

Academic Assessment Report
Department of Philosophy, Fulbright College, University of Arkansas
Philosophy Major (Bachelor of Arts Degree)
June 2022

Results of analysis of assessment of Student Learning Outcomes – Philosophy Majors

Students in PHIL4983, the Capstone Course for Philosophy Majors, were assessed on the basis of written work, including a lengthy final position paper; and participation in class.

I. Assessment by instructor of student work:

Assessment included detailed comments from the instructor and numerical ratings on the following dimensions and learning outcomes:

1) Increased critical thinking, communication and writing skills, including but not limited to:

- The student writes with clarity and accuracy;
- The student displays care in understanding positions with accuracy and fairness and in presenting his or her own ideas clearly and in ways that are relevant to his or her main points;
- The student shows ability and sophistication in the analysis and evaluation of arguments;
- The student proceeds critically in examining his or her own presuppositions and assumptions.

2) Increased knowledge and understanding of content, including but not limited to:

- The student's written work displays understanding of central concepts and terminology;
- The student's written work shows a grasp of main trends and theories in the areas under consideration and their application;
- The student understands historically important positions and figures where relevant;
- The student's thinking on the issues shows significant coherence, breadth and depth.

Student work was evaluated along these dimensions on the following scale:

- 0) Does not meet expectations;
- 1) Minimally meets expectations;
- 2) Meets expectations well, with room for improvement;
- 3) Exceeds expectations.

Average score on dimension 1 (critical thinking and communication skills): 2.42

Average score on dimension 2 (content): 2.58

II. Summary Results and Suggestions for Improvement from Assessment Committee:

These numbers represented significant improvement over the prior year. (With a different set of students, this was not surprising.

- Students were asked to do significant original work. Most kept up with the difficult

material and were successful in completing their assignments. Their written work was very good.

- The course was delivered face-to-face. Improved numbers may have been partly a result of that.
- Students varied in their ability to express and argue for their own conclusions, but four of twelve students produced really outstanding work. The rest wrote well and engaged the material, but sometimes failed to focus on central points.
- All these students reflected well on the abilities of our departmental majors.

The following are suggestions for improvement in this and similar level courses:

- Students should be given instruction in focusing their papers more specifically.
- All instructors in courses aimed at majors should continue to emphasize the abilities to anticipate and respond to objections and fairly to characterize those views which the student is responding to, contesting or opposing.
- In the interest of producing more ambitious written work, students need to be willing to be risk averse and to learn from their mistakes. One way to achieve this would be to encourage or require them to submit drafts of papers for feedback prior to handing in final versions.

This feedback will be reported to all faculty who are teaching 3000 and 4000 level courses during AY2022-2023.