

Department of Philosophy
Plan for Writing Across the Curriculum
(For: Philosophy BA)

- I. **Goals:** At the completion of the degree requirements in Philosophy, a graduate will be able to
- **Summarize and explicate** the philosophy texts they have read.
 - **Extract** philosophical arguments.
 - **Evaluate philosophical arguments** and conduct different types of philosophical analysis.
 - **Identify degrees of evidence**, assess evidence and avoid inductive traps.
 - **Develop and defend their own philosophical positions**, particularly in advanced courses.
 - **Understand** the vocabulary of philosophy and to use that vocabulary appropriately.
 - **Use libraries and on-line technology** to conduct research and be able to cite appropriately.
 - **Write an argumentative essay** that supports a position on an issue and applies critical thinking skills.
 - **Revise and edit** with particular attention on word choice, sentence and paragraph structure, and organization.
 - **Recognize and decipher** ambiguity.
 - **Assess the philosophical value** of articles in newspapers, magazines, books and on television.
 - **Write for a diverse society** by avoiding sexist language and stereotypes.
 - **Use counterarguments** to anticipate and discuss what opponents might say in criticism.
 - **Meet the expectations** of different readers and forums. These expectations include matters of correctness and convention as well as broader rhetorical concerns, such as persuasiveness and appropriate tone and style.
- II. **Objectives:** All students in the Philosophy major will be required to write frequently as part of their coursework, and will receive extensive feedback on their writing, with some opportunity for rewriting earlier drafts or submitting rough drafts, or both.

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A. Behavior: Specific Writing Experiences

Specific writing assignments include, but are not limited to, in-class essays, argumentative essays, explications, analyses of philosophical arguments, precis of readings, term papers in which students' defend their own philosophical position and research papers in which they synthesize and analyze information from a number of sources.

B. Conditions:

Students are provided with specific examples of the kind of writing expected, such as journal and review articles. In introductory courses, especially Introduction to Critical Thinking, students are provided materials that review standards for clarity in writing, principles of organization, and good writing practices. Specific instructions will be given for each kind of writing assignment.

C. Criteria for Writing Experiences:

Each student is required to take five courses that have a substantive writing requirement. To be considered 'substantive' 30% or more of their final grade must evaluate their ability to demonstrate what they have learned in their own written words. Each of the five courses must be included in one of the following three types (Introductory, Writing to Learn, and Advanced). Students are required to take one course of each type. The remaining two courses may be either a Writing to Learn or Advanced courses. All five courses must be chosen from the list of approved writing courses taught in the Department of Philosophy (approved courses listed below). It is anticipated that these writing courses will be mainly "double-dip" courses and are likely to apply to other major requirements.

1. Introductory Writing Courses:

These courses emphasize the writing of argumentative essays which support a position on some issue. These essays must be soundly organized, clearly written and support the position taken. Principles of critical thinking are to be applied, particularly the ability to recognize and avoid fallacies of composition and division. Attention will be given to learning to edit, with particular emphasis on word choice, sentence and paragraph structure, and organization. The textbooks required for Introduction to Critical Thinking (Philosophy 101) address these skills. Other introductory courses address critical thinking and writing skills in lectures and/or handouts. Course assignments introduce and train students in the types of writing listed in Goals (above).

2. Courses Emphasizing Writing to Learn:

These courses assist students in learning to comprehend philosophical texts and summarize what they have read in their own words. Emphasis is placed on their ability to extract philosophical arguments and write explications. Exams require that student be able to explicate philosophical arguments. Essays, exams and research papers require students to demonstrate their comprehension of assigned readings. Their ability to present their knowledge and understanding of what they have learned in their own written words will determine at least 30% of their final grade. Papers and essay exams are returned with extensive feedback. Extensive feedback does not merely justify grades but also helps students learn to revise and rethink their work.

3. Advanced Level Courses:

These courses assist student in their ability to analyze philosophical arguments and develop their own philosophical positions. Students are required to write one or more of the following: a) a research paper of ten or more pages including a review of the recent literature on the topic (with appropriate citation) or b) a research paper of ten or more pages in which a student defends his or her own philosophical position. Papers are returned with extensive feedback and there is opportunity for students to submit rough drafts and/or revise their work. Students in these courses will be encouraged, if appropriate, to submit their work to undergraduate philosophy conferences or to present their work on campus.

III. Courses: Specific courses that fulfill the writing requirement for the department of Philosophy fall under three categories:

A. Introductory: a course designed for beginning philosophy students with a strong writing component [1 required (or evidence of a similar course at a previous college for transfer students, or at another college, with approval)].

- Philosophy 101: Introduction to Critical Thinking
- Philosophy 105: Current Moral Problems
- Philosophy 205: Introduction to Classical Ethics

B. Courses Emphasizing Writing to Learn: a course in which writing to learn is a substantial component, but not necessarily including a term paper where students develop their own position [1 required (or evidence of a similar course at a previous college for transfer students, or at another college, with approval)].

- Philosophy 235: History of Ancient Philosophy
- Philosophy 236: History of Modern Philosophy
- Philosophy 305: Contemporary Ethics
- Philosophy 306: Business Ethics
- Philosophy 360: Philosophy of the Middle Ages
- Philosophy 337: History of Recent Philosophy

C. Advanced Writing Courses: a course in which students write a research paper that analyzes relevant literature and/or defends their own well developed philosophical position [1 required (or evidence of a similar course at a previous college for transfer students, or at another college, with approval)].

- Philosophy 317: Philosophy of Religion
- Philosophy 313: Philosophy of Language
- Philosophy 322: Philosophy of Social Sciences
- Philosophy 348: Philosophy and Feminism
- Philosophy 370: Metaphysics
- Philosophy 442: Social Philosophy
- ~~Philosophy 450: Current Topics in Philosophy~~
- Philosophy 443: Philosophy of Law
- PHL 471: Philosophy of Mind