (if any)

(Given your findings, please list the proposed changes and goals for the next academic year and beyond – that is, how will you “close the loop”?)

There is a major proposed change to the Comps. We aim to update the Reading List so that it more accurately reflects the breadth of our curricular offerings and the strengths of our existing tenured and tenure-track faculty.

Part C

(This table should be reviewed and updated each year, ultimately providing a cycle-long record of your efforts to improve student outcome as a result of your assessment efforts. Each row should represent a single proposed change or goal. Each proposed change should be reviewed and updated yearly so as to create a record of your department’s efforts. Please add rows to the table as needed.)

| Proposed Changes and Goals | Status Update |
|-------------------------------|---------------|
| Update Reading List for Comps | |
| | |
| | |
| | |

Appendix

San Jose State University
Department of Philosophy

Graduate Comprehensive Examination

You can either take this Exam immediately, in which case you have until 4 p.m. to complete it, or you can take it home. If you take it now, use a blue book and be as clear as possible. If you take it home, the exam must be typed, double spaced, clear, and cogent. Because you will have the weekend to complete it, the Graduate Committee grading it will look for excellence in interpretation, writing, and independence of thought. In either case, answer one question from each of the three sections below. Write only your student ID number (or Social Security Number) on the top of each page. **Do not write your name on the exam. If taken home, you must return the examination to Laura by 12 p.m. (noon) Monday morning. Email attachments will not be accepted.**

Return this page with your exam. In signing this page, you attest that everything you have done with respect to the Exam, from the time you picked it up until you turned it in, is entirely your own work.

Name: _____ Student ID: _____

Print

Sign

I. Metaphysics and Epistemology

1. According to Kant, why must all moral laws be derived *a priori*? Explain. Contextualize your answer within Kant's system of ideas and critically evaluate Kant's assertion.
2. Explain and critically evaluate the main tenets of Berkeley's idealism. What is one of the problems that his idealism is supposed to solve? Does he succeed in solving this problem? Why or why not?

II. Value Theory

1. Explain the Utilitarian theory of ethics as developed in Mill's *Utilitarianism* and discuss what you see as some important objections to the theory. What objections would you pose from a Kantian perspective? With whom do you agree and why?

2. Explain the virtue ethics approach as presented by Aristotle in his *Nicomachean Ethics*, and discuss its advantages and disadvantages in view of the advantages and disadvantages of the moral theories of Kant or Mill. Do you think the two approaches could be complementary?

III. History of Philosophy

1. Explain, compare and contrast the views of Descartes and Hume concerning the nature of skepticism and whether or not skepticism is a view that ought to be embraced. Critically discuss the views of both, and state with whom you most agree and why.

2. What is Descartes' argument for the existence of bodies in the 6th Meditation? Carefully summarize the argument. Do you think it succeeds? Why or why not?