

Philosophy Department
December 3, 2008

General University Requirement:

Students who take philosophy engage in a systematic and sustained examination of the basic concepts of life, such as justice, knowledge, goodness, and the self. By scrutinizing methods, assumptions, and implications, they are able to explore lifelong questions of meaning, thought, and action. They acquire historical perspective on the diversity of human thought and tolerance for the considered opinions of others. Through the collective exploration of, and reasoned argument over, difficult ideas, students develop autonomy in their decision making. Philosophy is vital to the formation of meaning and purpose in students' lives and provides an indispensable framework for developing a sense of vocation--Who am I? What values should we hold? What really is the common good to which I might contribute? What kind of life should I live? In short, the active study of philosophy is essential "to empower students for lives of thoughtful inquiry, service, leadership and care--for other persons, for the community and for the earth."

GUR: Goals and Objectives.

1) Skills:

- a) Writing Skills--Develop argumentation skills (clarity and analysis). Their papers should be clear and accessible and get a point across. Multiple papers and multiple drafts are good methods for achieving this. Modeling effective writing in the texts being read and with other students' papers help as well.
- b) Oral Communication--Help them be organized in what they say. One can emphasize an oral presentation and/or general class participation.
- c) Reasoning--Be able to evaluate and provide reasoned justification for beliefs.

2) Values and beliefs:

Tolerance and autonomy--Students will respect the considered moral opinion of others and show independence in decision making and in shaping their own values.

3) Content:

A critical sense of some aspect of the Western philosophic tradition.

The Major and Minor: Goals and Objectives

Upper Division Courses:

- 1) Be able to work independently.
- 2) Be able to meet deadlines completely reliably.
- 3) Be self-critical and able to critique peers.
- 4) Be able to lead discussion.
- 5) Be able to identify presuppositions in a text or argument.
- 6) Have a critical sense of period/topic.
- 7) Show links to other classes.

- 8) Demonstrate the practice of argumentative charity and tolerance.
- 9) Demonstrate scholarly autonomy in shaping one's own position.

Seminar:

- 1) A clear exposition of the issue and/or authors being addressed.
- 2) A clear statement of the position or thesis the author of the paper will be defending.
- 3) A clear statement of the positions being rejected and why.
- 4) Support of the position being defended.

Minor/Major:

- 1) Content
 - a) Understand and appreciate central questions of the Western philosophical tradition and the similarities and differences between philosophical and non-philosophical ways of knowing.
 - b) Achieve some historical perspective on the diversity of human thought and acquire some degree of breadth in the history of ideas, along with meaningful depth in at least one traditional area of philosophy.
 - c) Gain a critical perspective on the philosophical tradition.
- 2) Skills
 - a) Cultivate skills and habits of thinking, writing, and speaking systematically and thinking independently without appeal to authority or unwarranted assumptions.
 - b) Improve one's ability to engage in independent, respectful, and well-reasoned philosophical discourse, fairly interpret and assess diverse arguments and beliefs, and to be able to identify and rationally assess one's core values and beliefs.
 - c) Assist in a better understanding of other fields of study by scrutinizing their assumptions, implications, and methodologies and encourage the habit of critical analytic thought as this is applied to any or all realms of understanding.
 - d) Provide experience of collective exploration of and argument over issues, while encouraging one to be open to modifying positions in light of counter-arguments.
 - e) Be able to articulate and develop a position of one's own.
- 3) Attitude
 - a) Be charitable and tolerant.
 - b) Develop a disposition to learn from others, to seek new perspectives, but also to be cautious regarding trends and novel approaches.