

Philosophy Program Assessment Plan
May 2016
Brad Frazier

Program Mission Statement:

The Philosophy Program at Wells College engages students in a conversation (or conversations) - of ancient and venerable pedigree - about basic questions of human existence. Through their study of and participation in these conversations, students develop and sharpen crucial tools of critical thinking and logic. With these tools - a starter kit for self-creation - students come to realize more their own point of view on things, cultivate their own values, and develop a much greater appreciation of complexity and difference. Often a student's journey to self-understanding, a deeply meaningful life, and the formation of an individual identity begins with a jarring encounter with otherness. It is much better to go through this process, then, in community with others, and in a diverse community founded on respect, freedom of speech and conscience, with a shared commitment to discovery and truth, and openness to new ways of knowing. This is what we emphasize and promote in Philosophy. All veterans of our Program gladly acknowledge as well that the passionate pursuit of wisdom in all its various forms is challenging and never a completed task. However, it's also deeply rewarding and mind expanding. Therefore, the stance of 'learner' or 'student' necessarily becomes a lifelong orientation to others, oneself, and the world.

Program Goals, Learning Objectives, & Measurable Learning Outcomes

Program Goal #1:

Each graduate of the Philosophy program will be a proficient logical and critical thinker, who uses these skills with appreciation and sympathy for the perspectives and sensitivities of others, and to enhance the quality of human relationships and human life.

Learning Objective for Program Goal #1:

Philosophy majors will be competent in the use of basic principles of propositional logic and common forms of informal rational argument.

Measurable Learning Outcome for Learning Objective:

Every student who graduates from the Wells College Philosophy Program will pass a course in propositional logic and critical thinking - PHIL 114.

Program Goal #2:

Philosophy majors also will be able imaginatively to articulate a personal, rationally coherent ethical perspective, which is responsive to the views and concerns of others (past, present, and future).

Learning Objectives for Program Goal #2:

1. Philosophy majors will demonstrate basic competency in philosophical theories of ethics and applied ethics.
2. Philosophy majors will develop an ability to consider alternative and competing points of view, and what may be gained by viewing objectivity as thoughtful intersubjectivity.

Measurable Learning Outcomes for Learning Objectives:

1. Each Philosophy major must take and pass PHIL 240: Ethics in order to graduate from the program.
2. Each Philosophy course other than Phil 114, including Phil 100, will require students to write philosophical essays in which they discuss and evaluate the views of others and their own views.

Program Goal #3:

Philosophy majors will be informed about fundamental issues of mind and human identity, such as, the mind-body relation, free will, life after death, the nature of consciousness, and other issues of human psychology and belief.

Learning Objectives for Program Goal #3:

1. Philosophy majors will demonstrate basic competency in epistemology.
2. Philosophy majors will develop an understanding of philosophy of mind and its interconnections with neuroscience.
3. Philosophy majors will acquire basic competence in human psychology.

Measurable Learning Outcomes for Learning Objectives:

1. Each Philosophy major will take and pass Phil 331: Mind.
2. Each Philosophy major will take and pass a course in human psychology.
3. Each Philosophy major will take and pass PHIL 325: Belief and Knowledge.

Means of Assessment of Outcomes:

1. At the end of each year, each Philosophy major's progress and work in the major will be reviewed.
2. Each semester random samples of papers and exams from all Philosophy courses will be collected, compared, and reviewed.
3. Each semester Mike Gorr (or whoever is our additional instructor in Philosophy) will discuss his courses and philosophy majors in his courses in a meeting with the program director and provide a written assessment of each course as well.

How Assessment Data will be Utilized:

Each year there will be an assessment meeting - as noted above - in which individual students, courses, and broader issues related to the program will be discussed and evaluated. Random papers and exams will be collected and analyzed.

Early in the Fall semester, relevant data and impressions from the previous year's assessment will be shared and discussed with our adjunct instructor, Mike Gorr.