

General Education Assessment Plan

5-Year Report Template

Objective: 7

Department: Philosophy Program, Department of English and Philosophy

Representative to Objective Review Committee: Jim Skidmore

Course(s): PHIL 2201, 2250

A. For each general education learning outcome that the course aims to achieve:

1. Describe the specific assessment instrument(s) used to address the learning outcome.

- a. Include full question text or assignment instructions, which may be included as an appendix.

All sections of PHIL 2201 and PHIL 2250 currently being taught include a comprehensive final exam. This exam is used to measure the extent to which students are achieving the outcomes. See examples in Appendix 1 (Should a section be taught without including a comprehensive final, student work from one of the section's main assignments would be used instead.)

- b. Include a description of the timing of the assessment and the groups that were assessed.

Syllabi and main assignments for each section of these courses are reviewed annually each fall if the course was taught the previous year. (2250 has not reliably been offered every year, but we hope to offer it annually going forward.) A random sample of student exams are collected from each section on a 3-year rotation, and these exams are assessed for their demonstration of all relevant outcomes. The most recent student sample was collected in Fall 2018 and Fall 2017 for PHIL 2250.

- c. Describe the criteria used to evaluate each assessment instrument, and how this evaluation was performed.

The criteria used to evaluate the samples of student work are the state-mandated learning outcomes for Objective 7.

- d. Describe the application of this or comparable assessment to any students earning credit for the class via early college program or test credit.

ISU does not offer any early-college sections of PHIL 2201 and 2250, and we are not aware of any other Idaho university that does.

2. Describe the findings regarding the learning outcome, and overall conclusion as to the effectiveness of the class in achieving the learning outcome in question.

Our two main findings have been as follows:

1. The collected syllabi and assignments make it clear that our sections of these courses are adequately targeting the relevant "outcomes" under any reasonable interpretation of them. PHIL 2201 offers students a rigorous undergraduate introduction to informal and symbolic logic. The course fits somewhat awkwardly with the specific language of some of the outcomes in Objective 7, but we don't have any doubts about the effectiveness of the course or its appropriateness for Objective 7. Critical thinking is difficult to define, but whatever it is, the formal and informal study of deductive reasoning would seem to be central.
2. Most students in these courses are able to demonstrate achievement of the relevant outcomes at least to a minimally adequate degree. Beyond this their performance varies widely, which is to be expected. For example, 100% of students in PHIL 2250 were deemed to satisfy the outcomes to a minimally adequate degree, but the percentage of students who were deemed "proficient" was closer to 50%. It is not yet clear that students are especially weak (or strong) on any of these "outcomes."

3. Describe any changes made or proposed to better meet learning outcomes.

Significant changes have been made in PHIL 2250 in recent years. These changes have been made in order deliver the course asynchronous online rather than in-person. These changes can be seen as attempts to ensure that the learning outcomes are met in this new mode of delivery. It is also possible that some of these changes will improve the achievement of some outcomes. For example, the course now uses weekly reading quizzes to encourage students to read carefully. It also employs weekly videos working through the course material, which students can review multiple times and/or slow down as needed. These methods may improve student learning.

4. Describe any changes made or proposed to assessment procedures themselves.

The discussion above mentions some changes. We no longer collect sample student exams each year. Instead we collect them on a 3-year rotation and assess those exams for achievement of all of the learning outcomes.

- B. Do you see any incongruities between the learning outcomes and the spirit of the objective? If so, how would you suggest the learning outcomes be modified?

The official learning outcomes for Objective 7 are quite general and vague, and some of them fit awkwardly in the context of PHIL 2201.. Given the wide diversity of courses taught in

Objective 7, however, it is not easy to come up with language for learning outcomes that applies easily to all of them. We think that the current outcomes are adequate, provided that individual disciplines are given reasonable latitude to interpret them in a way that makes sense for their own courses.

- C. Do you believe that the objective currently serves an optimal role in the broader general education program? If not, how could its contribution be improved?

The development of critical reasoning skills is vital to undergraduate education. Specifying a specific “critical thinking” objective in the general education system is one way of trying to ensure that students develop these basic skills.

Appendix 1 Sample Exams/Main Assignments

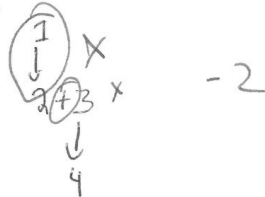
PHIL 2201 Sample Exam

Final Examination
April 30, 2018

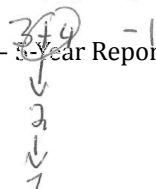
I. Argument diagrams (8 points)

Diagram the arguments in the following paragraphs:

1. (1) Either we will have to have immigration reform or we will continue with the current policy. (2) Under the current policy there is a disregard for law which undermines the very fabric of our country. This is so because (3) companies must hire workers illegally. (4) Thus we need immigration reform.



2. (1) The selling of human organs such as hearts, kidneys and corneas, should be outlawed. (2) Allowing human organs to be sold will inevitably lead to a situation in which only the rich will be able to afford transplants. This is the case because (3) whenever something scarce is bought and sold as a commodity, the price always goes up. The reason for this is that (4) the law of supply and demand requires it.



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2. It is impossible to talk or think without employing general concepts, for without these, cognition and language are impossible.

Begging the question

3. The senator has argued that we need to address the long-term care of veterans. Why should we listen to him? There are fewer veterans in his state than in any of the others.

Ad Hominem

4. Those who are concerned with the pollution in the Pocatello aquifer coming from the dump on Fort Hall Mine Road are way off base. Many cities have dumps, and they are necessary for cities to be able to control garbage which would otherwise pile up in the city.

Diversion

5. This person should be admitted to medical school. While it is true that his grades are not very good and he did terribly on the MCAT, he has suffered terribly from PTSD and has had a very difficult family life.

Appeal to emotion

6. The players in the all-star team are top players from their teams; so the all-star team must be really good.

Composition

III. State the converse, the contrapositive, and obverse of each of the following propositions. Then state which are equivalent to the original. (8 points)

(1) Some non-scientists are philosophers.

Converse: Some philosophers are non-scientists = equivalent

Obverse: Some non-scientists are not non-philosophers = equivalent

Contrapositive: Some non-philosophers are not non-scientists = not equivalent

(2) All scientists are philosophers.

Converse: All philosophers are scientists = not equivalent

Obverse: No scientists are not philosophers = equivalent

Contrapositive: All non-philosophers are non-scientists = equivalent

IV. Square of opposition 2 points

1. What is the contradictory of "All dogs go to heaven"? *Some dogs are animals that are not going to heaven.*

2

2. What is the contrary of "No scientists are philosophers"?

↳ All Scientists are Philosophers

V. Venn Diagrams. Use Venn Diagrams to determine the validity of the following syllogisms. Be sure to state whether the argument is valid or not. If you find an argument to be invalid, state which rule it breaks. (12 points) Bonus points: State the mood and figure.

~~Forced: Barbara~~ AOO (4) x

All things with gills are fish.

Some tuna are not things with gills

Some tuna are not fish.



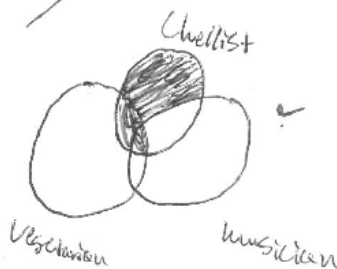
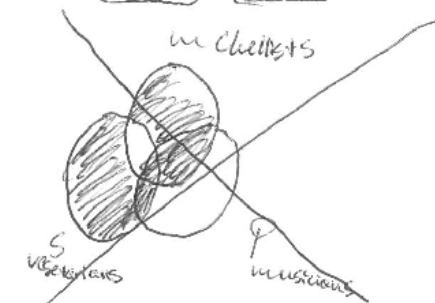
Valid - 4

~~Forced: Barbara~~ EAE - 1

No vegetarians are cellists.

All cellists are musicians.

No musicians are vegetarians.



Invalid: Distribution 2
EAE (1) x

VI. Translate these arguments into symbols and test them for validity using truth tables or indirect truth tables. (18 points)

Use the following abbreviations: P: Poison caused the victim's death. C: There was a change in his blood chemistry. R: There was a residue of poison in his stomach. M: There were puncture marks on the body. N: Poison was injected by a needle. H: The pH test indicates acid

- A Poison caused the victim's death only if there was a change in his blood chemistry and a residue of poison in his stomach.
If there was a change in the blood chemistry, the pH test will indicate acid.

Therefore, if the pH test does not indicate acid, poison didn't cause the victim's death.

$P > (C \cdot R)$ | $C > H$ | $H > P$
 $T \ T \ T \ T$ | $T \ T \ F$ | $T \ F \ F \ F \ T$
 (Valid)

B. Poison didn't cause the victim's death unless it was injected by needle or there was a residue of poison in his stomach.
While there was no residue of poison in his stomach, there were puncture marks on the body.
If poison was injected by a needle, there would be puncture marks on the body.

Therefore, poison caused the victim's death.

Therefore, poison caused the victim's death.

$$\begin{array}{c}
 P \supset (N \vee R) \\
 \begin{array}{cc|cc|ccc}
 T & F & T & T & F & T & T & T
 \end{array}
 \end{array}$$

Invalid

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VII. Translations in quantificational logic. 10 points

1. Any dog without a collar should be taken to the pound. (Dx: x is a dog, Cx: x has a collar, Px: x should be taken to the pound)

$$(\forall x)((Dx \cdot \neg Cx) \supset Px) \quad \checkmark$$

2. Not every business man is rich, but some drug lords are. (Bx: x is a business man, Rx: x is rich, Dx: x is a drug lord)

$$(\exists x)(Bx \cdot \neg Rx) \cdot (Dx \cdot Rx) \quad -$$

3. Only doctors and lawyers live in Johnny Creek. (Dx: x is a doctor, Lx: x is a lawyer, Jx: x lives in Johnny Creek)

$$(\forall x)(Jx \supset (Dx \vee Lx)) \quad -1$$

4. There are large universities in Michigan and Ohio. (Lx: x is large, Ux: x is a university, Mx: x is in Michigan, Ox: x is in Ohio)

$$\exists x(Lx \cdot Ux) \cdot (Mx \vee Ox) \quad -2$$

5. No person in his right mind would attack a tiger unless he had a weapon. (Px: x is a person, Rx: x is in x's right mind, Ax: x would attack a tiger, Wx: x has a weapon.)

$$\neg(\exists x)(Px \cdot Rx \cdot Ax \cdot \neg Wx) \quad -1$$

VIII. Proofs. (30 points)

Hint: CP is useful for 2, RA is useful for 3.

1. $\neg A \supset (B \vee C)$

2. $\neg E \cdot \neg C$

3. $\neg E \supset \neg A \quad \therefore B$

4. $\neg E \quad 2 \text{ Simp.}$

5. $\neg A \quad 3, 4 \text{ MP.}$

6. $B \vee C \quad 1, 5 \text{ MP.}$

7. $\neg C \quad 2 \text{ Simp.}$

8. $B \quad 6, 7 \text{ DS.}$

2. $1 D \supset (B \bullet C)$
 $2 (B \vee H) \supset (K \bullet Z)$
 $3 (K \vee \sim C) \supset \sim F \quad \therefore D \supset \sim F$
 $4 D \quad \text{ACP} -$
 $5 B \bullet C \quad 1,4 \text{ mp} -$
 $6 B \quad 5 \text{ Simp} -$
 $7 B \vee H \quad 6 \text{ Add} -$
 $8 K \bullet Z \quad 2,7 \text{ mp} -$
 $9 K \quad 8 \text{ Simp} -$
 $10 K \vee \sim C \quad 9 \text{ Add} -$
 $11 \sim F \quad 3,10 \text{ mp} -$
 $12 D \supset F \quad 4-11 \text{ CP} -$

3. $1 A \supset (\sim C \bullet D)$
 $2 \sim C \supset (T \supset S)$
 $3 T \bullet \sim S \quad \therefore \sim A$
 $4 A \quad \text{RA} -$
 $5 \sim C \bullet D \quad 1,4 \text{ mp} -$
 $6 \sim C \quad 5 \text{ Simp} -$
 $7 T \supset S \quad 2,6 \text{ mp} -$
 $8 \sim S \quad 3 \text{ Simp} -$
 $9 \sim T \quad 7,8 \text{ mt} -$
 $10 T \quad 3 \text{ Simp} -$
 $11 T \bullet \sim T \quad 9,10 \text{ conj} -$
 $12 \sim A \quad 4-11 \text{ RA} -$

30

PHIL 2250 Sample Essay Topics

Topic: Singer's Account of Killing Persons

Explain carefully Singer's account of the ethics of killing *persons*. Then explain a plausible *objection* against some aspect of Singer's account and offer an argument in defense of your objection. Finally, *critically evaluate* the objection you have raised. In order to be complete, your paper must:

1. Clearly and accurately explain what Singer means by 'person'. [Explain carefully the *capacities* that he associates with being a person.]
2. Explain carefully the 4 main reasons that, according to Singer, may make it "especially serious" to kill a person.
3. Clearly and accurately explain the claim that constitutes your *objection* against Singer's account, and explain *how* the objection challenges his account.
4. Identify, and explain carefully, a plausible *argument* in defense of your objection. (What *reasons* are there to think that your objection's claim is true?)
5. Explain carefully how you think Singer could best *respond* to your objection.
6. Explain your conclusion regarding whether Singer's best response to your objection is adequate. (Explain what *reason* you have for concluding that this objection can or cannot be dismissed.)

Topic: The Morality of Abortion

For the author you have chosen (Thomson, Marquis, or Steinbock) explain carefully the author's main argument concerning the morality of abortion. Then explain carefully an *objection* against that main argument. Finally, *critically evaluate* the objection you have raised. In order to be complete, your paper must:

1. Clearly and accurately explain the main conclusion that the author defends.
2. Explain carefully the main argument that he or she develops—the *reasons* he or she offers for thinking that the conclusion is true.
3. Explain carefully the *objection* you are raising against the argument.
4. Defend your objection. Explain what *reasons* you think there are for believing it is correct. (Are there examples that help illustrate the problem you are raising?)
5. Explain carefully how you think the original author could best *respond* to the objection you have raised.
6. Explain your conclusion regarding whether their best response to your objection is adequate. (Explain what *reason* you have for concluding that this objection can or cannot be dismissed.)