
OSU Communication

Department of Philosophy

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To: Members of the ASC-CCI

From: Don Hubin 

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Subject: Philosophy Department Curriculum Proposals

The Department of Philosophy is submitting a number of proposals for new courses, including one that requests GEC status. In the next few months, we will be submitting additional curricular requests. I'm writing now to provide some context for these changes and to explain how they fit in with our current curriculum and, especially, our major program.

Introductory Level Courses:

Philosophy 131: Ethics in the Professions:

Our current Introduction to Ethics course (Philosophy 130) is a general introduction to applied ethics which draws on a variety of examples to illustrate crucial points in normative ethical theory. It is possible to use a wide variety of concrete moral problems to develop students' understanding of the various philosophical theories of ethics and students' skills in applying these theories and in criticizing them. For a generalized course like Philosophy 130, we typically employ examples that are of very broad interest. So, we might focus on issues such as abortion, euthanasia, the treatment of animals, the justification of punishment and so forth. But the very same, quite general, philosophical knowledge and skill could be taught using examples that might not hold as much general appeal but be of very strong interest to a smaller group of students.

We propose, with Philosophy 131, the creation of a family of decimalized courses that will be *general* introductions to applied ethics in various professions with each "child" course drawing its specific examples to illustrate these general philosophical points from different professions. I want to underscore that the introduction to philosophical ethics is general and constant

across these courses. It is similar to that conveyed in Philosophy 130 (which explains the exclusion proposed). What *is* specialized is just the examples employed to illustrate the philosophical points.

At this point, we are proposing just one decimalized “child” course, Introduction to Engineering Ethics. (See below.) However, we plan to explore the possibility and support from various other units in the University for courses in business ethics, journalism ethics, and so forth.

Engineering Ethics: Philosophy 294 and Philosophy 131.01:

The College of Engineering contacted the Philosophy Department with a request for a course in ethics that would address issues in engineering ethics. We have developed such a course and run two test versions of it. We propose this as the first decimalized “child” course under the Philosophy 131 number.

We also request GEC credit for this course under the Culture and Ideas subcategory of the Arts and Humanities category. This is appropriate given the basic and general philosophical material covered in the course. We emphasize that, although the course was designed to meet the needs of engineering majors, it is open to all students and would be an excellent course for students from a wide variety of disciplines.

Because we are planning to offer Engineering Ethics in the Winger Quarter, we have also submitted a request for a 294 Group Studies number under which we can teach it in case the approval process for Philosophy 131.01 is not completed in time for a Winter Quarter course. If Philosophy 131.01 is approved in time, the request for this Philosophy 294 course is moot.

400-Level Courses:

Last year, the Department of Philosophy had what is almost certainly the largest faculty turn over any large, established philosophy program has ever experienced: we hired seven new colleagues, fully one-third of our faculty in a single year. Of course, this has brought new specialties to our Department and made it possible for us to enlarge our offering of mid-level and higher-level courses. Two of the three, 400-level courses we propose at this time, Philosophy of Action and Philosophy of Perception, are made possible by the additional areas of research that we now have represented in the Department.

Philosophy 450: Philosophy of Logic:

Students have long complained that there is a leap between our Symbolic Logic course (Philosophy 250) and our next logic course, Advanced Symbolic Logic (Philosophy 650), which in addition to being open to undergraduates is required of all of our graduate students.

We seek to fill this gap in a useful way by developing further the logical skills of undergraduates who would like to be better prepared for the Philosophy 650 course and to present a course that will develop in students an understanding and appreciation of the philosophical implications of logic. Philosophy 450 will serve these purposes.

Philosophy 465: Philosophy of Action & Philosophy 468: Philosophy of Perception:

The Philosophy Department is now able to offer these two courses because of the appointment of two new colleagues: Wayne Wu and Abe Roth. These courses will appeal primarily to our majors but also to some psychology students and others with allied interests. At this point, we are not altering our major program requirements and these courses will be electives in the major. The Department will be reviewing its major requirements with an eye toward including these courses as *options* for the distribution requirements. We do not anticipate increasing the hours required for a major in Philosophy.

I have been informed by Professors Roth and Wu that these courses will typically involve readings in the range of 50-70 pages a week. It is worth noting that philosophical literature can be exceedingly difficult—a point that I'll take the liberty of illustrating with an anecdote from my past. When I was an undergraduate, waiting after a lecture to speak with one of my professors, a student ahead of me complained to the professor: "This Kant guy is really hard to read; I had to read this paragraph three times before I could understand it." The professor replied, "Congratulations! I had to read it *five* times before I understood it." Given the level and the nature of the readings, the proposed amount of reading is appropriate for a 400-level philosophy course.