

PHILOSOPHY DEPARTMENT PROGRAM REVIEW

Review Process: Spring 2008

Completion Date: November 2008

Preliminary Information

Program Name: Philosophy

Category:

Program **Degree** **General Education** **Vocational**

Direct Instructional Support **Indirect Instructional Support**

Process Leader: Cathy J. Itnyre

Responsible Administrator: Rodger McGinness

I. Identify Internal Stakeholders

The process leader (person responsible for Program) will identify all internal (CMC) stakeholders of this program. This will be the group that participates in all steps of the Program Review process, including the creation of each document, gathering evidence/data, reviewing and approving all documents and plans.

Full-time faculty member Cathy J. Itnyre led the Philosophy Department program review, assisted by part-time faculty member Bill Blau. These two faculty consulted with the CMC Articulation Officer Andrea Armstrong regarding the lower division transfer pattern and ASSIST on July 16, 2008. On June 10, July 16, and November 13, 2008, Itnyre and Blau met to assess data related to the program, and both agreed that this report fairly represents their department. The college SLO coordinator Greg Gilbert participated in discussions related to this report as well.

II. Program History

Write a brief statement that describes why the program was initiated and when it began. Describe any details of historical significance, how the program meets CMC's mission, any unique challenges that the program has experienced, and any elements that will provide insights into its values and regulatory requirements.

All of the philosophy courses currently offered at Copper Mountain College were originally prepared by College of the Desert (COD) faculty, and instructors at the Joshua Tree campus of COD were given the Course Outline of Record to prepare their own syllabi. When CMC separated from COD, the Chancellor's Office allowed all courses in the department to be offered at CMC. One course, Philosophy 7, was deactivated in the

Spring 2008 semester, as it had never been offered at CMC, and the content of the course was met by the existing Philosophy 6 course. (See document "Deactivation of Philosophy 7").

Copper Mountain College offers an associate's degree in philosophy, although there have been few students with this major. Instead, students take these courses to fulfill humanities requirements/electives for transfer, or for lifelong learning and self-development opportunities. This is particularly true of the Perspectives on Death and Dying (Philosophy 13), which has been identified by the Basic Skills staff as a course in which many basic skills students may achieve success. In support of the college's mission to "provide access to educational opportunities for diverse desert communities...and a passion for the success of every individual student," many philosophy department courses are offered in the compressed format on the Marine Base in order to accommodate the schedules of Marines and their dependents. Faculty work with deploying students by e-mail, allowing special test times, and holding review sessions, to ensure that military students can complete the classes.

Prior to the establishment of Copper Mountain Community College District in 1999, the Philosophy Department at the Joshua Tree campus consisted entirely of part-time faculty until in 1995 Cathy Itnyre, who had been teaching at the college for six years as an adjunct, was hired to fill the newly-created full-time position. Itnyre also teaches history courses for CMC. In recent years, one or two part-time faculty have taught philosophy courses; Dr. William Blau is currently the only part-time instructor. The associate's degree in philosophy carried over from College of the Desert at the time of separation in 1999. The Philosophy Department is part of the Social Sciences configuration at the college.

Frequency of Course Offerings:

Courses in the Philosophy Department provide CMC students with the opportunity to fulfill humanities, critical thinking, lifelong understanding and self development, and traditions and cultures academic requirements. Following are classes students may take:

- Phil 6: Introduction to Philosophy
- Phil 8: Philosophy: Ancient through Renaissance
- Phil 9: Philosophy: Renaissance through Modern World
- Phil 10: General Logic
- Phil 12: Religions of the World
- Phil 13: Perspectives on Death and Dying
- Phil 14: Introduction to Ethics

Phil 8 is offered in the fall semester of even years (2000, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008); Phil 9 is offered in the fall semester of odd years. Phil 12 is generally offered every fall semester, and Phil 14 is usually offered in the spring. Phil 6, Phil 10, and Phil 13 are available for students every semester, with Phil 13 also offered in the summer sessions.

Course Relevancy:

Courses in the Philosophy Department serve transfer students in the following ways:

Phil 6: fulfills Humanities requirements for the associate's degree and IGETC; fulfills Traditions and Cultures requirement.

Phil 8: fulfills Humanities requirements for the associate's degree and IGETC.

Phil 9: fulfills Humanities requirements for the associate's degree and IGETC.

Phil 10: fulfills Critical Thinking requirement of the CSU General Education Pattern.

Phil 12: fulfills Humanities and Traditions and Cultures requirements for the associate's degree; fulfills Humanities requirement for the CSU General Education Pattern; fulfills Humanities requirement for IGETC.

Phil 13: fulfills Humanities and Traditions and Cultures requirements for the associate's degree; fulfills Humanities and Lifelong Understanding and Self-Development requirements for CSU General Education Certification Course Pattern; fulfills Humanities requirement for IGETC.

Phil 14: fulfills Humanities and Traditions and Cultures requirements for the associate's degree; fulfills Humanities requirement for CSU General Education Certification Course Pattern; fulfills Humanities requirement for IGETC.

It should be noted that Philosophy 13 (Perspectives on Death and Dying) attracts a significant number of "lifelong learning students" who do not intend to pursue degrees at the college, but are generally older members of the community who are interested in the topic. This course also is recommended by CMC counselors to students in basic skills courses, as the major project for the course is a detailed but private journal, so students do not have to demonstrate research writing skills. The instructor of this course is involved with the Basic Skills Initiative team.

In a typical academic year from fall to summer, 13-15 sections of philosophy courses are offered at the CMC campus and Marine Base. Although average class size at CMC is 17.78 (see "By Program, total number of students and number of sections run each semester"), average class size for Philosophy Department courses is 34.5 (see chart "By course, total number of students and number of sections run each semester").

Faculty members occasionally request books, journals, and videos for library purchase to maintain current scholarship in the discipline, but these purchases are consistent with other academic departments' requests. The department is thus fairly low-cost. None of the courses in the department are offered online, although approximately 20-30% of the sections are offered in the compressed format to better serve military students.

When the CMC community identified core competencies for the college, it became clear that courses offered in the Philosophy Department directly support the acquisition of these skills:

- **communication skills** (papers, essay exams, oral presentations);
- **critical thinking skills** (analysis of inductive and deductive arguments; identification of informal fallacies; assessment of strength of arguments);
- **ethics** (systematic study of ethical theories from antiquity to the present; application of moral reasoning in modern political, economic, and medical realms);
- **personal development** (exposure to/appreciation of the traditional liberal arts achievements of the ancient, medieval, and recent past; reflection on personal mortality, with practical guidance regarding the American death system);
- **information competency** (analysis of appropriate sources).

Over a six-semester spread, 74% of students taking philosophy courses (day 1 enrollment) completed the courses with grades of A, B, C, or I (= CMC definition of student success). Of the students enrolled at the first census date, 82% finished the courses successfully. Slightly higher student success rates characterize the compressed classes (89% finished with grades of A,B,C, or I), with 80% of traditional-length students completing successfully. Whereas 87% of students who took philosophy courses in the evening finished with grades of A,B,C, or I, only 83% of afternoon students and 79% of morning students did so. (See charts "6 Semester Trend for Success as a % of Day 1 enrollment," "6 Semester Trend for Success as a % of Census," and "Successful Completion by Course and Time of Day).

Rigor:

One method to examine rigor to look at the grade point averages. Overall philosophy department GPAs in the compressed class format is 3.55; in the traditional format, the average is 3.17. A review of the syllabi of courses in the department indicates that all philosophy courses, compressed and traditional length, use multiple measures to evaluate student performance. The measures include objective tests, essay tests, directed journal-keeping, student in-class presentations, and research papers.

A comparison of grade averages awarded by full- and part-time faculty in the department reveals very little distinction between them, with the full-time instructor's courses averaging a GPA of 3.26, and the PT instructor's courses averaging a GPA of 3.32.

To measure the attainment of student learning objectives in one particular departmental course, Philosophy 13, a pre- and post-test analysis was made of ten questions presented

to two classes during the fall 2007 semester. (See attached document "Perspectives on Death and Dying Pre- and Post-Test Results: Monday class Fall 2007 and Tuesday class Fall 2007.")

Recent Department activity

Since January of 2008, faculty in the department have conducted a review of the course outlines of record, which had not been revised since the 1980's. To date, five have been updated, submitted to the Curriculum Committee, and have either completed the process or are on the way. Of the remaining two CORs (Phil 8 and 9), the former is in the process of review, and the latter will be complete by January 2009.

Course Outlines of Record completed for:

Philosophy 6 Introduction to Philosophy
Philosophy 10 General Logic
Philosophy 12 Religions of the World
Philosophy 13 Perspectives on Death and Dying
Philosophy 14 Introduction to Ethics

Course Outlines of Record in the process of being revised:

Philosophy 8 Philosophy from Ancient Times to Renaissance
Philosophy 9 Philosophy from Renaissance to the Present

PROGRAM REVIEW – 2008-2009

SWOT – PHILOSOPHY DEPARTMENT THREATS

CURRICULUM/PROGRAM: What factors in the external environment represent threats to the curriculum as it currently exists? These factors might directly compete with the current curriculum, render it obsolete, or reduce its effectiveness:

1. Courses offered in the Philosophy Department are traditional college fare—obsolescence is not a problem, as the discipline has been around for 2,500 years! Large-scale trends like dropping enrollment would, of course, impact the number of students in classes, but the curriculum itself would not be threatened.

INSTRUCTIONAL STAFF: What factors, if any, in the external environment represent threats to the instructional staff, their professional development, or may threaten to render faculty content expertise obsolete?

1. Again, obsolescence is not a problem in a department like Philosophy. However, the remote location of the college, along with budgetary restraints, makes it challenging for faculty to pursue professional development activities. Theoretically (because since 1995, no faculty in the department have ever requested professional development funds), when the state college budget is tight, financial constraints would limit individual faculty's requests for assistance to attend discipline-related conferences.

TECHNOLOGY/EQUIPMENT: What factors in the external environment represent threats to the technology of the instructional program as it currently exists? These factors might render the technology/equipment obsolete, etc.

1. Many of the documentaries the CMC library has purchased at the department's request over the years are in the VHS format. If this medium becomes extinct, measures must be taken to ensure that these programs are converted to a new format.

SUPPLIES/FACILITIES: What factors in the external environment represent threats to the utilization of supplies and facilities currently used by the instructional program? These factors might render the supplies and facilities useless, obsolete, worthless, etc.

1. None

PROGRAM REVIEW – 2008-2009

SWOTE—PHILOSOPHY DEPARTMENT

OPPORTUNITIES

CURRICULUM/PROGRAM: What opportunities exist in the external environment that might help utilize current curriculum more effectively or that would lead to the development of new curriculum?

1. With the arrival of Phi Theta Kappa on the CMC campus, there is a good opportunity to initiate an honors program at the college; hopefully, this will lead to sections of courses like Phil 06 that will be geared for honors students. This will encourage students with a deep interest in this discipline to explore it in greater depth and to sharpen the type of skills and research habits that will assist them when they transfer to four-year universities and colleges.

INSTRUCTIONAL STAFF: What opportunities exist in the external environment that might be utilized to help instructional staff more effectively address the needs of students?

1. The Morongo Basin contains many professionals whose presence in department classes enhance students' learning experiences. For example, lawyers, insurance sales staff, doctors, veterinarians, nurses, assisted living aides, musicians, coroners, emergency medical personnel, funeral directors, embalmers, and crisis counselors have all been guests in the Perspectives on Death and Dying classes, thereby deepening students' knowledge of the American death system. At the end of every semester, students in Philosophy 13 critique the value of the visitors' contributions, and the guests are invited to return to future classes—or not—based on students' recommendations.

TECHNOLOGY/EQUIPMENT: What opportunities exist in the external environment in the development of technology/equipment that might be utilized to make the instructional program more effective and up-to-date?

1. It would be useful to explore the possibility of interaction between guests and students in the Philosophy 13 class via computer technology.
2. Some of the classes in the department might be offered in the hybrid format.

SUPPLIES/FACILITIES: What opportunities exist in the external environment that might help the instructional program utilize the supplies/facilities more effectively?

1. Explore use of off-campus buildings for classes like Phil 13 that might have broad appeal in the community.

PROGRAM REVIEW—2008-2009

SWOT—PHILOSOPHY DEPARTMENT

WEAKNESS

CURRICULUM/PROGRAM: What is the weakness of the curriculum/program?

1. Although many CMC students take philosophy courses to fulfill humanities requirements, there have been very few majors in the program.

(If there were an Honors program at the college, this department would be a natural magnet, and maybe there would be more students majoring in philosophy as a result.)

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM: What is the weakness of the instructional staff?

1. Because of the remoteness of the CMC campus, it is difficult to recruit faculty with appropriate degrees.
2. Faculty would benefit from professional development activities.

TECHNOLOGY/EQUIPMENT: What is the weakness, if any, of the technology/equipment used in the instructional program?

1. Many of the philosophy courses are taught in Room 5, which has large skylights. The only way students can watch CDs or videos is by using the television, as trying to project images on the large scroll-down screen produces very dim results. Perhaps when the renovation is completed on this room, this deficiency will no longer exist.

SUPPLIES/FACILITIES: What is the weakness, if any, of the supplies/facilities used by your instructional program?

1. Approximately 5 courses in the department each academic year are taught at the Marine Corps base. Unfortunately, the classrooms there are often below par: too small; too hot or cold; inadequate outside lighting, making it dangerous for students to leave the building after class; inadequate classroom furniture such as podiums; frequent unavailability or inconvenience in acquiring video equipment.

PROGRAM REVIEW-2008-2009

SWOT—PHILOSOPHY DEPARTMENT

STRENGTHS

CURRICULUM/PROGRAM: What is the strength of the curriculum/program?

1. The full- and part-time instructors have an excellent working relationship and generally agree on course offerings with regard to time, location, and format.
2. For such a small school, the Philosophy Department at CMC attracts a good number of students who seek to fulfill humanities or traditions and cultures requirements. As noted in this report, the student satisfaction and retention rates are slightly above the college average, and average class size exceeds the CMC number.
3. The college offers seven courses in the Philosophy Department, and these courses meet requirements in a variety of areas for transfer students, such as humanities, traditions and cultures, lifelong understanding and self-development, and rationality and language.

INSTRUCTIONAL STAFF: What is the strength of the instructional staff?

1. Faculty currently working in the department are well-educated in the discipline; both are enthusiastic about the subject and strive to convey this enthusiasm to their students—hence, the good enrollment.
2. The department faculty are conscientious about offering courses at times and places convenient to students. Courses in the department are offered in the compressed and semester-length formats on the Marine Corps base.

TECHNOLOGY/EQUIPMENT: What is the strength, if any, of the technology/equipment used in the instructional program?

1. The CMC library purchases CDs and videos appropriate for use in department classes. Instructors in the department also purchase, and sometimes donate, programs for classroom use.

SUPPLIES/FACILITIES: What is the strength, if any, of the supplies/facilities used by your instructional program?

1. For classes taught on the campus, adjustments can often be made so that appropriately-sized classrooms can be used. At the base, the college staff are extremely helpful in arranging for audiovisual equipment to be delivered to the classrooms.