

UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO
College of Arts and Sciences

Philosophy—Program Assessment Plan

Program Goals

To think philosophically on the meaning of one's life, the conceptual foundations of belief, and the nature of self and responsibility. Students read, discuss, and analyze in writing (1) philosophical problems (ontology of self and other; metaphysics of action; possibility of knowledge; origin and value of ethical systems; and concern for social justice), and (2) major figures and eras in the history and present of philosophy (ancient, medieval, modern, post-modern, and contemporary).

Program Learning Outcomes

- Students identify primary philosophical themes found in the writings of major philosophers.
- Students write historical and argumentative essays on central philosophical issues.
- Students develop philosophical arguments using methods originated by historical and contemporary philosophers.

Outcome Rubrics

Outcome	Below Expectations	Minimal Acceptable	Exemplary
1. Students identify primary philosophical themes found in the writings of major philosophers	The student shows little or no understanding of the basic texts, traditions, theories, questions, and values that constitute the history of philosophical thought. The student is unable to demonstrate a meaningful understanding in her written and oral arguments.	The student shows a general understanding of the basic texts, traditions, theories, questions, and values that constitute the history of philosophical thought. The student is also able to demonstrate this understanding in her written and oral arguments.	The student provides clear evidence of a nuanced understanding of the basic texts, traditions, theories, questions, and values that constitute the history of philosophical thought. The student is also able to provide detailed and subtle interpretations in her written and oral arguments.
Students write historical and argumentative essays on central philosophical issues.	The student is unable to ask relevant questions, to conceive, suggest and answer those questions, or to support her own positions with appropriate arguments. The student shows little or no understanding of any additional implications of her positions.	The student shows that she is able to ask relevant questions, to conceive, suggest and answer those questions appropriately, and to support her own positions with logically competent arguments. The student can also show an understanding of the more general implications of the question as framed and her position taken on that question.	The student shows that she is able to ask relevant and original questions, to suggest novel answers to those questions, and to support her own positions with creative and compelling arguments. The student can also take into account a range of competing arguments, and show why her position taken is superior to those alternatives.
Students develop philosophical arguments using methods originated by historical and contemporary philosophers.	The student is unable to locate information, or inappropriately uses or fails to cite sources. The student shows little or no ability to critically analyze her sources. The student is unable to utilize effective philosophical argumentation to defend a stated thesis.	The student is able to locate, appropriately use, and cite sources with critical analysis and application of those sources. Essays serve to establish a primary thesis by following one accepted method of philosophical argumentation and defending that thesis from competing or alternate interpretations.	The student is able to demonstrate excellence in conducting critical research on philosophical topics. The student can also demonstrate some degree of originality grounded in the source material. Essays provide a basis for further research by including relevant secondary sources and a wide range of primary material.

- Students identify primary philosophical themes found in the writings of major philosophers.

Measurement

Embedded in essays, examination questions and other assignments in three required “core” philosophy courses (210 – Ancient Philosophy; 212 – Modern Philosophy; 215 – Ethics).

Time frame

During the student’s first or second year as a declared major, they will complete the required “core” courses.

Who assesses

Instructor for the classes, as per Department assignments.

How data will be used to improve program or revise curricula

Presiding instructors will offer to the Department their findings, and the Department will meet as a whole to recommend to the Chair and curriculum committee methods of (1) improving curricula, (2) establishing effective standards for students' primary understanding of the issues of the field, and (3) preparing students for success in more advanced courses.

- Students write historical and argumentative essays on central philosophical issues.

Measurement

Embedded in assigned essay questions and/or final exams in courses aligned within each of the defined distribution areas (metaphysics, logic, & analytic philosophy; history of philosophy; and theories of value, ethics, politics, and critical theories of race and gender).

Time Frame

Students will take the proposed courses and will complete the essay examinations.

Who Assesses

Instructor for the classes, as per Department assignments.

Use of data

Presiding instructors will offer to the Department their findings, and the Department will meet as a whole to recommend to the Chair and curriculum committee methods of (1) improving curricula, (2) establishing effective standards for students' skills in analysis, explanation, and logical reasoning.

- Students develop philosophical arguments using methods originated by historical and contemporary philosophers.

Measurement

Embedded in individually guided research essays in seminar and advanced topics courses.

Time Frame

Students will take the proposed courses and will complete the research essay requirements.

Who Assesses

Instructor for the classes, as per Department assignments.

Use of data

Presiding instructors will offer to the Department their findings, and the Department will meet as a whole to recommend to the Chair and curriculum committee methods of (1) improving curricula, and (2) establishing or revising effective priorities for students' research and argumentation skills.

PROGRAM ASSESSMENT TIMELINE

(1) May 2009: Department will meet to assess Outcome #1: how do core philosophy courses establish effective standards for students' primary understanding of the issues of the field, and preparing them for success in more advanced courses? Use of individual course rubrics to be discussed, as well as alignment of course methodologies among cohort courses as well as subsequent course iterations.

(2) May 2010: Department will meet to assess Outcome #2: how do area and themed philosophy courses establish effective standards for students' skills in analysis, explanation, and logical reasoning? Existing use of area distribution requirements to be discussed. Possible use of self-reporting assessment tools to be introduced.

(3) May 2011: Department will meet to assess Outcome #3: how do advanced and seminar courses establish effective priorities for research and argumentation skills? Use of embedded assessment technique to be discussed and evaluated at this time, and possible use of portfolio assessment to be introduced.