**2017-2018 Annual Program Assessment Report**

**College: Humanities**

**Department: Philosophy**

**Program: Major**

**Assessment liaison: Robert Gressis**

1. **Overview of Annual Assessment Project(s).** Provide a brief overview of this year’s assessment plan and process.

This year we gathered data for SLOs 3-5 of the major. Those SLOs are:

1. Students will respond critically and analytically to philosophical positions, arguments, and methodologies, including positions, arguments, and methodologies involved in the investigation of significant issues in epistemology, metaphysics, and value theory.
2. Students will defend their own philosophical positions and arguments.
3. Students will write well-organized philosophical essays in which they clearly and effectively present and defend their own philosophical positions and arguments.

We did this because our remit for assessment in 2017-18 was just to provide data on student performance, and in philosophy we think our students’ most important ability (and the one we work on the most) is to write clear, argumentative papers.

1. **Assessment Buy-In.** Describe how your chair and faculty were involved in assessment related activities. Did department meetings include discussion of student learning assessment in a manner that included the department faculty as a whole?

My department continues to be very accommodating about providing me with data to assess, and helping me norm it. I received papers from Gregory Velazco y Trianosky (Philosophy 446, “Advanced Social and Political Philosophy”), Kristina Meshelski (Philosophy 365, “Social and Political Philosophy”), and Sarah Hansen (Philosophy 406, “Philosophy of Sex, Gender, Sexuality”). Robin Muller and Julie Yoo helped me assess the papers according to the departmental rubic (a copy of which I include with this report).

1. **Student Learning Outcome Assessment Project.** Answer items a-f for each SLO assessed this year. If you assessed an additional SLO, copy and paste items a-f below, BEFORE you answer them here, to provide additional reporting space.

**3a. Which Student Learning Outcome was measured this year?**

As mentioned above, we measured SLOs 3-5.

**3b. Does this learning outcome align with one or more of the university’s Big 5 Competencies?** (Delete any which do not apply)

These learning outcomes align with “Critical Thinking” and “Written Communication”.

**3c. What direct and/or indirect instrument(s) were used to measure this SLO?**

We used our departmental “Standard Rubric,” which I include in Appendix A.

**3d. Describe the assessment design methodology:** For example, was this SLO assessed longitudinally (same students at different points) or was a cross-sectional comparison used (Comparing freshmen with seniors)? If so, describe the assessment points used.

Since we were interested in how we were teaching writing, we decided to look at the work of courses where the students would be philosophy majors of would have had significant exposure to philosophy. Philosophy 365 is for majors, and Philosophy 406 and Philosophy 446 are predominantly majors and students who have significant exposure to philosophy. We had the instructors of those classes pick ten papers at random from their classes and send them to us. The three of us—I (Dr. Gressis), Dr. Muller, and Dr. Yoo—then evaluated students’ final papers according to our Standard Rubric. I compiled the scores for each paper into a spreadsheet, averaged each student’s score, each class’s score, and all the students’ scores put together.

**3e. Assessment Results & Analysis of this SLO:** Provide a summary of how the results were analyzed and highlight findings from the collected evidence.

We compared the average results of students in Philosophy 446, Philosophy 365, and Philosophy 406. On a scale of 0 to 4, where 4 represents “exemplary”, 3 is “proficient”, 2 is “developing”, 1 is “elementary” and 0 is “unsatisfactory”, The average score for students in Philosophy 446 was 2.34, that for students in Philosophy 365 was 2.63, and that for students in Philosophy 406 was 2.5. The average across all thirty students was 2.49. According to the scale, this means that philosophy majors in our upper level courses are producing work that, on average, we find to be (almost exactly) between developing and proficient.

**3f. Use of Assessment Results of this SLO:** Describe how assessment results were used to improve student learning. Were assessment results from previous years or from this year used to make program changes in this reporting year? (Possible changes include: changes to course content/topics covered, changes to course sequence, additions/deletions of courses in program, changes in pedagogy, changes to student advisement, changes to student support services, revisions to program SLOs, new or revised assessment instruments, other academic programmatic changes, and changes to the assessment plan.)

While 2.49 is not a bad average score, we would like to increase it. However, we haven’t arrived at any change that we’ve tried to make part of our curriculum.

4. **Other information, assessment or reflective activities or processes not captured above.**

One option we’re considering is posting to the departmental website a primer on different ways of conceive of the point of a philosophy essay. Most students (and faculty) typically ask their students to explicate an author’s view and then criticize it. However, Professor Muller has come up with a helpful taxonomy of ways of approaching philosophical papers that we hope can attract students who have different ways of thinking. (This taxonomy is included as Appendix B.)