

## The Undergraduate Philosophy Assessment Plan

### Goals:

A major in philosophy as well as courses for the general undergraduate population, can provide a core or principle around which a student can organize an education in the liberal arts. Accordingly, the goal of the major in philosophy is (a) to provide a basic and balanced understanding of philosophical questions and the methods philosophers use in attempting to answer them, (b) and some appreciation of the history and the classics of the discipline, c) to foster the development of skills essential for doing philosophy and for engaging conceptual issues generally; particularly, logical skills and the ability to identify, reconstruct and critically assess arguments, (d) to prepare students for graduate study in philosophy, should they choose to continue to work in the field. Because many of our majors also major in other disciplines, we aim in addition (e) to provide opportunities through course work and independent study to investigate philosophical issues in the natural and social sciences, as well as in the arts and other humanities.

To these ends, we require majors to complete course work in:

- i. The history of philosophy, focusing particularly on the ancient Greek and Modern periods;
- ii. Logic;
- iii. And in a variety of advanced subjects which are designated as satisfying our breadth requirement. Thus we require that majors who are especially interested, say, in the theory of knowledge also do course work in ethics or aesthetics, and that students interested mainly in political philosophy also study metaphysics and the philosophy of science.

### Assessment of the Goals:

In order to assess our goals we propose the following:

(1) In the required courses, 211 (Logic), 430 (Ancient Philosophy) and 432 (Modern Philosophy - 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century philosophy), a professor will assess the majors' grasp of key concepts or skills by embedding questions designed for this purpose in a regular examination or other assignment. These questions might aim to test whether the student has a grasp of some important concept (e.g. What is a valid argument form? The concept of "objectivity"? Or Plato's Forms) or they might aim to test some key skill (e.g., the ability to recognize or produce a valid argument, to give a plausible rendition of some important argument, or to produce a criticism of an argument). The professor will then evaluate the performance of the majors and write a report for the Undergraduate Planning Committee. This is meant to assess whether we are meeting the goals stated in (a), (b), and c) above.

(2) The Undergraduate Planning Committee will review the transcripts of the graduating majors to evaluate whether the advanced courses they are taking in fact meet our goal of "breadth and depth" in the major. That is, are majors taking enough courses from a sufficient variety or areas as well as courses that are sufficiently central to the subject. This is meant to assess goals (a), (d), and (e).

(3) Questionnaires will be given to graduating majors to see how well they think we meet our

goals. (This is meant to assess whether we meet all our goals). In order to assess goal (d), questionnaires will also be sent to students who went on to graduate school in philosophy (after their first year of graduate school) for the purpose of evaluating how well they think they were prepared by our program for graduate school.

Implementation of the Assessment of Goals:

We propose to do all of (1) through (3) next year (06-07) and, by the end of the Spring of 07 have the Undergraduate Planning Committee prepare a report for the department.

We think any changes we would make in the program would take at least 2 years to show up in any assessment. Consequently, after our initial assessment, we propose to do (1) through (3) every other year.