STUDENT LEARNING ASSESSMENT REPORT

SUBMITTED BY: MICHAEL BOYLAN

DATE: SEPTEMBER, 2015

BRIEFLY DESCRIBE WHERE AND HOW ARE DATA AND DOCUMENTS USED TO GENERATE THIS REPORT BEING STORED:

We have examined samples from the only senior major/ our two service courses (intro and ethical theory) and an upper level class, modern philosophy.

The senior major was evaluated by Dr. Ariane Economos who supervised the senior thesis. Dr. Economos discussed her results with the chair. Boylan also looked at 12 random papers from introduction to philosophy and ethical theory (the bulk of our students take our courses for the Liberal Arts Core). He used the written communications rubric. 4 papers from PH 327 were also analyzed.

The data are stored in the office of the chair of the department.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

List all of the program's learning outcomes: *(regardless of whether or not they are being assessed this year)*

Learning Outcome	Year of Last Assessment	Year of Next Planned Assessment
Students demonstrate an awareness of the broad and deep understanding of issues concerning fundamental problem of human existence	*2012-2013*	*2016-2017*
Students demonstrate the ability to synthesize and assess ethical and moral arguments. This ability will allow personal exploration, development and application within an ethical framework.	*2012-2013*	*2016-2017*
Students articulate the role of reason in the understanding and in the creation of personal worldviews. Students can critically engage varied perspectives of the role of reason	*2012-2013*	*2012-2013*
Inquiry: Students will conduct appropriate research to develop considered responses to questions about philosophical problems using their knowledge of philosophical claims and theories.	*2012-2013*	*2012-2013*

Note: in 2013-2014 the department had a program review. Action Plan Progress is noted in Appendix 2.

Describe how the program's outcomes support Marymount's Mission, Strategic Plan, and relevant school plan:
As a liberal arts school in the Catholic tradition, philosophy stands at the heart of Marymount's academic mission. The former president of the university continually named philosophy as one of the important areas of the strategic plan and the new liberal arts core. Philosophy also provides excellent preparation for later studies including law school and any study in the humanities. Our outcomes speak to these concerns. The new Liberal Arts Core demonstrates the significance of philosophy for Marymount's Mission & Vision in light of requiring two courses for graduation. Our reorganization of the department's curriculum enlarges the options for Philosophy-2 courses as well as offering 6 new Writing Intensive Courses (one of which will be offered each term).

Provide a brief description of the assessment process used including strengths, challenges and planned improvements:
We have decided to move away from the 3-year cycle to a 2-year cycle so that we might attract more students to courses that are offered more frequently. We also note that we have trouble "making" our 400-level courses. We have therefore decided to have only one 400-level course (Topics 415) which we plan to fill with majors in a special meeting of the philosophy club in the spring. In pursuant to this we have moved two courses to the low 300-level and made them consistent with PH-E so that they might make (PH 307 Philosophy of Law) and (PH 303 Animals, the Environment & Ethics). PH 305 (Business Ethics) will also count for PH-E credit. Philosophy of Mind and Asian Philosophy are being re-numbered as 300-level courses. We are eliminating Philosophy of Biology and Moral Psychology (the former because it has never made and the latter because the only instructor competent to teach it has left the university).

Boylan reviewed a dozen papers from our service courses (Intro and Ethics) and they are as successful at meeting our objectives as we have since 2002 (when senior administration stopped recruiting non-traditional undergraduate students). He also reviewed 4 papers from an upper level course. Details in appendix 1.

Describe how the program implemented its planned improvements from last year:
We have worked on various recommendations from our program review. We have three goals: 1. Attract more majors/minors; 2. Attract more students to 300 & 400 level courses; and 3. Have more courses taught by full time personnel. (see appendix 2).

We are expanding the number of social events with the majors and minors including an annual lecture given by one of the faculty members in philosophy. More communication also occurs with the adjuncts as we engage in two social events each year. The chair also reaches out on a regular basis to the adjuncts.

Provide a response to last year's University Assessment Committee review of the program's learning assessment report: *(List each recommendation and provide a specific response to each).*
1,   Develop and implement outcome specific rubrics that directly assess student performance relative to each outcome.
        These have been developed and are being implemented in the service courses as well as the senior thesis and two other papers written by underclass majors.

The rubrics included in this report were used last year. The assessment committee suggested we begin using rubrics that are more tightly tied to our learning objectives. We have developed these rubrics and they were in use in AY 2014-2015. Note that we have given further specification of just what our four categories mean and the criteria we use to put them there.

Outcome and Past Assessment

Learning Outcome 1: Students demonstrate an awareness of the broad and deep understanding of issues concerning fundamental problem of human existence

Is this outcome being reexamined? ☐ Yes ☒ No

Assessment Activity

Outcome Measures *Explain how student learning will be measured and indicate whether it is direct or indirect.*	Performance Standard *Define and explain acceptable level of student performance.*	Data Collection *Discuss the data collected and student population*	Analysis *1) Describe the analysis process. 2) Present the findings of the analysis including the numbers participating and deemed acceptable.*
One senior thesis, two majors papers and a dozen other papers from service courses (direct)	Student clearly articulated issues related to existence and contextualized them in a philosophical framework in a manner befitting senior philosophy majors, and in the service courses meeting LAC objectives for philosophy	One senior thesis and 4 other upper division papers (direct)—six intro papers and six ethical theory papers	Faculty member assessed the quality of the arguments proposed in these papers. The senior thesis was adequate in written communication, critical thinking, and inquiry The other papers (from PH 328 Modern Philosophy) showed proficiency in this area. The service courses papers were proficient (for the most part), mixture of 4s and 3s.
Student Survey input to faculty (indirect)		Given during the course of the term and exit interviews with majors	These results are discussed at the first department meeting of the following term. The majors scored well on this outcome

Interpretation of Results

Extent this Learning Outcome has been achieved by students *(Use both direct and indirect measure results)***:**
The students being assessed demonstrated performance outcomes of 4s and 3s (on a 4 point scale). The senior thesis, as noted above, was adequate (3) in written communication, critical thinking, and inquiry (using the LAC rubric for these categories).

Program strengths and opportunities for improvement <u>relative to assessment of outcome</u>:
This outcome is really a statement about the ability to do philosophy. The faculty are conscious of including this in all courses from the Intro to the senior seminar. Our success here will be made clearer in the assessment for the LAC.

Discuss planned curricular or program improvements <u>for this year based on assessment of outcome:</u>
See out action plan progress: Appendix One.

The assessment this year demonstrated a perennial issue for our majors, low numbers. We spoke with the dean and he set out a goal for us for 10 combined majors and minors. At the writing of this report we are now at 13 combined majors and minors.

Outcome and Past Assessment

Learning Outcome 2: Students demonstrate the ability to synthesize and assess ethical and moral arguments. This ability will allow personal exploration, development and application within an ethical framework.

Is this outcome being reexamined? ☐ Yes ☒ No

Assessment Activity

Outcome Measures *Explain how student learning will be measured and indicate whether it is direct or indirect.*	Performance Standard *Define and explain acceptable level of student performance.*	Data Collection *Discuss the data collected and student population*	Analysis *1) Describe the analysis process.* *2) Present the findings of the analysis including the numbers participating and deemed acceptable.*
12 final papers for courses (Intro and Ethical Theory) and 2 papers from underclass majors (direct)	Student are able to articulate and critically apply varied ethical theories to specific ethical dilemmas	12 final papers for service courses (direct); 4 papers from upper level courses (direct)	The senior thesis and PH 327 papers did not deal with ethics. Intro and PH 309 paper demonstrated excellent achievement of the outcome.
Student Survey input to faculty (indirect)		Given during the course of the term and exit interviews with majors	The senior major scored well on this outcome since she had taken one class in philosophical ethics and one in moral theology

Interpretation of Results

Extent this Learning Outcome has been achieved by students *(Use both direct and indirect measure results)***:**
Most of the philosophy majors take two courses that are primarily ethics. The history sequence and even the introductory course all wrestle with ethical issues. Philosophy majors and students in PH 309 are invited to participate in the Consortium undergraduate research conference on the topic of ethics and social justice. We have extended the offerings in ethics to PH 307 (Philosophy of Law), PH 303 (Animals, The environment & Ethics). The philosophy major and five other students did well at the conference. The philosophy program has several strengths, but ethics stands as our primary focus which is evidenced through the much of the scholarship done by the faculty.

Program strengths and opportunities for improvement <u>relative to assessment of outcome</u>:
Ethics is the great strength of the department. Our assessment process, however, does not assess growth in ethics specifically. First, this is difficult to do since aspects of this growth is found in personal behavior and not academic achievement. Also, if a thesis does not address ethics, no data are collected in reference to this outcome.

Discuss planned curricular or program improvements <u>for this year based on assessment of outcome:</u> In order to attract more minors we have lowered the number of classed needed to five. We are offering more social events to major and minors and we will have a faculty lecture on philosophy followed by discussion each year.

We have slimmed down the rotation of courses to a two-year plan. We have limited our 400-level courses (so that they might more successfully "make."

Outcome and Past Assessment

Learning Outcome 3: Students articulate the role of reason in the understanding of and in the creation of personal worldviews. Students can critically engage varied perspectives of the role of reason

Is this outcome being reexamined? ☐ Yes ☒ No

Assessment Activity

Outcome Measures *Explain how student learning will be measured and indicate whether it is direct or indirect.*	Performance Standard *Define and explain acceptable level of student performance.*	Data Collection *Discuss the data collected and student population*	Analysis *1) Describe the analysis process. 2) Present the findings of the analysis including the numbers participating and deemed acceptable.*
One senior thesis, two underclass majors and 12 other papers (direct)	Students are able consistently to use reasonable arguments to support their worldviews and critically engage other worldviews	One senior thesis; 6 intro; 6 ethics; 4 upper level.	Papers can only pass if they demonstrate the ability to argue reasonably. The senior thesis demonstrated profound depth of logical argument. All the papers were acceptable.
Student Survey input to faculty (indirect)		Given during the course of the term and exit interviews with majors	The offering of advanced logic in the fall assisted students in achieving this outcome

Interpretation of Results

Extent this Learning Outcome has been achieved by students *(Use both direct and indirect measure results)***:**
The graduating senior demonstrated an ability to prepare and analyze reasonable arguments regarding personal and communal worldviews. Furthermore, he was able to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the logical arguments of others. The Modern Philosophy papers showed skill at recognizing and evaluating logical argument. The department is convinced that students are being prepared well for these upper division classes by their introductory course (PH 200) and the other service course (PH 309) though none of them were declared majors when they enrolled in that course. Again, the LAC assessment of introductory courses should give us more of a baseline than we have now—they all score between "3" and "4".

Program strengths and opportunities for improvement <u>relative to assessment of outcome</u>**:**
This outcome intends to assess how well our students integrate their classroom reading with what is often called lifelong learning. Philosophy is an important academic and intellectual study but it also must impact the life and relationships the students have. Furthermore, the use of reason to defend one's position and assess another's is an essential characteristic of a college educated person. Assessment demonstrates that students are successful regarding this objective. The graduate survey is indirect data that leads us to believe that students are impacted beyond graduation, but the number of responses for our department is incredibly low.

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Discuss planned curricular or program improvements <u>for this year based on assessment of outcome:</u>
The curriculum revision that we have put into place will balance our offerings and fulfill the indirect input of senior exit interviews over the past decade. By balancing our offerings, students will have a more well-rounded rational worldview skills.

A complete student learning assessment report includes appendix of rubrics,
survey questions, or other relevant documents and information.

In our Senior Exit Interview she said that philosophy helped her structure logical responses to texts that she read. Because she was also a theology major, she cited that philosophy helped her in theology. She especially like the Medieval Philosophy class and the Philosophy of Religion classes as they allowed her to combine her interests. She liked the idea of moving to a two-year class rotation.

Appendix One: Action Plan Progress since Departmental Review

Goal: Attract more majors/minors. Action Taken: talk to students doing well in the classes about the possibility of a philosophy major or minor. Progress: The dean asked us to shoot for 10 combined. We are now at 13 (with one additional pending minor).

Goal: Attract more students to 300 & 400 level courses. Action Taken: we put in curriculum revisions that moved two 400 level courses to PH-E at 303 and 307, respectively. We have moved to eliminate two courses at the 400 level and re-number two courses from 400 level to 300 level. Since our 300 level courses make better, we will only teach one regular 400 level course, PH 415 on a regular basis (once a year). We will try pre-filling that course with philosophy majors and minors. Progress: One year of curriculum changes have gone through and we are pending presently on the others. Four of six upper-level classes made this past year.

Goal: Have more classes taught by full-time faculty. Action Taken: we requested a post-doctoral position. Progress: we were turned down for the post-doctoral position. We intend to keep trying. Currently 11 of 22 sections are covered by adjuncts.

Appendix Two

Rubric for Written Communication—The four levels take into account a multiplicity of factors judged against expectation levels of United States students as taught by the combined department faculty. We feel a rating of "strong" means that the student would be performing at the "A" or "B+" level at any comparable college in the U.S. "Adequate" would indicate performing at the "B" or "B-" level at any comparable college in the U.S. "Marginal" would indicate that the student is performing at the "C+" or "C" level at any comparable college in the U.S. "Attempt that fails" means that the student is performing at the "C-" or lower level at any comparative college in the U.S. We look for: 1. Recognition of the structure of the logical argument being evaluated; 2. Focus upon the controversial areas of the argument; 3. Recognition of both sides of the controversy; and 4. Creation of a sound defense of one of the positions (including the introduction of an underlying theoretical groundwork). In courses that feature ethics, students should be able to take the stance of a major ethical theory and to use the vocabulary and analysis skills of that theory correctly. The three groups evaluated are : A. Intro to philosophy (6 papers), B. Ethical Theory (6 papers), C. Upper Level course (4 papers). Numbers below represent the average (in whole numbers for each group, A, B, C).

PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES on two service courses: A. PH 200, B. PH 309, C. Upper level—PH 327	Strong	Adequate	Marginal	Attempt that fails
The paper demonstrates the role of reason in the understanding and in creating personal worldviews	4—A=3 B=4 C=3	3—A-3 B=2 C=1	2	1
Paper demonstrates an understanding of ethical and moral arguments in the development and application of an ethical framework.	4—A=3 B=5 C=n/a	3—A=3 B=1 C=n/a	2	1
The paper effectively demonstrates a broad and deep understanding of issues concerning fundamental problem of human existence	4—A=5 B=4 C=3	3—A=1 B=2 C=1	2	1

OVERALL	**Strong**	**Adequate**	**Marginal**	**Attempt that fails**
The paper works as an academic philosophical project, in scope, focus, analysis, deliberation, and execution.	**4—A=4** **B=4** **C=3**	**3—A=2** **B=2** **C=1**	**2**	**1**

PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES—Ethics / PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES on two service courses: A. PH 200, B. PH 309, C. Upper level—PH 327	Strong	Adequate	Marginal	Attempt that fails
The paper demonstrates the role of reason in the understanding and in creating personal worldviews	4—A=3 B=3 C=2	3—A=3 B=3 C=2	2	1
Paper demonstrates an understanding of ethical and moral arguments in the development and application of an ethical framework.	4—A=3 B=3 C= n/a	3—A=3 B=3 C=n/a	2	1
The paper effectively demonstrates a broad and deep understanding of issues concerning fundamental problem of human existence	4—A=4 B=4 C=3	3—A=2 B=2 C=1	2	1

OVERALL	Strong	Adequate	Marginal	Attempt that fails
The paper works as an academic philosophical project, in scope, focus, analysis, deliberation, and execution.	4—A=3 B=3 C=2	3—A=3 B=3 C=2	2	1

Senior Seminar Syllabus

Course Number PH 422	Course Title Senior Seminar		
Fall Semester	Spring Semester X	Summer Semester	Year 2011
Name of Instructor Michael Boylan			
Meeting Day, Time, and Room Number: TBA			
Final Exam Day, Time, and Room Number: N/A			
Office Hours, Location, Phone Tuesdays, Ballston 511, 3:15-4:45pm Fridays, Ballston 511, 3:15-4:45pm Gerard 4D (by appointment), (703) 284-3836			
E-mail: Michael.boylan@marymount.edu			

UNIVERSITY STATEMENTS

Academic Integrity

By accepting this syllabus, you pledge to uphold the principles of Academic Integrity expressed by the Marymount University Community. You agree to observe these principles yourself and to defend them against abuse by others.

Special Needs and Accommodations

Please advise the instructor of any special problems or needs at the beginning of the semester. If you seek accommodation based on disabilities, you should provide a Faculty Contact Sheet obtained through Disability Support Services located in Gerard Hall, (703) 284-1615.

Access to Student Work

Copies of your work in this course including copies of any submitted papers and your portfolios may be kept on file for institutional research, assessment and accreditation purposes. All work used for these purposes will be submitted anonymously.

Student Copyright Authorization

For the benefit of current and future students, work in this course may be used for educational critique, demonstrations, samples, presentations, and verification. Outside of these uses, work shall not be sold, copied, broadcast, or distributed for profit without student consent.

1. BROAD PURPOSE OF COURSE

Course Description: The focus of the senior seminar is the student research paper that demonstrates skill in researching and writing on topics in philosophy or religion. Prerequisite: senior status. (3)

The purpose of this course is to encourage students to work independently on an issue or topic in the major.

2. COURSE OBJECTIVES Upon successful completion of this course students will be expected to:

- Know how to reconstruct and evaluate arguments.
- Work independently to develop an original research project.
- Appreciate the personal and social significance of philosophical inquiry and dialogue.
- Develop their critical thinking and writing skills.

3. TEACHING METHOD

The student will engage in independent research. I shall meet with the student regularly throughout the semester to monitor his or her progress.

4. GRADING POLICY

The student's grade will be based upon the final paper that he or she submits to me by the end of the semester.

5. CLASS SCHEDULE

Scheduled meetings between instructor and student.