

Department of Philosophy
2020-2021 Assessment Report
Due Date: November 1, 2021

1. Identifying Information

Name of Program: Philosophy
Type of Program: Major and Minor
Assessment Committee:
Jackie Taylor, Chair (jtaylor2@usfca.edu)
David Kim (kim@usfca.edu)

2. Mission Statement

No changes were made to the mission statement since the last report.

Mission statement: Executing its mission, the philosophy department fosters philosophical thinking by providing an intellectually engaging major and minor, offering excellent core-courses, and fostering a reflective community amongst the faculty and students. Philosophy grounds USF's education in the Jesuit, Catholic tradition. The department upholds that venerable tradition in the major, minor, and Core curriculum. Consonant with the University's mission, the philosophy department offers diverse courses to educate women and men for others.

3. Program Learning Outcomes

No changes were made to the learning outcomes for the philosophy major, philosophy minor, Core D1, or Core D3 since the last report.

The Major:

1. Students identify primary philosophical themes found in the writings of major ancient, medieval, modern, and moral philosophers.
2. Students write historical and argumentative essays on central philosophical issues.
3. Students develop philosophical arguments using formal and informal methods originated by historical and contemporary philosophers.

The Minor:

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

Core D1 (Philosophy):

Students will:

- Understand the value of thinking philosophically by reflecting on the meaning of one's own life, the conceptual foundations of human actions and beliefs, the nature of the self and of human responsibility
- Understand and discuss coherently the central philosophical issues, such as the problem of evil, the existence of God, free will, the mind/body relation, human knowledge, and the question of being
- Demonstrate an ability to identify and articulate, both orally and in writing, the primary philosophical themes and issues found in the writings of the major philosophers
- Demonstrate an ability to evaluate philosophical arguments critically, both orally and in writing, using philosophical methods that have been developed by either historical or contemporary philosophers

Core D3 (Ethics):

Students will:

- Identify and articulate central ethical problems concerning equality, justice, and rights, and understand the role these play in personal and professional life
- Compare and contrast major ethical theories, to show how actions can be determined to be just or unjust, right or wrong, or good or bad, and to demonstrate knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of major ethical theories
- Investigate ways of settling ethical disputes in arriving at ethical judgments
- Think and write critically about classic and contemporary moral issues
- Identify the contributions of diversity and recognize the challenge that it presents in resolving contemporary ethical issues
- Demonstrate an ability to apply ethical theories and values in personal decision-making

4. Curricular Map

No changes were made since the last report. The map is attached to this document.

5. Assessment Schedule

The final version of the department's most recent self-study was submitted on March 16, 2020. We substituted the comprehensive section on curriculum and assessment from our self-study (initially prepared for an APR Fall 2020) for the assessment report for 2019-2020.

As we all know, the rest of spring 2020 and all of AY 2020-21 were comprehensively impacted by the Covid-19 situation and USF's shift to remote teaching. Our pedagogy had to be suddenly and radically reconfigured, entailing additional work for all instructors, and especially for the Chair who spent a period of nine months working on the evolving schedule for Fall 2021. As a

result of this extra work and an emergency pandemic situation, our assessment practices were significantly hampered. As a result, an ordinary schedule of assessment could not be followed. Nevertheless, the recency of the department's self-study and the use of the Year of Reflection method of assessment, which draws on that self-study, can offer a general portrait for assessment purposes.

6. Assessment Methodology

The Year of Reflection method involves a global evaluation of a program that can generate revisions for specific PLOs or assessment strategies as well as rethinking of larger and long-term program goals. As noted earlier, our use of this method can draw from a 2020 self-study and general consideration of this past Covid year to develop a broad evaluative framework.

We note that with the development of different modalities for undergraduate instruction, from hybrid/hyflex to remote to fully online, we will, moving forward, work to evaluate assessment methods for courses other than those taught in person. The online courses, in particular, require different strategies and assignments for ensuring that students are understanding and keeping up with the material. The department will plan to discuss this together and also with the external reviewers who will visit our department for an APR in Spring 2022.

7. Assessment Results

The 2020 self-study comprehensively assessed the department's efforts at satisfying the PLOs for the major, minor, and core D1 and D3. As noted in the final submission of the self-study, Mark Merritt, the Faculty Director of Curriculum Development, affirmed in a memo, dated March 17, 2019, the department's ability to satisfy each of the sets of PLOs for which it is responsible. He affirmed as well the quality of the department's deliberations on its assessment strategies, factors that have helped or hindered its pedagogy, and data on retention and graduation.

The pedagogy that generated these positive results could not be normally applied in AY 2020-21 due to the shift to remote learning. But the department faculty attended ITS zoom and canvas instructional sessions and applied as many of their previously successful pedagogical strategies as they could in the new teaching situation. Some of the faculty even embraced the remote learning format and devised online summer courses.

The overall impression is that any challenge to satisfying the relevant PLOs in the last year was attributable to the total retreat to a remote learning environment and the envioning Covid situation. Nothing in the department's ordinary teaching practices seemed to be problematic in delivering its curriculum and enabling its students to succeed. We believe that having in place sets of PLOs that have proven effective provides an invaluable guide to all faculty teaching in our department with respect to designing course content and assessing student performance.

This section is perhaps the place to raise the matters of (i) having appropriate equipment for teaching in modalities other than in person, and (ii) awareness of inequities in the student population that made it very challenging for some students to have a quality environment in which to attend class and participate. These are, of course, university-wide concerns, but the department can also plan to give attention to them.

8. Department Response to Assessment Results

The department was pleased to receive confirmation from Mark Merritt that we have achieved our PLOs as evidenced by both direct and indirect assessment methods.

9. Feedback from Previous Report

Because we submitted a portion of our self-study, no feedback was given or required.