

2012 Philosophy Assessment meeting

1. Department Head Brad Hall met with us to discuss the possibility of offering an online minor called something like "Citizenship and Ethics" or "Citizenship and Responsibility". The advantages would be (a) being able to reach distant student populations and (b) generating funds to support needed faculty hires, and secure more financial stability for our non-tenure track faculty. Discussion seemed generally supportive of such a minor.
2. USU will host the Ethics Bowl for 2012. Holberg agreed to be the coordinator for USU's own team, and Kleiner agreed to be the coordinator for our hosting responsibilities.
3. We examined class GPAs for PHIL classes offered in Fall 2011. There had been some worry expressed at last year's meeting that we were being too easy in giving out high marks. But the results from Fall 2011 suggested otherwise: several classes averaged between 2.5 and 3, and the overall average of the GPAs was 3.08, which seems reasonable. We will continue to monitor this, because we feel that just the act of monitoring it may help suppress grade inflation. (Kleiner volunteered to chair the trophy committee to bestow honors upon the "grade troll" and "grade fairy" annual awards.)
4. We partially performed our annual paper exchange: some papers had been shared with other faculty for their grading and feedback with the intent of seeing whether we are roughly commensurate in our grading practices. It seems we are. There followed a useful discussion of types of assignments, strategies in grading, what we look for in papers, and how to handle complaints from our various kinds of student audiences.
5. We discussed the possibility of making T-shirts for Philosophy majors. A concern was expressed that T-shirts might attract students to the major who really do not have the requisite skill set. The majority felt T-shirts were a good idea for building camaraderie among the students. It seemed to be generally agreed that T-shirts could be made, but we would no longer advertize them as rewards for declaring a major in philosophy. We will try to find a slogan for the T-shirts through suggestions made on the blog, or communicated by any other means.
6. Kleiner shared with us information from the Honors program about identifying possible candidates for the Honors program, and encouraging Honors students to complete contracts in our classes.
7. The meeting adjourned with muted self-congratulatory remarks.