The Transition from Studying Philosophy to Doing Philosophy

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Abstract: In this paper I articulate a minimal conception of the idea of doing philosophy that informs a curriculum and pedagogy for producing students who are capable of engaging in philosophical activity and not just competent with a specific domain of knowledge. The paper then relates, by way of background, the departmental assessment practices that have played a vital role in the development of my department's current curriculum and in particular in the design of a junior-year seminar in philosophical research required of all majors. After a brief survey of the learning theory literature that has informed its design, I share the content of this junior-year seminar. In the paper's conclusion I provide some initial data that indicates our approach to curriculum and pedagogy has had a positive impact on student achievement with respect to reaching the learning goals associated with "doing" as opposed to "merely studying" philosophy.

1. Introduction

Capstone projects are common among liberal arts colleges and frequently carry an expectation that the final product demonstrates the student's achievement of becoming a budding biologist, historian, sociologist, philosopher and so on. Even without a formal capstone requirement, I would hope that my philosophy students could—as they finish their undergraduate studies—demonstrate such an achievement. This is because the full set of benefits made available by an education in philosophy includes but extends well beyond knowledge of the history of philosophy and mastery of a philosophical lexicon. These benefits are only realized to the extent that students are able to *do philosophy* in contrast with merely knowing (even knowing masterfully) about the content of the writings of different historical figures and the influential arguments in favor of and against a variety of philosophical positions.[1]

Of course, if students are to become nascent philosophers, it is not enough to merely share with them such an expectation or to simply require assignments like capstone research projects. Their success also requires a complimentary and preparatory pedagogy. A crucial part of this pedagogy involves getting students, in the first place, to recognize that there is a difference between merely studying a particular *domain of knowledge* called "philosophy" and fully engaging in a sort of *intellectual activity*, also called "philosophy." Once students recognize that there is such a difference, teachers can direct their attention to the various elements, manifested in the work of practicing philosophers, which constitute active engagement in philosophy. Then, students can begin training in the activity starting with more primitive instances and proceeding to more sophisticated instances by stages.

In section two of this paper I develop a minimal conception of the idea of doing philosophy that can serve to inform pedagogy for producing students who are capable of engaging in philosophical activity and not just competent with a specific domain of knowledge. Such a conception is compatible with a range of more substantive and mutually incompatible meta-philosophical views and I avoid taking a stand on these more substantive controversies.[2] The third section of my paper describes, by way of background, my department's self-assessment practices. These practices have played a vital role in the development of our current curriculum and in particular in the design of a junior-year seminar in philosophical research required of all majors. Next, after a brief survey of the learning theory literature that has informed its design, I share the content of this junior-year seminar. In the paper's conclusion, I share some initial data, which suggests our approach to pedagogy has had a positive impact on student achievement.

2. A Minimal Conception of "Doing Philosophy"

It is unproblematic enough to provide an account of studying philosophy as a particular domain of knowledge. In contrast, providing an account of what it means to fully (and properly) engage in philosophy as an activity invites one, *ab initio*, headlong into the activity itself, replete with all of the usual expectations of controversy. Other than to note that the conception of "doing philosophy" that I develop here is a minimal one that is consistent with a variety of more substantive meta-philosophical views, I make no effort here to *defend* any particular meta-philosophical claims. I do maintain, however, that the teaching of philosophy at the undergraduate level is positively aided by adopting, even if only provisionally, such a minimal conception.

By "studying philosophy" I mean, primarily, acquiring knowledge about the history of philosophy. A student *merely* studies philosophy

when she limits herself to acquiring answers to questions like: "in what century and locale did a particular philosopher live?"; "what theses did a particular philosopher defend?"; "what prior or competing philosophical claims did a particular philosopher reject?"; and "what biographical, cultural, or intellectual influences help explain a particular philosopher's commitment to some thesis?" A student makes but little progress, moreover, in the transition to doing philosophy in acquiring knowledge of the *arguments* deployed by various philosophers as well as those that have been developed and deployed by their critics.

A student who "does philosophy" is a student who, in a self-directed way, exercises a set of intellectual skills in the service of reaching greater clarity with respect to a broad range of issues. Included among this range of issues are those of how to best understand certain concepts and the logical relationships between (and, sometimes, metaphysical implications of) various concepts. She engages in the pursuit of answers to, for example, ontological and epistemological questions regarding the nature of value and our access (cognitive or other) to it or the nature of mind and various distinguishable types of mental state and the possibility and ground of justified belief. One who does philosophy might also employ the philosopher's skills in the service of addressing any of an indefinite list of practical concerns requiring answers to questions about what norms are properly endorsed and why.

What, then, are the skills of the philosopher? They are skills of (1) interpretation and analysis, (2) critical assessment of arguments, ideas, and presuppositions, (3) fluent application of philosophical concepts, distinctions and methods to the project of addressing a philosophical problem and (4) creatively developing and pursuing, through the means of effective written and oral communication, a novel approach to any of a certain broad class of puzzling issues. Here I say a bit about each of these in turn.

First, although one (at least frequently) does philosophy from the armchair, rather than in the laboratory or field, this is not to say that philosophy must be done in isolation. When philosophers do philosophy they do so dialogically. A philosopher's interlocutors are sometimes imagined, though mostly real. And, sometimes the interlocutors are present in real time while in other cases their contribution is via the philosophical texts they have produced and contributed to posterity. In order to do philosophy, then, a student must be adept at understanding the claims (and arguments for those claims) of her philosophical interlocutors. This means that she must be able to identify and describe the main (philosophical) aims of an interlocutor (or text). She must also, on her own and respectful of the principle of charity in interpretation, be able to identify the strategy and main assumptions of a thinker or text. In the process, the student who does philosophy demonstrates

a keen ability to both pick out of a text key terms (those playing a crucial role in the argument of the text) for critical analysis and also perform that critical analysis.

Second, doing philosophy involves formulating and critiquing arguments, ideas and presuppositions effectively. Students who have successfully transitioned to doing philosophy demonstrate an ability to distinguish between a philosophical position and an argument for a philosophical position. They can employ elementary logic (both formal and informal) to assess others' arguments, formulate objections to arguments, and formulate their own arguments for a philosophical claim.

Third, students who are fully doing philosophy demonstrate a high degree of fluency with the major traditions, figures, concepts, and methods of philosophy. Thus, they are able to recognize the difference between philosophical and non-philosophical questions, explain the relationship between the methodology of philosophy and those of other disciplines, distinguish between empirical claims and *a priori* claims, use conceptual analysis to enrich their understanding of philosophical problems and proposed solutions, and explain and employ the distinctions between metaphysics, epistemology, value theory, and logic.

Finally, for our minimal and provisional account, a student only fully "does philosophy" to the extent that she can (orally and in her writing) develop, organize, express and defend her own ideas—both assertive claims and critical appraisals of others' claims—in a precise, clear, effective and systematic manner.

As their teacher, I recognize that I have a great deal of responsibility in preparing students for their maiden voyage into the practice of philosophy. In the remainder of this paper I share, first, a description of our department's assessment practice and, second, the design and content of a course I have developed specifically for the purpose of preparing students for the challenges they will face while working on their capstone independent study research projects. However, the ultimate goal served by this course is that of the students' successful transition from studying philosophy to doing philosophy.

3. Background: Informing Pedogogy through Assessment

The model of an apprenticeship into a field or profession is more developed in the sciences (natural and social) than it is in philosophy. My colleagues in these other disciplines enjoy what I take to be a straightforward program for turning their students into young biologists, or chemists, or developmental psychologists (etcetera). These colleagues have their respective research agendas and are able to bring their students on board, rather unproblematically, as *quasi* apprentices. They teach their students (among other things) experimental design,

data collection and data analysis. These students often work side by side—in laboratories or in the field—with their faculty mentors and, in the process, begin to learn not just about a given science but also how to be a practitioner of that science. In contrast, in philosophy it is more of a challenge to take on our undergraduate students as apprentices working side by side with us on our own research. Consequently, it is easier to teach students about philosophy than teaching students to become philosophers. This might seem of only minor importance since so few of our students are even interested in being professional philosophers. However, for each of our students (including the vast majority who will pursue some other line of work) mere content knowledge will be of limited value while philosophical skill will be of tremendous worth.

Certainly, like all good philosophy professors, I favor including—in all of my courses—writing assignments that, by design, require students to go beyond merely *describing* others' claims and arguments towards articulating critical assessments of these claims and arguments and developing arguments of their own. I favor such assignments precisely because I want my students to become philosophical. And such assignments do work towards this end, especially when students are provided with an explicit, deliberate, preparation for this kind of intellectual exercise. Each of my colleagues has—like me and in all of their courses—required students to write critical and argumentative papers (and provided guidance for so doing). However, we believe that more can be done to meet the challenge of helping students move effectively from studying philosophy to fully doing philosophy, particularly at the level of preparation needed to develop a quality senior thesis. In response to this challenge, my colleagues and I began a conversation about how we might improve the design and content of an already existing and required Junior Seminar, the purpose of which is to prepare majors for the capstone project.

This conversation arose in the midst of a departmental *self*-assessment, during which we set out to develop a more explicit program for the assessment of our students' learning. Our department's efforts to develop an effective strategy for assessing student learning were self-initiated and began sometime ago when a concerted effort was made to restructure our curriculum.[3]

We began our effort to improve assessment motivated by a concern to make our program better for our students. We are entrusted with the responsibility of providing for our students certain educational benefits. Our salaries are paid by those students (and their parents) who commit a significant amount of money and, in most cases, a significant amount of effort following our direction, in a display of their trust that we will deliver what we promise. Students (and parents) ought to take their selection of a college seriously and they ought to have available to

them information helpful to that process. A carefully designed, multi-dimensional, comprehensive assessment program is an effective way of securing and providing that information. Such a program also, we have found, provides guidance for bringing about improvements upon what we already do quite well.

There are better, more streamlined, valid, and efficient ways of conducting assessment of student outcomes than we would ever have developed on our own. In our attempts to meet the external expectations for assessment we grew more and more familiar with the research in this area and have found a particular model for assessment that we favor. This is the model called "primary trait analysis."[4] We have used the is model to help us develop our department's mission statement, to identify and articulate the student learning goals that fit that mission, and to enumerate the assessable markers or "traits" that, when present in student work, indicate the degree to which the goals are being met. In total, we identified four learning goals that we expect our majors to achieve prior to graduation.[5] My reader will recognize that these four learning goals are the components of my minimal account of what it is to *do* philosophy. They are as follows:

(1) Interpretation and Analysis
Students should be able to analyze, interpret, and understand philosophical texts and discourse.

(2) Argumentation
Students should be able to effectively identify, evaluate, and formulate arguments.

(3) Philosophical Knowledge and Methodology
Students should be able to demonstrate a high degree of fluency with the major traditions, figures, concepts, and methods of philosophy.

(4) Communication
Students should be able to develop, organize, and express ideas in a precise, clear, effective, and systematic manner in writing and discussion.

Each of these learning goals, in turn, is associated with measurable skills and traits. For example, the first learning goal (interpretation and analysis) is assessed by the student's ability to (among other things) identify and describe the main aim(s) of a text or philosopher, to identify and describe a philosopher's main assumption(s), and to pick out key terms for analysis. The second learning goal (argumentation) is assessed by (among other things) the student's ability to extract an argument from a text, employ elementary logic to evaluate an argument, and formulate effective and well-reasoned arguments for and against a position. And, the third learning goal (philosophical knowledge and

methodology) is assessed by (among other things) the student's ability to recognize the difference between philosophical and non-philosophical questions, use conceptual analysis to enrich one's understanding of philosophical problems and proposed solutions, and explain and use the fundamental concepts in the various sub-disciplines of philosophy.[6]

The many traits associated with the five learning goals are developed in each of the courses that comprise our departmental curriculum with special emphasis placed on the development of some of these traits and skills in some courses and others of these traits and skills in other courses.[7] As a consequence of our assessment work, we find ourselves with a more sharply delineated understanding of the capstone project, what it should involve for students, how we communicate this to students and how we prepare them for the task. Having this clearer vision facilitates a more deliberate approach to the design of our several courses and the assignments we employ in each. It facilitates, further, a more intentional approach to the way we prepare students to undertake the capstone project through the Junior Seminar course that is required for this purpose. A student's capstone project is to be assessed in terms of its demonstration of a level of achievement with respect to each distinct learning goal and their integration into one philosophical endeavor. We now work much more explicitly, and in coordination as a department, to make all of our students conscious of these goals and to draw their attention to the relationship between, on the one hand, the curriculum and various assignments we give and, on the other hand, the development of the associated traits and skills.

By the time students take the Junior Seminar, it is hoped that they will have developed both an understanding of the sorts of skills and traits that are central to the practice of philosophy and some measure of competence with respect to a good portion of these identified traits. Having developed this understanding and some initial competence is, of course, to already have begun the transition to doing philosophy. And yet, there is an important contrast between doing philosophy in the context of first and second year college courses and doing philosophy in the context of a larger philosophical community. The former context is necessarily delimited for the purpose of gaining entry into a specific set of philosophical issues and establishing some rather basic familiarity with the contours of some small set of responses to these issues. The latter context, however, is decidedly less constrained. Removing these constraints is somewhat akin to removing training wheels in the process of learning to ride a bike. It imposes a greater degree of oversight and responsibility for the success of the venture and demands a corresponding increase in skill.

Introductory and intermediate philosophy courses are often not ideally suited to providing sufficient opportunity for a student to fully

integrate the several philosophical skills into a broader research project that she takes full responsibility for, in which she pursues her own philosophical question or set of questions and with respect to which she defends some conclusion (or set of conclusions). A capstone project undertaken in the final year is well suited for this sort of integration on a large scale. My students, almost universally, greet such a project with a mix of excitement and anxiety. Students are excited to be challenged to create their own significant work in philosophy; they are exhilarated at the prospect of "riding without training wheels." Yet, they are anxious and often report (or demonstrate through the early stages) a novice's understandable concern with not knowing exactly what they are supposed to be doing or how to begin doing it. Working with students in a way that familiarizes them with a variety of components of the larger research process helps to minimize this anxiety.

The Junior Seminar, thus, is to serve as a strategic exercise designed to help students pull together the many threads that have been spun through students' prior coursework while engaging students in a series of reflections on philosophy and practical assignments that simulate bits of a larger research process. The goal of this seminar is to further enhance students' knowledge of the nature of philosophy as an activity, familiarize them with and initiate them into its methods and research practices while cultivating a measure of practical research wisdom and scholarly virtue that they will employ during the capstone experience and beyond. In so doing, we provide our students with an effective intentional guidance through the transition from studying philosophy to doing philosophy. What follows is a description of the Junior Seminar.

4. Junior Seminar Structure and Content

The Junior Seminar has two separate, simultaneous and complimentary, tracks. The first track involves the focus on meta-philosophy and philosophical research methods. For this track, students undertake a combination of readings and assignments. In completing these readings and assignments students adopt, primarily, a second order, or *meta*, focus. Readings are selected for their promise in helping to enhance students' knowledge of what philosophy is and how philosophy is done. Assignments are devised (and characterized) to promote reflection on the type of activity the assignment involves them in. Each of the assignments in the first track is designed to promote progress towards the realization of one or more of our departmental learning goals and, thus, towards the students' more fully doing philosophy.

The design of the assignments comprising this first track, moreover, is informed by contemporary learning theory that has its earliest roots

in the work of the Soviet psychologist Lev Vygotsky and, in particular, his concept of the "zone of proximal development" (ZPD). The ZPD is

> [t]he distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers.[8]

Inspired by Vygotsky's idea that teaching and learning best occur in the ZPD, a number of learning theorists[9] have championed the idea of "scaffolding" or "guided discovery." Brian J. Reiser explains that

> [i]n the last two decades of learning sciences research, scaffolding has become increasingly prominent. Scaffolding is a key strategy in cognitive apprenticeship, in which students can learn by taking increasing responsibility and ownership for their role in complex problem solving with the structure and guidance of more knowledgeable mentors or teachers.[10]

Scaffolding has been defined as a practice whereby the teacher controls

> those elements of the task that are essentially beyond the learner's capacity, thus permitting him to concentrate upon and complete only those elements that are within his range of competence.[11]

The assignments I describe in the following employ processes of scaffolding including directing student's focus on a manageable task or narrowed range of tasks, putting into relief the critical features of the assigned tasks, and modeling ideal solutions to tasks.[12] Furthermore, the assignments in the seminar are dialogic and interactive so as to facilitate mutual, real-time and ongoing, monitoring and assessment of student progress. This feature of the assignments promotes responsive calibrating of the teacher's support including the "fading" of that support when appropriate.[13]

The second track of the seminar is that of the students' respective seminar research projects. The same learning theory that supports the design of the first track assignments also applies to the second track. The students' own research projects are being developed in parallel to the completion of the first track assignments. This is a deliberate feature of the seminar designed to encourage the transfer of insight from the context of first track to that of the second. Each student begins by developing a detailed proposal, including a research bibliography, for his or her article length research paper. Each seminar participant also leads a class discussion of a journal article (or other short reading) on the topic of his or her respective research project. Finally each student presents to the class his or her own philosophical work in progress and takes a turn commenting on a peer's presentation. Thus, the simultaneity of these two tracks in the seminar is itself an intentional employment of scaffolding and guided discovery.

4.1. First Track: What is Philosophy? Doing Philosophy

4.1.1. First Assignment

From the opening meetings of our introduction to philosophy classes, my colleagues and I call our students' attention to the question: "what is philosophy?" This is, of course, a common practice and there are a great number of excellent sources used for this purpose in introductory courses being taught worldwide.[14] There is, I find, a tremendous payoff to repeatedly raising the meta-philosophy question. The import of any attempt to answer this question changes as the student's perspective changes from that of one who is first exposed to philosophy to that of one who is engaged in a substantial philosophical research project, *as a philosopher*. From the former perspective, the student is likely to be approaching the issue by thinking (third personally) "what is this endeavor (or discipline or kind of inquiry) called philosophy that some of our culturally celebrated 'great-minds' were engaged in?" From the latter perspective, the student must approach the issue by asking, "what is it that *I* am engaged in when *I* pursue a philosophical project?" In the Junior Seminar, students adopt this latter perspective while we work through a series of readings and assignments designed to help them address the meta-philosophy question raised in this more first-personal way. In what follows, I describe the combination of readings and assignments that I have designed for the first track of the Junior Seminar. Some of the readings are readings in meta-philosophy while others are not. The former sort of reading helps, in a straightforward way, students to think about the meta-philosophy question since that very question is its primary focus. Those readings selected, which are not on the question "what is philosophy," still promote meta-philo-sophical reflection when read and discussed primarily as *exemplars* of philosophical writing and method.

Timing requires that students get started, early on, with the work of the seminar's second track, which is that of their individual seminar research projects. For this reason, the *first* track begins with a focus on helping them to develop a research plan in the form of a project prospectus.[15] One of the difficulties students often experience at the outset of a research endeavor is with envisioning in any detail at all what a final project might look like. Almost invariably, of course, an actual final project will look significantly different from the project as first conceived in the early stages. Yet, the formulation of a working and always revisable vision of the end state can offer tremendous guidance and, thus, facilitate progress from the beginning. The first assignment for the seminar, consequently, is designed to help students overcome this difficulty so that, at the earliest stages of a research project, they are able to better develop a sense of direction for their work.

For their first assignment students do a bit of reverse engineering in completing a project that is intended to improve their skill at planning a project strategically and structuring a paper in accordance with that strategy. An accessible and clearly structured philosophy article is selected and assigned for students to read. Each student imagines that she is the author of this article, back in time, before it was written and that she will be submitting a proposal to a journal that is planning a special issue on the topic of the article. The student then writes the prospectus for *this already actually existing article* (though they are imagining, of course, that it is not yet written). The assignment, thus, is to create "the" prospectus that the (actual) author would have created for this paper before (s)he wrote it. The already-published article[16] provides a vivid "image" of the final project and enables students to more easily construct a plan without being paralyzed, as they at times can be when beginning with a too vague and inchoate philosophical interest. Getting comfortable with this process helps students, at the earliest stages of their own projects, to sharpen their focus and move from an inchoate inspiration towards the greater clarity of a direction-providing plan. Completing this project, including a follow-up, in-class discussion of the experience, also affords an opportunity to reflect upon and learn from the choices that the article's real author made in structuring the article and defending its conclusion(s). Directing students' attention in this way, it is hoped, helps them to get more comfortable with the *practice* of philosophy.

4.1.2. Second Assignment

There is a wealth of excellent material available on the topic of metaphilosophy. Here I want to discuss just one[17] recent work that I have used to generate thinking about and discussion of what philosophy is and what is involved in doing philosophy and with which I have paired an effective meta-philosophical assignment. This work is Hans-Johann Glock's recent book *What is Analytic Philosophy?*[18] While this book is a bit of a challenging read for undergraduates, it works well for certain purposes so long as there is appropriate situating of the work in the context of the course and sufficient guidance of the discussion so as to help students stay on point. This book covers much more ground than could be covered in but a fraction of a seminar. For the seminar's purposes, I believe the chapters on "History and Historiography," and "Ethics and Politics" are particularly useful. A nice feature of this book and of these chapters is that it is not terribly difficult for students to, when asked, discern Glock's own aim and strategy and hence to put into practice philosophical skills we will have already been trying to cultivate in them throughout their prior coursework.[19] A favorite strategy employed by Glock is that of the counter-example. Thus, for

example, Glock considers and rejects, via counter examples, the claims that analytic philosophy is to be understood in terms of geography and language (as, say, a strictly Anglo-American and English variant of philosophy), that it is anti-historicist and that it is morally neutral and conservative.

Especially useful for the purposes of this seminar is the fourth chapter, entitled: "History and historiography." Glock begins this chapter with the claim that "(a) disregard for historical issues is often mentioned as one of the distinctive features of analytic philosophy."[20] Glock does a nice job of drawing helpful distinctions between multiple positions *vis à vis* the role of history in philosophy and providing examples of analytic philosophers who have espoused them.[21] One such helpful distinction is that between "instrumental" and "weak" historicism. Briefly, the former, attributed in particular to Charles Taylor, holds that "studying the past is *necessary*, yet only as a *means* to achieving ends which themselves are not historical in nature."[22] The latter, attributed to Peter Hare, holds that "a study of the past is *useful* [to systematic philosophy] without being indispensible."[23] Using this chapter, then, allows me to draw students' attention to the skills (exhibited nicely by Glock) of drawing distinctions and employing counter examples in order to challenge a thesis under consideration. Beyond this, however, it allows me the opportunity to invite students to consider the level of importance that history (and the history of philosophy and philosophical concepts) has for pursuing a philosophical inquiry. This chapter also pairs nicely with an additional set of readings in order to set up the second assignment for the term.

For assignment number two, the aim is to work towards improvement with respect to learning goals one (interpretation and analysis) and three (knowledge and methodology). Following the reading and discussion of Glock's chapter, I have students read Charles Taylor's metaphilosophical essay: "Philosophy and its History."[24] This essay is an exemplary statement and defense of the position Glock discusses under the label "instrumental historicism." Students are also assigned to read Taylor's essay "The Politics of Recognition."[25] This essay *employs* the instrumental historicist's approach to addressing a philosophical issue. Students then write a paper in which they discuss and critically assess Taylor's instrumental historicist position and his argument in support of it. Additionally, students are to point out the elements of the second Taylor essay that best represent this approach and to assess the quality of the essay as an exemplar of this approach. They are further asked to address the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the instrumental historicism in supporting Taylor's main thesis. Finally, they reflect in writing, upon the value or disvalue such an approach might have for their own independent research project. This second assignment directs

them to become more critical about the enterprise of philosophy by (1) inviting them consider an interesting meta-philosophical thesis while (2) simultaneously assessing a piece of philosophical writing that is representative of that thesis and (3) taking a meta-perspective on their own proposed philosophical endeavor. The cultivation of this meta-perspective is central to their successful transition to doing philosophy.

4.1.3. Third Assignment

In order to highlight the value of doing philosophy dialogically as opposed to in isolation, students are asked to complete the third assignment in groups. I hope to instill in students a practice of thinking through the details and difficulties in their own projects, when possible, in dialogue with peers and with faculty advisors. This assignment is paired with two readings, one before completion of the written portion of the assignment and one assigned (and only revealed) after. The first reading presents a historically significant, positive case for some particular philosophical thesis. The second reading is an effective critical assessment of that historically significant position.[26] For the written assignment, students are asked to imagine that they have decided upon pursuing a capstone project on the problem addressed in the first article. Part of this (hypothetical) capstone project will be to survey historically significant approaches to dealing with the problem. Since the first reading represents one of the most historically significant approaches, the plan for the student's (hypothetical) project includes explaining and critically evaluating this particular approach. In small working groups, the students produce a five page "thesis installment" in which they explain what the problem or issue is that is addressed in the first reading and explicate the author's proposed solution. They are also asked to raise challenges to the author's position.[27] After the assignments have been turned in and discussed, with the groups comparing and contrasting the ways that they each responded to the assignment, I ask students to read the second essay. We finish this exercise by comparing and contrasting their own critical responses to that of an accomplished professional. In my experience students regularly see, through this process, both how well such an assignment can be executed (as evidenced by the second reading) but also, affirmatively, how capable they are, on their own, of developing a strong critique. Often students will find that elements of their own criticism overlap in interesting ways with that of the established classic. This can be especially good at boosting student confidence while helping them to appreciate that in doing philosophy they are *active* participants in and contributors to an *ongoing* philosophical discussion. This assignment contributes to the development of the skills associated with learning goals two (argumentation) and four (communication).

4.1.4. Fourth Assignment

Since, during the final segment of the seminar, students will be responsible not only for presenting their own research but also for responding to a classmate's presentation, the fourth and final assignment for this portion of the seminar is intended to help clarify and make more familiar the task of providing a professional commentary. To serve as a model, I provide and discuss with students examples of commentaries that I (and my colleagues) have presented in the context of a philosophy conference session. The students are then asked to read an article and then to pretend that they have been invited to present, at a conference, comments on that article.[28] They are then encouraged to consider, in constructing their commentary, any of the following options (or combination of the following options). They can comment on the paper as a whole or on some lesser part of the paper (perhaps focusing on one or two specific points). They can provide friendly suggestions from a position of (mostly) agreement. They can provide less "friendly" (though still charitable and appropriately professional in tone) suggestions or considerations that challenge or point out weaknesses in the author's position (or a part of his position). Finally, they can provide an alternative interpretation of the author's source material. This fourth exercise further reinforces the dialogical aspects of philosophical practice and helps students to develop the skills and virtues associated with the practice of peer review and the role of a critical interlocutor within an ongoing philosophical endeavor. In one rather manageable hybrid writing/oral presentation assignment, students are able to sharpen the skills associated with all four learning goals.

4.2. Second Track: Research Project

4.2.1. First Element

By the end of the seminar each student completes a journal article length term paper on a philosophical topic of his or her choosing. This assignment affords an opportunity to integrate the exercise of each of the skills associated with doing philosophy into one project. Each student follows the (first-track) first assignment by writing multiple drafts of his or her own final project research proposal. These proposals are to be developed according to specific instructions. Students are required, in their proposals, to explicitly identify the area of philosophy in which they will be working (e.g. ethics, epistemology, mind) and also to formulate the central question or questions that they propose to address. The proposal itself is to be between 750 and 1000 words and must include a plan for the organization of the paper, a statement of what is at stake, and an indication of the anticipated answer(s) to the central question(s). Students are required to submit, with the final proposal, a bibliography containing a minimum of ten entries.

To help with the production of the research proposal and bibliography, I spend one seminar meeting introducing (or, in some cases re-introducing) them to a variety of research databases and other electronic sources of information, starting with the *Philosophers Index*, *The Stanford Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*,[29] and *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.[30] In addition to these sources, I introduce students to a variety (and ever growing number) of quality philosophical weblogs[31] where students can follow interesting discussions of ideas, as they are being teased out and developed, in real time, by some of today's most talented philosophical minds. These blogs can be both a model of twenty-first-century Socratic method and a source of inspiration for topic ideas. Finally, I introduce students to the Arts and Humanities Citation Index.[32] This excellent resource helps them to easily keep track of relevant citations using a variety of referencing programs and also generates handy citation maps that show (up to two generations forward and backward) what sources are cited in a particular work and where the particular work has itself been cited. This is useful to students both in terms of helping them to populate their own project bibliographies as well as in providing some data that helps them to assess the quality and significance of a given source.

To ensure that students are practiced at finding and obtaining resources through a variety of available means, I add the following requirements to their bibliography assignment. At least one entry must be: (1) a professional journal article, photocopied from the campus library holdings (2) a professional journal article in PDF format accessible through the campus library's electronic subscriptions, (3) a book, and (4) a book chapter. No more than five of the entries can be selected from readings they have been assigned in prior courses. One source must come through the statewide library network and one from the extended library loan service. Finally, five of the entries in the bibliography submitted with the final proposal draft must contain an annotation. The requirements for this project proposal assignment are replicated in the requirements students will be asked to meet in constructing their capstone project proposals at the beginning of their final year at the college.

4.2.2. Second Element

While working from the beginning of the seminar on building their respective bibliographies (for their respective term papers) students are directed to pick out one short reading to be assigned to the class for group discussion. The idea behind this article presentation assignment is for students to begin talking with a group of peers about their specific research project. The article is a vehicle to help that discussion. The student's role is that of a reading-group leader, leading discussion and

generating valuable group reflection on the topic chosen. The student's primary goal, thus, is to channel the discussion of the article into a discussion of what he or she wants to cover in his or her seminar research project. Students are directed to begin their presentations by first sharing with the class a brief description of their seminar project topic. For this part of the presentation each student is allowed (and even encouraged) to draw heavily on his or her prospectus.[33] As the student shifts into a focus on the selected article, he or she is directed to address the following questions:

(1) How does the article relate to your primary research question? What role will it play in your final paper?

(2) Does the article present/defend any thesis (or more than one) that you are sympathetic with? If so, what is it? (or, what are they?)

(3) Does the article present/defend any thesis (or more than one) that you disagree with? If so, what is it? (or, what are they?)

(4) In what ways do you think your project will compliment, extend, improve or otherwise relate to this article (as well as the context of the wider literature surrounding the issue on which you are focusing)?

(5) Does it do an especially nice job of setting up the problem (or some relevant portion of a larger problem)? If so, describe its merits/virtues. Indicate how this will be built upon in your paper.

(6) Does the article begin from an unhelpful starting point by making the statement of the problem less clear than it ought to be? Does it involve other mistakes that you would seek to overcome? If so, what are its flaws and how can they be improved?

The number one concern for this exercise is making the presentation experience an *integral part* of the overall Junior Seminar research project. Students are to figure out a way to successfully capitalize on this opportunity to discuss the issues they find important with a group of peers.[34]

4.2.3. Third Element

During the final segment of this seminar, students take turns presenting their research projects, following a standard philosophy conference format. I serve as session chair and a peer is assigned to share prepared commentary. The presenters are required to supply their commenter with a draft of their presentation no later than one week prior to their scheduled presentation so that the commenter will have time to prepare his or her comments. The research projects will unavoidably be (depending on the schedule) at various stages of completion, with

those going first presenting less complete projects and those going last presenting more complete projects. After the presentation of the project and the peer commentary, the floor is opened up for questions. This exercise, like so much else in the seminar, reinforces the dialogical nature of doing philosophy and promotes the student's identification as a member of a philosophical community.

5. Initial Assessment Data and Conclusion

In order to assess the impact of the introduction of the learning goals and the associated curricular adjustments, including the newly designed junior seminar, we developed an independent study (senior thesis) assessment guide.[35] We began scoring our seniors' progress towards meeting each of the learning goals in four separate aspects of their capstone experience: (1) the written thesis, (2) the public roundtable presentation of the project, (3) the research process, and (4) the final oral defense of the thesis. The first cohort to be scored using this instrument had not taken the newly designed junior seminar in philosophical research prior to embarking on their capstone projects. Also, this cohort had not been introduced to the specific language of the learning goals and associated traits prior to beginning their capstone research projects. All subsequent cohorts had (prior to beginning the capstone research project) grown familiar with this language having seen it on various course syllabi, in the context of multiple student/faculty assessment "retreats,"[36] in the context of the junior seminar, and in the department's major's handbook.

Data from the scoring of the written thesis, employing the assessment guide, shows an improvement between the 2007 cohort and all subsequent cohorts[37] on all four learning goals (understanding, argumentation, knowledge and methodology, and communication).[38] The most dramatic increase was between 2007 and 2008, when, in each category, the mean score increased by nearly half of a rubric point. Mean scores of student cohorts in subsequent years show that each cohort maintained, on each learning goal, the level of achievement demonstrated in 2008.

The department also collected data on the percentage of students in each cohort, with respect to each learning goal, who met or exceeded a benchmark score of 3. A level of 3 indicates that a student has exceeded the minimum expectations for a satisfactory research project. In 2007, 72 percent of the cohort met the benchmark in the "understanding" category while over 80 percent of each of the following three cohorts met this benchmark. In each of the remaining areas ("argumentation," "knowledge and methodology," and "communication") approximately 50 percent of the 2007 cohort met the benchmark. In all subsequent

years, the benchmark for these categories was met by between 70–87 percent of a cohort. We take this data to support the conclusion that our curricular adjustments, including the redesign of the junior seminar on philosophical research, are having a positive impact on student achievement.[39]

The Junior Seminar described in this paper is an important piece of a broader effort to help students more effectively and more fully make the transition from studying "philosophy" (understood as a particular *domain of knowledge*) to doing "philosophy" (understood as a self-directed engagement in an intellectual activity involving the exercise of a particular set of skills). The overall design of the course as well as the design of each constituent element is guided by the outcome of our efforts to explicitly articulate the learning goals that we have for our students while identifying the measurable traits associated with these goals. While identifying these goals and associated traits, we were concerned to think not just in terms of what we expected of students in the classroom but also in terms of the sorts of skills they would ideally carry with them, and from which they would benefit, long after graduation. These skills (including the skills of interpretation and analysis, those involved in the critical assessment of arguments, ideas, and presuppositions, and those involved in creatively developing, pursuing, and effectively communicating a novel approach to a puzzling issue) are the skills that are widely recognized as the distinguishing traits of a liberally educated person. They are of tremendous value to both professional and communal aspects of an adult life. If a student is to effectively *do* philosophy over and above studying philosophy, she will of necessity need to develop and make use of these skills. This, then, calls for the development of a pedagogy that facilitates a thorough cultivation of those skills and provides the opportunity for their exercise. The sort of seminar described in this paper, I believe, marks a promising step in the development of such pedagogy.

Appendix A

Mission Statement and Learning Goals

Philosophy Department Mission Statement

The Philosophy Department has as its fundamental mission the cultivation of skills and dispositions in its students that contribute to their development as autonomous persons and as responsible and engaged members of society. These skills and dispositions are acquired and honed through studying and doing philosophy. They facilitate a student's development by enabling the critical, systematic, and philosophically informed examination of beliefs, values, and conceptions of the world. Such an individual has an independent mind: one that is open, flexible, creative, critical, and capable of making well-reasoned decisions.

Learning Goals

The following four goals are what the department expects majors to achieve by the end of their course of studies.

1. *Interpretation and Analysis*
   Students should be able to analyze, interpret, and understand philosophical texts and discourse.

2. *Argumentation*
   Students should be able to effectively identify, evaluate, and formulate arguments.

3. *Philosophical Knowledge and Methodology*
   Students should be able to demonstrate a high degree of fluency with the major traditions, figures, concepts, and methods of philosophy.

4. *Communication*
   Students should be able to develop, organize, and express ideas in a precise, clear, effective, and systematic manner in writing and discussion.

Primary Traits Associated With Each Learning Goal

Each of the four learning goals is associated with measurable skills and traits (i.e., primary traits) that help determine whether students are meeting the learning goals.

1. *Interpretation and Analysis*
   Students should be able to analyze, interpret, and understand philosophical texts and discourse.

   Success in achieving this goal will be assessed by a student's ability to:

- identify and describe the main aim(s) of a text or thinker.
- identify and describe the strategy of a text or thinker.
- identify and describe the main assumption(s) of a text or thinker.
- recognize what is important about or "at stake in" a philosophical debate.
- separate understanding a text from evaluating a text.
- summarize and explicate the main support for the main conclusion(s).
- pick out key terms for analysis.
- identify incomplete, ambiguous, vague, or nonsensical concepts and statements.
- ask incisive questions of a thinker/text.
- apply the principle of charity in interpretation.

2. *Argumentation*
   Students should be able to effectively identify, evaluate, and formulate arguments.

   Success in achieving this goal will be assessed by a student's ability to:
   - identify the difference between a position and an argument for a position.
   - extract an argument from a piece of text.
   - define and identify formal and informal fallacies.
   - employ elementary logic to evaluate an argument.
   - formulate a strong objection to a given argument.
   - formulate an effective and well-reasoned argument for and against a position.

3. *Philosophical Knowledge and Methodology*
   Students should be able to demonstrate a high degree of fluency with the major traditions, figures, concepts, and methods of philosophy.

   Success in achieving this goal will be assessed by a student's ability to:
   - recognize the difference between philosophical and non-philosophical questions.
   - explain the relationship between the methodology of philosophy and that of other disciplines.
   - distinguish between empirical claims and *a priori* claims.
   - use conceptual analysis to enrich one's understanding of philosophical problems and proposed solutions.
   - explain and employ the distinctions between metaphysics, epistemology, value theory, and logic.

- explain and use the fundamental concepts and theories in metaphysics.
- explain and use the fundamental concepts and theories in epistemology.
- connect and integrate the discussion in one area of philosophy to another.
- explain and use the fundamental concepts and theories in ethics and political philosophy.
- exhibit fluency with major traditions and figures in the history of philosophy.

4. *Communication*

Students should be able to develop, organize, and express ideas in a precise, clear, effective, and systematic manner in writing and discussion.

Success in achieving this goal will be assessed by a student's ability to:

- discuss philosophy in a thoughtful and engaging manner.
- show respect for others and their ideas (express disagreement in a respectful and rational manner).
- deliver oral presentations to a class or group.
- research a paper.
- plan a paper strategically.
- structure a paper given the strategy.
- choose the most appropriate and precise wording.
- stick to the point.

Appendix B

Independent Study Assessment Guide
(Department of Philosophy)

Student: _____ Date: _____

I. Thesis

Form:

–Title (*clear, concise, informative*): 0 1 2 3 4

–Abstract (*150–300 word effective summary of the paper's thesis, main arguments*): 0 1 2 3 4

–Introduction (*provides context and purpose for the thesis*): 0 1 2 3 4

–Summary (*the thesis's primary points are briefly restated*): 0 1 2 3 4

–Citation of sources (*all borrowed ideas and words adequately cited*): 0 1 2 3 4

–Spelling & Grammar (*proper punctuation, spelling, sentence structure, etc.*): 0 1 2 3 4

–Proper format followed (*meets the requirements outlined in our style guide*): 0 1 2 3 4

Content:

–Understanding—Interpretation and Analysis: 0 1 2 3 4
(*The thesis demonstrates an ability to analyze, interpret, and understand philosophical texts and discourse.*)

–Argumentation: 0 1 2 3 4
(*The thesis demonstrates an ability to effectively identify, evaluate, and formulate arguments.*)

–Philosophical Knowledge and Methodology: 0 1 2 3 4
(*The paper demonstrates a high degree of fluency with the major traditions, figures, concepts, and methods of philosophy.*)

–Communication: 0 1 2 3 4
(*The thesis demonstrates an ability to develop, organize, and express ideas in a precise, clear, effective and systematic manner.*)

II. Roundtable Presentation

Form:

–Student was clear with audible vocal projection: 0   1   2   3   4

–Student was articulate with minimal verbal
    clutter: 0   1   2   3   4

–Student spoke at an appropriate pace: 0   1   2   3   4

–Student showed poise and self confidence: 0   1   2   3   4

–Student developed a rapport with the audience: 0   1   2   3   4

–Student communicated effectively with the
    audience: 0   1   2   3   4

–Handout was well organized, clear, and ef-
    fectively used: 0   1   2   3   4

Content:

–Understanding—Interpretation and Analysis: 0   1   2   3   4
    (*The student demonstrates an ability to
    analyze, interpret, and understand philo-
    sophical texts and discourse.*)

–Argumentation: 0   1   2   3   4
    (*The student demonstrates during meetings
    an ability to effectively identify, evaluate,
    and formulate arguments.*)

–Philosophical Knowledge and Methodology—
    (Depth, Originality, Creativity):   0   1   2   3   4
    (*The student demonstrates a high degree of
    fluency with the major traditions, figures,
    concepts, and methods of philosophy.*)

–Communication: 0   1   2   3   4
    (*The student demonstrates an ability to
    develop, organize, and express ideas in
    a precise, clear, effective and systematic
    manner.*)

III. Process

–Understanding—Interpretation and Analysis: 0   1   2   3   4
    (*The student demonstrates an ability to
    analyze, interpret, and understand philo-
    sophical texts and discourse.*)

–Argumentation: 0   1   2   3   4

(*The student demonstrates during meetings an ability to effectively identify, evaluate, and formulate arguments.*)

–Philosophical Knowledge and Methodology—
(Depth, Originality, Creativity):   0   1   2   3   4
(*The student demonstrates a high degree of fluency with the major traditions, figures, concepts, and methods of philosophy.*)

–Communication: 0   1   2   3   4
(*The student demonstrates an ability to develop, organize, and express ideas in a precise, clear, effective and systematic manner.*)

–Literature and Research: 0   1   2   3   4
(*The student demonstrates skill in finding and using appropriate research materials.*)

–Effort: 0   1   2   3   4
(*The student comes prepared for each meeting, exhibits consistent effort, and demonstrates active engagement with the project.*)

IV. Oral Examination

–Understanding—Interpretation and Analysis: 0   1   2   3   4
(*The student demonstrates an ability to analyze, interpret, and understand philosophical texts and discourse.*)

–Argumentation: 0   1   2   3   4
(*The student demonstrates during meetings an ability to effectively identify, evaluate, and formulate arguments.*)

–Philosophical Knowledge and Methodology—
(Depth, Originality, Creativity):   0   1   2   3   4
(*The student demonstrates a high degree of fluency with the major traditions, figures, concepts, and methods of philosophy.*)

–Communication: 0   1   2   3   4
(*The student demonstrates an ability to develop, organize, and express ideas in a precise, clear, effective and systematic manner.*)

Interpretative Scale

Understanding—Interpretation and Analysis

4   Exceptional: Interpretations and analyses of the philosophical positions are exceptionally clear, precise, and reveal a rich and insightful understanding of the assumptions, strategies, and aims of the text.

3   Exceeds expectations: Interpretations and analyses of the philosophical positions are clear, precise, and reveal a rich understanding of the basic assumptions, strategies, and aims of the text.

2   Satisfies expectations: Interpretations and analyses of the philosophical positions are correct on all basic points and fit within the standard interpretations and show an awareness of the basic assumptions and aims of the text.

1   Does not satisfy expectations: Interpretations and analyses of the philosophical positions do not reveal an understanding of "what is at stake" and/or do not effectively identify the basic aims and assumptions of the text.

0   Significantly below expectations: There is an absence of interpretations and analyses of the philosophical positions and/or a failure to engage the text.

NA Not Applicable.

Argumentation

4   Exceptional: Argumentation is exceptionally well-organized, tightly constructed, clearly presented, philosophically sophisticated, effective, and well-reasoned. In addition, it shows a rich and insightful understanding of other arguments for and against the position.

3   Exceeds expectations: Argumentation is well-organized, tightly constructed, clearly presented, philosophically sophisticated, effective, and well-reasoned. In addition, it shows a rich understanding of other arguments for and against the position

2   Satisfies expectations: Argumentation is organized, clearly presented, philosophically informed, and generally well-reasoned. In addition, it effectively demonstrates an understanding of other arguments for and against the position.

1   Does not satisfy expectations: Argumentation is poorly organized, lacking clarity and structure, and not well-reasoned and/or does not effectively demonstrate an understanding of other arguments for and against the position.

0   Significantly below expectations: There is an absence of argumentation and/or no indication of an awareness of other arguments for or against the position.

NA   Not Applicable.

Philosophical Knowledge and Methodology

4   Exceptional: The project demonstrates facility with and mastery of a wide range of philosophical concepts and methodologies. In addition, the project exhibits a deep and insightful understanding of the relevant literature, theories and traditional approaches to the issue(s).

3   Exceeds expectations: The project demonstrates facility with a wide range of philosophical concepts and methodologies. In addition, the project exhibits a deep understanding of the relevant theories and traditional approaches to the issue(s).

2   Satisfies expectations: The project is developed in accordance with fundamental philosophical concepts and methodologies. In addition, it effectively demonstrates an understanding of theories and traditional approaches to the issue(s).

1   Does not satisfy expectations: The project is not clearly developed in accordance with fundamental philosophical concepts and methodologies and/or does not effectively demonstrate an understanding of theories and traditional approaches to the issue(s).

0   Significantly below expectations: The project fails to employ fundamental philosophical concepts and methodologies and/or to demonstrate an awareness of theories and traditional approaches to the issue(s).

NA   Not Applicable.

Communication

4   Exceptional: Ideas and issues are presented with clarity and in a style that is engaging, thoughtful, and insightful. Tone and word choice is not only effective, but also elegant and demonstrates an awareness of the audience in a manner which not only eliminate potential misunderstandings but also enriches understanding. The project is developed according to a clear and effective structure and strategy that is easily recognizable and enhances the audience's understanding.

3   Exceeds expectations: Ideas and issues are presented with clarity and precision and in a style that is engaging and thoughtful. Tone and word choice is effective and demonstrates an awareness of the audience by attempting to eliminate potential

misunderstandings and confusions. The project is developed according to a clear and effective structure and strategy.

2   Satisfies expectations: Ideas and issues are presented with a reasonable degree of clarity and precision. Appropriate tone and word choice are generally employed. The project is developed with a discernible structure and strategy such that lapses do not detract from overall understanding.

1   Does not satisfy expectations: Ideas and issues are presented in a manner that is frequently vague or ambiguous. Organization and structure is inconsistent and the strategy employed is difficult to recognize and assess.

0   Significantly below expectations: There is an absence of clarity, precision, and/or organization.

NA Not Applicable.

Notes

1. I do not wish to imply that the gaining of content knowledge is not itself a part of becoming a philosopher. It is, after all, an accomplishment that requires first the gaining and developing of essential philosophical skills. To be sure, students have to be effective readers and interpreters of texts before they can be said to have content knowledge. To be able to read and interpret philosophical texts well is already to be on one's way to becoming a philosopher. For an excellent discussion of what is involved in reading philosophy well and how to develop this skill in students, see David W. Concepción, "Reading Philosophy with Background Knowledge and Metacognition," *Teaching Philosophy* 27:4 (December 2004): 351–68.

2. For example, the minimal conception I present here is compatible with both meta-philosophical views that consider philosophy to be a wholly *a priori* endeavor and those that accept inclusion of empirical methodology into the practice of philosophy.

3. We now continue these efforts in a different institutional context that places on us an additional, largely external, imperative. Narrowly, this context is that of our own college and its specific requirements for a comprehensive assessment process. More broadly, it is the context of the state of higher education in America and its emphasis on assessment dating back at least twenty years now (this broader context, of course, provides the bulk of the explanans behind the narrow context being what it is—colleges like ours are requiring assessment strategies in their academic departments *because they have to*—their accreditation depends on it).

4. For a helpful introduction to Primary Trait Analysis, see: B. E. Walvoord and V. I. Anderson, *Effective Grading: A Tool for Learning and Assessment* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998).

5. I co-presented (with Henry Kreuzman and Elizabeth Schiltz) an overview of our work in developing this assessment program under the title "Assessment in the Philosophy Classroom and Across the Philosophy Curriculum" at The American Association of Philosophy Teachers Sixteenth Annual Workshop/Conference on Teaching Philosophy, Washington and Jefferson College, Washington, Pennsylvania, August 5, 2006. My participation in a separate project, *Creative and Critical Thinking: Assessing the Foundations of a Liberal Arts Education,* also informed my contributions to the department's assessment plan and to the design of the Junior Seminar. The Teagle Foundation funded this latter project. Details, including outcomes, are available online at http://www3.wooster.edu/teagle/default.php.

6. For the full list of student learning goals and associated traits, see Appendix A.

7. For example, in most of our introductory and mid-level courses, we devote time explicitly to helping students identify and describe the main aims of a text or thinker and to recognizing what is at stake in a philosophical debate, whereas in our upper-level seminars we tend to assume at least a minimal level of competence regarding these skills,

and so focus more explicitly on developing other skills. Among these is the ability to pick out key terms for analysis and asking incisive questions of a text or thinker.

8.   Lev Vygotsky, *Mind in Society: Development of Higher Psychological Processes*, trans. A. Kozulin (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978), 86.

9.   Brian J. Reiser, "Scaffolding Complex Learning: The Mechanisms of Structuring and Problematizing Student Work," *The Journal of The Learning Sciences* 13:3 (2004): 273–304; D. Wood, J. S. Bruner, and G. Ross, "The Role of Tutoring in Problem Solving," *Journal of Child Psychology & Psychiatry & Allied Disciplines* 17:2 (1976): 89–100; Richard E. Mayer, "Should There Be a Three-Strikes Rule against Pure Discovery Learning?: The Case for Guided Methods of Instruction," *American Psychologist* 59:1 (2004): 14–19; Sadhana Puntambekar, and Roland Hübscher, "Tools for Scaffolding Students in a Complex Learning Environment: What Have We Gained and What Have We Missed?," *Educational Psychologist* 40:1 (2004): 1–12; John Seely Brown, Allan Collins, and Paul Duguid, "Situated Cognition and the Culture of Learning," *Educational Researcher* 18:1 (1989): 32–42.

10.   Reiser, "Scaffolding Complex Learning."

11.   Wood, Bruner, and Ross, "The Role of Tutoring in Problem Solving," 90.

12.   Ibid., 98.

13.   For a discussion of the dialogical or reciprocal features of quality guided discovery see A. L. Brown and A. S. Palinscar, "Reciprocal Teaching of Comprehension Strategies: A Natural History of One Program for Enhancing Learning," in *Intelligence and Exceptionality: New Directions for Theory, Assessment, and Instructional Practice*, ed. J. G. Borkowski (Norwood, N.J.: Ablex, 1985), 88–132; also A. S. Palinscar and A. L. Brown, "Reciprocal Teaching of Comprehension-Fostering and Comprehension-Monitoring Activities," *Cognition and Instruction* 1 (1984): 117–75.

14.   For example, in my introduction to philosophy courses I often assign Plato's *Apology* for the purpose of beginning to address the meta-philosophy question. Additionally, I have had students read Bertrand Russell's "The Value of Philosophy," in *The Problems of Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 153–61; and Garrett Thomson's "Showing What Others Hide," in *On Philosophy* (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Press, 2003), chap. 1, pp. 3–16.

15.   These students will be required to begin their senior capstone projects by submitting a similar prospectus. This assignment, thus, is the first of several that are intended to familiarize students with a task they will be expected to complete as a part of their capstone project.

16.   For this assignment, it is best to choose an article that is explicit in the presentation of its thesis statement and in which the argument(s) are fairly linear and developed in a nicely structured, straightforwardly unfolding way so that students can focus on the project at hand more readily. It further helps if the article contains crucial elements, such as a key distinction on which the argument rests, that are easy for students to spot and refer to in their proposal. I have used to great effect both Andrew Altman's "Liberalism and Campus Hate Speech: A Philosophical Examination," *Ethics* 103 (January 1993): 302–17; and Kai Nielsen's "A Moral Case for Socialism," *Critical Review* 3:3/4 (Summer/ Fall 1989), 542–53.

17.   There are far too many excellent works of metaphilosophy to list here, but I have found especially helpful (at least portions of) the following three recent books: (1) *What is Philosophy?*, ed. C. P. Ragland and Sarah Heidt (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2001); (2) *The Philosophy of Philosophy*, by Timothy Williamson (Malden, Mass.:

Wiley-Blackwell, 2008); and (3) *The Nature and Future of Philosophy*, by Michael Dummett (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).

18. Hans-Johann Glock, *What Is Analytic Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

19. Recall that one of our learning goals is "interpretation and analysis," and the primary traits associated with it include the abilities to identify and describe the main *aim(s)* of a text or thinker and identify and describe the *strategy* of a text or thinker.

20. Glock, *What Is Analytic Philosophy*, 89.

21. Thus he considers "historiophobes" (citing an anecdote about Gilbert Harman posting a sign on his office door that read "JUST SAY NO TO THE HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY," and Jerry Fodor's claim to be able to write a "book about Hume without actually knowing anything about him") and those who are in some way historicist (citing here philosophers as various as Kuhn and his followers, Julia Annas, and Alisdair MacIntyre).

22. Glock, *What Is Analytic Philosophy*, 90.

23. Ibid.

24. *Philosophy in History: Essays in the Historiography of Philosophy*, ed. Richard Rorty, Jerome B. Schneewind, and Quentin Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 17–30.

25. *Multiculturalism and the "Politics of Recognition,"* ed. Amy Gutmann (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press 1994).

26. For this assignment, I am fond of having students read Plato's solution to the problem of political obligation in the *Crito* and then, after completing the assignment, having them read and discuss A. John Simmon's clear and persuasive critique of Plato from his excellent book *Moral Principles and Political Obligation* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press 1981).

27. I like to provide a bit of direction, on the handout, for this assignment. So, for example when using the *Crito*, I write, "as your advisor I can tell you that (in reading the *Crito*) you can expect to isolate two distinct arguments, each of which is susceptible to challenge. One of the two is an argument from analogy and the response to this argument should begin by using standard strategies for critiquing arguments of this form." Such advice "leads" them in a friendly and helpful way and also signals (to those who are attentive) that they need to figure out (if they don't already know) what are the standard strategies for critiquing arguments from analogy.

28. Two papers that have worked especially well for this assignment are Gilbert Harman's "Guilt Free Morality," *Oxford Studies in Metaethics* 4 (2009): 203–14; and Evan Fales's "Should God Have Not Created Adam?," *Faith and Philosophy* 9:2 (April 1992).

29. http://plato.stanford.edu/.

30. http://www.iep.utm.edu/.

31. A small sampling of such weblogs includes: (1) *Public Reason* (http://publicreason.net/), (2) *PEA Soup* (http://peasoup.typepad.com/peasoup/), (3) *Feminist Philosophers* (http://feministphilosophers.wordpress.com/), (4) *Experimental Philosophy* (http://experimentalphilosophy.typepad.com/), (5) *Practical Ethics* (http://www.practicalethicsnews.com/practicalethics/), (6) *Matters of Substance* (http://substantialmatters.blogspot.com/), and (7) *Brains* (http://philosophyofbrains.com/).

32. This citation index is published by Thomsen Reuters and available through many research library websites.

33.   Which will have been finalized, after having gone through multiple drafts, by this point in the term.

34.   An inevitable challenge at this stage in the seminar is keeping students responsible for reading one another's selections. It is tempting for students to be negligent here and, if they are, then the exercise is of no benefit for the discussion leader. There is no foolproof remedy, but a combination of standard practices of positive and negative reinforcement has proven effective for me at minimizing this danger. On the negative side, I pass out a reading worksheet with about a half dozen items that they are to respond to so as to demonstrate that they have done the reading. I make a deal with them that I will only require that they complete and hand in these worksheets should they demonstrate neglect in preparing to participate in discussion. On the positive side, I repeatedly remind them that this is a vital part of good philosophical research and that their own projects will be significantly advanced and improved through this exercise if it goes well and the other participants engage effectively in the discussion. But this means they need to reciprocate with their peers by preparing for their discussions.

35.   See Appendix B.

36.   During the fall semester of the 2007–08, 2008–09, and 2009–10 school years, department faculty and majors met off-campus for a picnic/assessment meeting. Faculty shared with majors, in small groups, the work we were doing in designing the learning goals and associated assessment strategy.

37.   The sizes of the cohorts are as follows: 32 (2007), 33 (2008), 29 (2009), and 28 (2010).

38.   We saw similar improvements in each of the other aspects of the capstone project (roundtable presentation, research process, oral defense).

39.   In 2010, we also compared the mean scores on the "argumentation" learning goal of the *entire cohort* to that of the subset who had completed the department's logic course. We found that the mean for the subset was higher than that of the entire cohort by about one half of a rubric point. The contrast between the subset of students who completed logic and the subset of students who did not is (obviously) even greater. Based in part on this finding, the department will now require the logic course for the major.

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