

September 30, 2016

**PROFESSOR JONATHAN COHEN, Chair**  
**Department of Philosophy**

SUBJECT: Undergraduate Program Review for the Department of Philosophy

Dear Professor Cohen,

The Undergraduate Council discussed the Department of Philosophy's 2016 Undergraduate Program Review. The Council supports the findings and recommendations of the review subcommittee and appreciates the thoughtful and proactive response from the Department. The Council's comments centered on the following:

**Interest in the major.** The Council applauds the many accomplishments of the Department, including creating the new Bioethics minor and the concerted effort of faculty, especially Clinton Tolley and Rick Grush, to transition Philosophy minors into Philosophy majors. To continue growing student interest in the major and the Department, the Council supports the subcommittee's recommendation to establish two new majors—one in Philosophy, Politics and Law and one in Philosophy, Politics and Economics. The potential collaborations between departments for those new majors could attract new students. A number of departments on campus already offer courses along the same vein as "Philosophy of..." which the Philosophy Department could consider adding to their curriculum as course options to fulfill requirements or electives.

**Teaching Assistants (TA).** During the program review site visit, graduate student TAs expressed to the subcommittee their desire for a more formal, extensive TA training session. The Council opined that Philosophy graduate student TAs would benefit from training near the beginning of their studies since they serve as TAs immediately upon starting their graduate program. The undergraduate student population would be better served by TAs who are more comfortable in their roles.

**Opportunity for Inclusion in Course Topics.** During the on-site review, the subcommittee spoke with students who expressed concerns over how sensitive topics are covered within the History of Philosophy sequence. The students did not want to avoid these topics, but instead wanted acknowledgement that the discourse of such courses touched upon sensitive topics, and provide a historical view on Philosophy that is in opposition to the campus's commitment to an inclusive climate. The Council agreed with the subcommittee's recommendation that when courses cover racist, misogynist, homophobic, or other such positions within historical philosophy, the faculty should acknowledge that the positions presented are historical viewpoints that do not reflect the current opinions and climate of the University, rather than let them go undiscussed. The acknowledgment of uncomfortable topics would serve as a method of assuring students that the Department is committed to engaged conversations around diversity and inclusion.

**Resources.** The Council noted that issues around resources remain unaddressed and look forward to learning more about the Department's continued discussion with the Division of Arts and Humanities at the time of the follow-up review.

The Council will conduct its follow-up review of the Department in Fall Quarter 2017. At that time, our goal is to learn about the Department's progress in implementing the recommendations of the program review subcommittee and the Undergraduate Council. The Council extends its thanks to the Department for their engagement in this process and we look forward to the continued discussion.

Sincerely,

Geoffrey Cook, Chair  
Undergraduate Council

cc: F. Ackerman  
C. Callender  
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## Department of Philosophy Undergraduate Program Review, March 2-3, 2016

Professor and Program Review Chair Ross Frank, Department of Ethnic Studies, UC San Diego  
Professor Catherina Gere, Department of History, UC San Diego  
Professor Niko Kolodny, Department of Philosophy, UC Berkeley

During its review of the Philosophy Undergraduate Program, the committee consulted the Departmental Self Study, a comprehensive set of departmental data covering the 2010/11-2014/15 academic years, a number of student surveys including CAPE, UCUES, Post-Baccalaureate, College Deans of Advising, and the previous departmental review conducted in the Fall of 2007. In addition, we met with the Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, Philosophy Chair and Director of Undergraduate Studies (the latter by phone), MSO and Undergraduate Advisor, 13 faculty members (in 2 groups), 7 Philosophy Graduate Student Teaching Assistants, and 7 undergraduate majors. The committee wishes to thank the Academic Senate staff, the office of the AVCUE/Dean of Undergraduate Education, and the Philosophy Department for providing timely and excellent materials and access to the review committee.

The Committee finds that the undergraduate Philosophy program at UCSD has continued and improved upon its outstanding record for rigorous and inspiring training of majors and minors, as well as for teaching a significant number of non-majors enrolling from across the campus. Curricular improvements since its last Undergraduate Program Review in 2007, carried out by a cohesive and dedicated faculty, in addition to a well-considered series of initiatives to increase major, minor, and enrollments, reflect a department doing everything possible independently to meet the challenges of a changing campus environment. Success in the recent hiring of 2 women faculty recently, the continuing Women in Philosophy Summer Program to address gender equity in the graduate pipeline, and new DEI courses show an effective approach to diversity in the department. Morale appears good among faculty, staff, undergraduate and graduate students, and the department does an amazing amount with relatively scarce resources. The areas of discussion presented in this report largely concern curricular fine-tuning, in addition to a few other recommendations that may further enhance an already extraordinary undergraduate program.

*A. A brief description and analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the current operation of the department*

### **General Description**

The Department of Philosophy offers a major, minor and a new Bioethics Minor that has just gotten underway during this Winter 2016 quarter. The major requires 15 courses, 8 required courses and 7 electives. Majors must take all courses for a grade and receive a C- or higher for credit, and least 12 courses must be at upper-division level. The 8 required courses are distributed among 5 core requirements:

1. Logic: both 10 and 120
2. History of Philosophy: 110, 111, 112 (taken in sequence)
3. Moral and Political Philosophy: one of 160, 161, 166, 167
4. Metaphysics and Epistemology: one of 130, 131, 132, 134, 136

5. Philosophy of Science: one of 145, 146, 147, 149, 150, 151, 152

Areas of Emphasis can be chosen by following course plans in: Law, Ethics, and Society; Science, Technology, and Medicine; Mind, Brain, and Cognitive Science; and Historical Perspectives on Philosophy, Science, and Religion.

The department currently has 22 faculty, comprising of 15 Full Professors, 4 Associate Professors, 2 Assistant Professors, and 1 Teaching Professor. Staff include a chief administrative officer, undergraduate and graduate program coordinators, a fiscal assistant and computer specialist (each at 33% FTE), and a fiscal officer (temporarily vacant).

According to the various student surveys made available, Philosophy majors are on the whole quite satisfied with the Philosophy program. The UCUES data shows that UCSD students in philosophy are significantly more positive than the UC philosophy average in the areas of receiving prompt and useful faculty feedback and the quality of both lower and upper division courses. Besides being far more skeptical of UCSD's "strong commitment to undergraduate education" than other UC philosophy majors are of their campus, UCSD philosophy majors do report somewhat less direct communication and contact with faculty members outside of class. Although these UCUES statistics are not particularly unfavorable, the departmental self-study referred to them and posited a scheduling mismatch between faculty and student as one explanation. As the 2 questions together do include email, it is likely that this issue represents a manifestation of a more fundamental change in undergraduate interactions with faculty UC-wide linked to new communication technologies and the fragmentation of student time and commitment to campus life.

### **Majors, Enrollments, and Time to Degree**

Philosophy enrollment statistics show a marked decrease in students who entered as freshman declaring majors in the Fall quarter of 2012, from 55 to 39, most likely tied to the steep rise in UC tuition at the time and the attendant concern among undergraduates about investing their time in a major not perceived to lead directly to a highly remunerative career. The following year, in the Fall quarter of 2013, transfer student declaring majors in Philosophy suffered a similar decline, from 50 to 31. The causes of this drop are less clear, but the change from TAG to UniversityLink programs for admitting transfer students, the increase in GPA requirements for admission, and a lag effect from the earlier tuition raises may all have played a part.

This trend is concerning. Maintaining and expanding enrollments enables the department to provide employment in the department to its graduate students, contributes to the coherence of the undergraduate Philosophy offerings, and strengthens pedagogy at both the undergraduate and graduate level.

To counter the downwards trend in enrollments, majors, and minors, the advising staff and faculty of the department have undertaken an extraordinary set of outreach efforts, summarized below:

Recruitment of non-major enrollments and prospective/undeclared students:

- Development of the Bioethics Minor
- Addition of courses that satisfy the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion requirement:
  - PHIL 139 Global Justice

- PHIL 165: Freedom, Equality and the Law
- PHIL 170: Philosophy of Race
- Redesign of PHIL 1, PHIL 32, PHIL 33, and PHIL 90 to attract non-majors
- Efforts to turn minors into majors, especially through PHIL 10, led by Tolley and Grush
- A presentation for “A Major Decision” (Professor Monte Johnson gave keynote)
- Steering of undeclared students to Career Services to learn what they might do with a philosophy degree
- Development of a Career Services alumni panel
- Lecture series, Ethics and the Public Sphere
- Philosophy club activities:
  - Monthly coffee with a professor
  - Quarterly philosophy debates
  - Monthly philosophy and film nights
  - Weekly undergraduate tutoring
  - An annual undergraduate philosophy conference
  - An undergraduate journal, Intuitions
- Informal mentoring

Recruitment of admitted students:

- Arts and Humanities portfolio in partnership with Admissions
- Arts and Humanities tie-breaker in partnership with Admissions
- Outreach to admitted students considering philosophy
- Summer orientation for admitted transfer students

Recruitment in community colleges:

- Organizing a visit to Grossmont Community College
- Participating in a Southwest Community College fair

These measures have had recent success. The department added ten new majors (+20%) during the Fall 2015 quarter. It also largely maintained and even increased total enrollments. The review committee commends the extraordinary time, effort, and ingenuity that the department has invested in recruitment.

Time to degree for freshmen majoring in Philosophy has remained slightly above the campus mean of just under 13 quarters after having trended down over the last 3 years. Transfer students have graduated at or better than the campus mean with the exception of 2014-15, which appears to be a statistical anomaly created by few students among small numbers.

*B. Analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum*

**Curriculum Assessment**

Since its 2007 Review, the department has added the core upper-division history sequence for majors — PHIL 110, 111, 112 — which studies classic texts in depth. The Philosophy of Science core requirement for the major also represents an addition since the last review. In addition, the department added or reinstated 7 upper-division courses: PHIL 109 History of Analytic

Philosophy; PHIL 138 Metaethics; PHIL 139 Global Justice; PHIL 175 Aesthetics; PHIL 165 Legal and Social Philosophy; PHIL 169 Feminism and Philosophy; and PHIL 170 Philosophy and Race. Faculty developed the latter 3 courses to satisfy the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion requirement, aiding the commitment to integrating scholarship reflecting diversity into the teaching mission of the University as well as performing curricular outreach. Together, these curricular changes provide a capacious and coherent foundation for majors as well as highlight faculty strengths.

Adding the upper-division History of Philosophy sequence allowed the department to develop a distinct series of lower-division historical courses intended for a general audience: PHIL 31 Introduction to Ancient Philosophy; PHIL 32 Philosophy and the Rise of Science; and PHIL 33 Philosophy between Reason and Despair. These courses, organized around “big questions” that define a particular era or tradition, are particularly well-suited to attract non-majors. Philosophy has also added PHIL 25 Science, Philosophy and the Big Questions, PHIL 26 Science, Society and Values, and PHIL 28 Ethics in Society II to round out a considerable array of lower-division offerings.

These innovations and refinements have led to an exceptionally strong undergraduate curriculum. The review committee sees opportunities to build on these strengths and offers the following ideas that the department may wish to consider:

1) The newly instituted Bioethics minor seems to the review committee an inspired idea, building a bridge between philosophy and the life sciences that will be genuinely unforced and fruitful. Similar initiatives are worth exploring. The faculty have suggested developing majors in Philosophy, Politics, and Law, and Philosophy, Politics, and Economics. These strike us very promising proposals. They might attract students interested in a pre-law track, or students wishing to pair philosophy with (what to many may seem) more marketable training in economics. More generally, it would make it possible for students who cannot presently double major to do something very close.

2) During our review an undergraduate made a very promising suggestion: namely, to ask other departments to formally approve and list certain philosophy courses as satisfying elective requirements in their major. Some examples might be:

- Philosophy of Biology with Bioengineering, Biological Sciences
- Philosophy of Language with Linguistics
- Philosophy of Physics with Physics
- Philosophy of Mind, Philosophy of Psychology, Philosophy of the Cognitive Sciences, Philosophy of Neuroscience with Biology (Physiology and Neuroscience), Cognitive Sciences, and Psychology

These developments might draw non-majors to philosophy courses, as well as saving double majors the hassle and uncertainty of case-by-case petitions. Several undergraduates who are pursuing other majors, such as in biology, political science, and neuroscience, observed that they had learned a great deal about other disciplines in philosophy courses, and in ways that they would not have within those disciplines’ own offerings.

3) Philosophy, like other majors that have few prerequisites for courses offered, faces the

challenge of teaching students with vastly different levels of preparation. Transfer majors, who make up a substantial fraction of the total number of majors, may have studied philosophy at community colleges, but often with different expectations, especially in the level of writing and critical reflection. In their first quarter at UCSD, they find themselves, especially in the required core courses for the major, alongside four-year majors with several quarters of philosophy already under their belt.

Since almost no upper-level courses have prerequisites, non-majors routinely enroll in upper-level courses with no prior experience of philosophy. We were informed that the department was unsuccessful in a recent effort to institute the minimal prerequisite of a single course in philosophy before enrolling in an upper level course. In any event, with the decline in majors, there is understandable reluctance to place any barriers in the way of students who might wish to enroll in a philosophy course. Needless to say, it is easier to calibrate teaching to such differences in preparation when teachers can give students individualized attention. Unfortunately, many philosophy courses are too small for a TA (or at least a TA who can be relieved of enough grading to teach a discussion section) and yet too big for faculty to assess their specific needs.

PHIL 115, Philosophical Methods, may present an opportunity to address at least some of these concerns. The place of the course in the curriculum is in any event, somewhat unclear, and so independently merits review. In principle, the course was intended to focus on student writing. However, undergraduates familiar with the course found it hard to distinguish from other courses in structure or emphasis. (It struck them as more or less equivalent to PHIL 90: a course taught on varying topics from quarter to quarter.) Faculty recalled that PHIL 115 was originally introduced with an eye to making it a major requirement, but that this was abandoned from concern about the department's capacity to staff it consistently.

The department might explore changing the structure of the course to make it oriented less toward a body of content and more toward giving students practice and feedback on philosophical writing. One model would be the following. The professor would give a single weekly lecture, chiefly to provide students with philosophical subject matter to work with. Students would write short papers each week. TAs would read and comment on these papers, and then meet with one-on-one, or in small groups, with students, for perhaps 30 minutes or so, to explain the comments and identify areas of improvement for the next week's paper. Although this would place significant demands on graduate student teaching assistant resources, it seems a potentially effective way to deploy them. While we do not want to propose an unfunded mandate, special funding for this sort of concentrated approach might be forthcoming by establishing the course as "writing intensive", which would lower the expected faculty-student ratio and should increase resources for graduate teaching support. If a course so conceived became a major requirement, incoming transfers might be especially encouraged to take it to develop writing skills for success in the major.

4) During our review, students raised the issue of pedagogical sensitivity to philosophical works that confront non-normative students with racist, misogynist, homophobic, or other positions within the History of Philosophy sequence. These students made it clear that they did not ask for disavowal, apology, or avoidance, just acknowledgement that such attitudes are out of step with UCSD's commitment to an inclusive campus climate. Attention to this issue should be placed into

context with the department's recent, successful, and laudatory creation of the 3 new courses that satisfy the UCSD Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion requirement: PHIL 139 Global Justice, 165 Philosophy and Feminism, and 170 Philosophy and Race.

### **Teaching Assistant Resources**

Unlike many departments in the division, graduate students in philosophy serve as Teaching Assistants in the lower division courses from the moment they arrive in the department. In accordance with the constructive and collegial department culture, the TAs are proactive in cohort-building and mutual support, and they have organized a 'pedagogy group,' meeting about 3 times a quarter to share experiences and to read pedagogical theory. This initiative is supported by the department chair in the form of money for food for each meeting.

Perhaps, however, the pedagogy group does not provide enough TA training and support. The TAs brought up the question of a more formal and extensive program of teacher training, and suggested that incoming PhD students receive mentoring from more experienced TAs. A measure of wariness was expressed about the form that this might take if it were to come from outside the department. Therefore, the Review Committee recommends that the Department consider using the existing pedagogy group as a model for a peer-instruction system in partnership with the graduate student teaching assistants. We imagine a paid meeting a few days before the beginning of Fall Quarter, allowing for the new TAs to meet the veterans, get tips about dealing with UCSD undergraduates, do some grade calibration exercises, and discuss techniques for time management and other common issues. This meeting for TAs would take place in addition to the general campus TA orientation, but would supply a more extensive type of training sponsored by the department. We advocate that divisional funds be provided for this purpose. In addition, the new Teaching and Learning Commons might be able to provide infrastructural support.

As in other departments, the assignments for TAs differ in the amount of work they involve. PHIL 10, for example, does not require any grading of essays and is therefore a coveted position. At the other end of the spectrum of onerousness lie PHIL 27 and 28. These classes satisfy Warren College's ethics requirement, have high enrollments, and generally attract between 100 and 300 students, each of whom attends a mandatory section. Graduate students in the department typically TA for these courses in their first and second years. Sections are around 35 students each, and the class is writing intensive. These outsize sections are problematic for everyone from the undergraduates to the TAs, the professors, and the college.

In fact, 35 students in a section is also out of line with other departments contributing to Warren's curriculum. Political Science sometimes teaches versions of these same classes, and their section sizes are much smaller. For example, in Winter 2015, PHIL 27 and POLI 28 were both offered, with section sizes of 36 and 18 respectively. In other words, Philosophy's sections were double the size of Political Science's for an equivalent class. Other Warren Writing classes are capped at 15. We urge the department to think about ways that they might be able to deploy their TA funds to relieve this problem, which would also provide more spots for graduate students to teach in Philosophy (rather than in unrelated disciplines in the colleges), a desideratum that was mentioned more than once by faculty.

### **Non-Western Philosophy Courses**

One issue that lingers from the 2007 Review, and the department Self Study revisits, is the lack of non-western Philosophy among the research areas of faculty and its absence from the department's undergraduate course offerings. Although the committee believes that the preferred resolution would be to hire a faculty member whose core interests fall in this area, or someone who teaches non-Western philosophical traditions as an additional area of interest, we acknowledge that it is difficult for a department to use an FTE in an area not previously covered, and perhaps viewed as an outlier having fewer inherent linkages to other areas in which the department has developed more concertedly. The committee feels that interested researchers and strong programs in other departments on campus, Chinese History to name one example, would support the interests of a non-Western Philosophy hire. Another direction that the department could take is to request support for a LSOE that would teach a variety of non-Western Philosophy courses. Pending such a hire, the department could consider cross-listing select courses covering Chinese Philosophy in the History department.

### *C. An analysis of strengths and weaknesses of the department in the context of campus and University policies*

#### **General Campus Considerations**

The campaign to reduce the time to degree for freshman and transfer undergraduates at UCSD has resulted in a process of reducing or relaxing departmental and college requirements. These changes have taken place during a recession apt to heighten the anxiety of students and parents about the economic value of majoring in philosophy. Reducing college General Education requirements or relaxing the rules so that a wider variety of courses satisfies a particular requirement takes a cumulative toll on enrollments. Departments across campus experience these effects unequally, and recent UGC reviews show clearly that Arts and Humanities departments, such as Philosophy, as well as a number of departments in the Division of Social Sciences, bear the brunt of these changes. Philosophy must compete for both enrollments and new majors and minors in this new arena on the basis of intellectual interest, the quality of faculty teaching, curriculum, attention to student learning, and skills that may complement preparation for future employment.

As the program review materials demonstrate, the current allocation of resources to the department inhibits its ability to compete for undergraduate enrollments and majors based on its long-standing and acknowledged strengths: dedicated faculty that teach the majority of classes; rigorous coursework; and a focus on individual and small group instruction in discussion and writing. The resulting process will increasingly hollow out this and other exemplary undergraduate programs campus-wide, as enrollments, majors, and minors decline, bringing with them a decrease in temporary FTE that can be used for graduate student TA salaries – a vicious and debilitating circle. If UC San Diego is sincere about maintaining the quality and relevance of Arts and Humanities and Social Sciences departments as a part of its undergraduate teaching mission, it cannot continue to allocate teaching resources based on formulas that may no longer reflect the current dynamics of student course selection. We call for the immediate assessment of the varied effects on enrollments of recent campus and university policy changes, and an evaluation of the resources necessary to assist negatively affected departments in attracting future students.

*D. Recommendations for alleviating any shortcomings suggested by the description and analysis*

To reiterate, the Review Committee regards the undergraduate program in the Department of Philosophy as a model of curricular rigor, taught by dedicated faculty who demonstrate devotion to effective pedagogy alongside excellence in research. Below the Review Committee summarizes the recommendations discussed above:

- 1) Consider establishing majors in Philosophy, Politics, and Law, and Philosophy, Politics, and Economics in order to attract new majors.
- 2) Consider working with other majors to list as approved electives relevant courses already offered as Philosophy of... in order to increase enrollments and the potential for double majors.
- 3) Consider using PHIL 115 or another course to offer intensive preparation in philosophical writing. The course may help to minimize the preparation disparities present in upper division courses.
- 4) When courses cover racist, misogynist, homophobic, or other positions within historical philosophy, acknowledge this is a way that assures students that the department is committed to diversity and inclusion.
- 5) Consider a Philosophy TA orientation in partnership with experienced Teaching Assistants, a paid session in advance of the Fall quarter.
- 6) Work to bring the sections of PHIL 27 and 28 down to a size in line with their Political Science equivalents and other Warren Writing courses in order to improve pedagogy, as well as increase and more equitably distribute employment of Philosophy graduate students.
- 7) Discuss allocating a future FTE to hire a ladder-rank faculty or LSOE in non-western Philosophy, and consider cross-listing suitable courses from other departments in the interim.