

# Lars Enden

## Teaching Portfolio

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## 1. Teaching Statement

I focus my teaching on two main ideas. The first idea is that a philosophy course is both a knowledge project, which involves learning philosophical content, and a skill project, which involves developing philosophical skills. The second idea is that experience is the best teacher. Putting these two ideas together, I strive to help students use their own experiences to discover philosophical knowledge and to develop philosophical skills.

My belief that students best acquire philosophical knowledge by drawing on their own experiences can be seen in the way that I pose questions. Instead of presenting philosophical questions in the abstract, I ask them in the first person plural. For example, I do not ask, "Does God exist?" I ask, "Should we believe that God exists?" I do not ask, "Is abortion morally permissible?" I ask, "Should we believe that abortion is morally permissible?" Putting the questions in the first person signals to the students that the answers should matter to them. These are not simply abstract questions of no real consequence. These are questions of personal belief that students may answer by drawing on their past experiences. Putting the questions in the plural also signals to the students that answering these questions is a communal project. In order to answer them, we must try to reach some kind of consensus with one another. This highlights the importance of argumentation in philosophy, further supporting the idea that each student's personal perspective and past experience is valuable to the project.

Another technique I use is to dramatize philosophical problems and solutions in a way that helps students realize for themselves the force of the issues. For example, when I introduce students to Hume's problem of induction, I bring to class two small black balls that look very similar but that actually have quite different properties: one ball bounces quite well, but the other hardly bounces at all. These are known as happy/sad balls. At the beginning of class, I bounce the happy ball several times as I'm talking, not saying anything about why I am doing so. Later, I stop bouncing the happy ball and secretly exchange it for the sad ball. When I have nearly finished explaining Hume's response to the problem of induction, I throw the sad ball down hard on the floor. The students invariably flinch thinking that the ball is going to take off chaotically around the room. Instead it just hits the floor with a thud. This dramatizes the effect of habit on our expectations. The students developed an expectation after having seen the ball bounce several times, and that expectation is thwarted when the ball doesn't do as expected. I can then more easily make the point that Hume tries to make, that our expectations about what will occur, developed from long habit, is the entire source of our ideas of causation. In this way, the students have *experienced* Hume's "solution" to the problem of induction rather than merely learned about it.

I also believe that student experience is a useful tool for building philosophical skills. One technique I have used is something I call philosophy lab (for an example, see section 7 of this portfolio). The idea behind philosophy lab is to apply science pedagogy to philosophy. In science classes students are often asked to do lab work because this helps them learn and develop *scientific* skills, like hypothesis testing and data analysis. I use a similar model to teach *philosophical* skills, like reconstructing arguments, developing objections, and

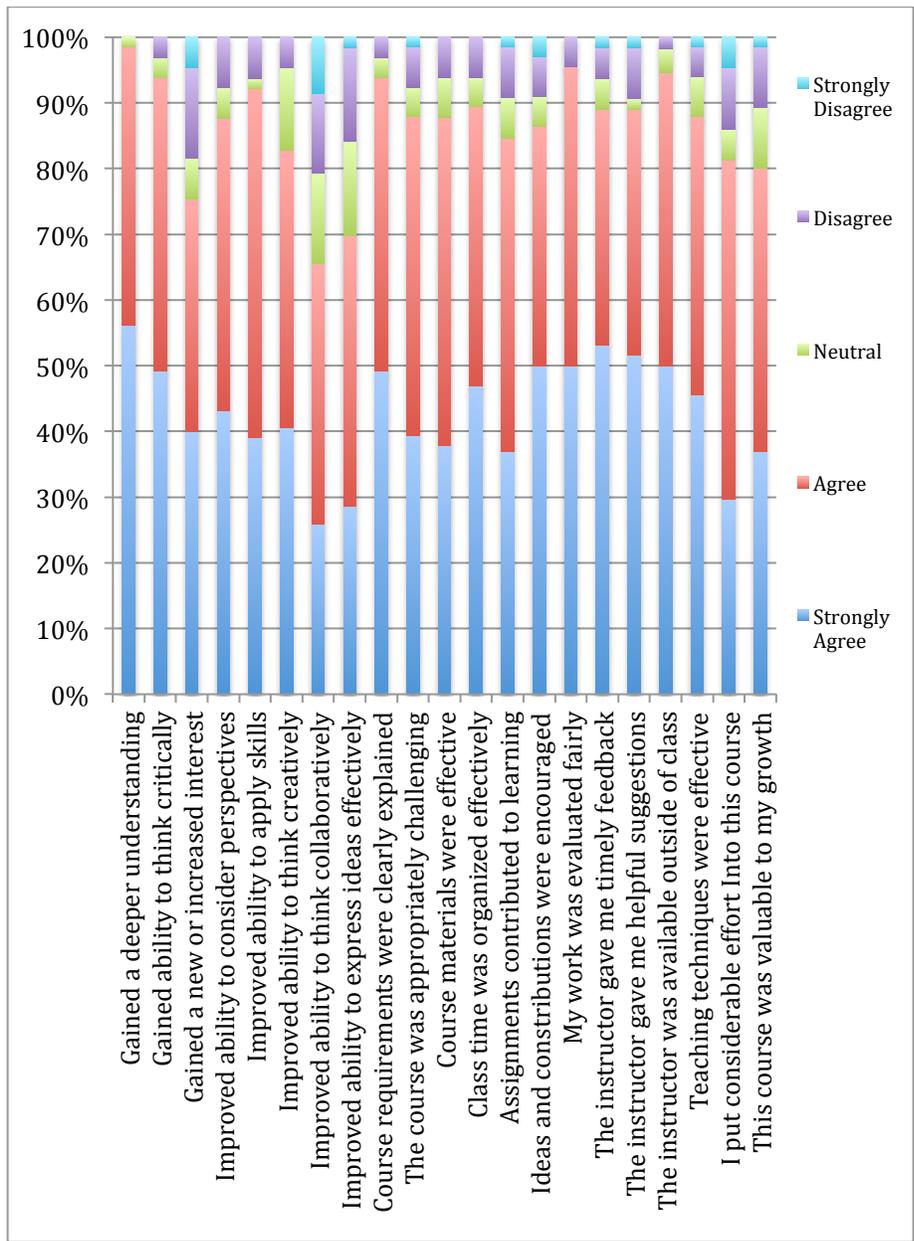
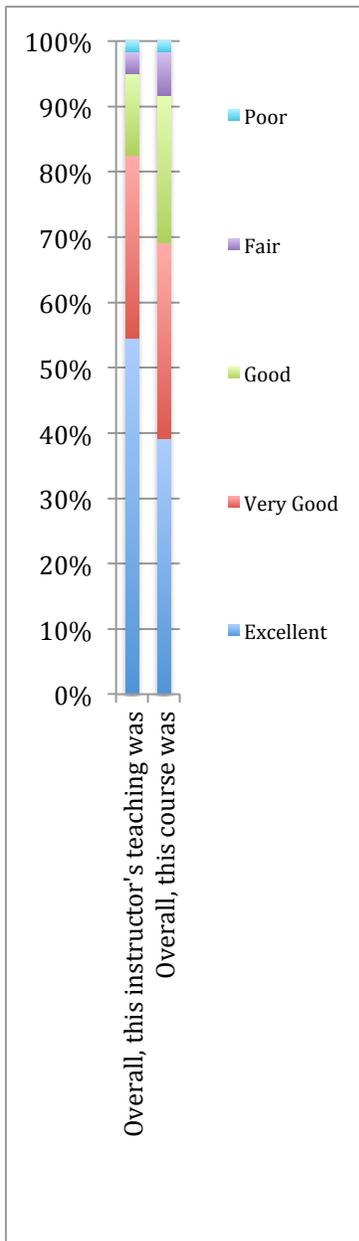
concept analysis. Each lab focuses on a specific philosophical skill and presents the students with specific tasks designed to help them understand and develop that skill. For example, in one lab, I give each lab group a simple, ordinary object, like a paperclip or a piece of chalk. I ask each group to identify the kind of object I have given them. Next, I ask them to make a list of all the properties they can think of that makes their object a thing of its kind. So now they have a list of necessary conditions. The next step is for the students to think of an object that satisfies their list of necessary conditions but does not count as a thing of the same kind. The students are now trying to develop their list of necessary conditions into a set that is also jointly sufficient. This is when the groups invariably struggle, so they begin to see for themselves how difficult it is to give a complete analysis of even the simplest concept. I can then relate the lab back to the concepts we are currently studying in class.

In conclusion, my teaching focuses on increasing my students' philosophical knowledge and developing their philosophical skills by helping them discover these things for themselves.

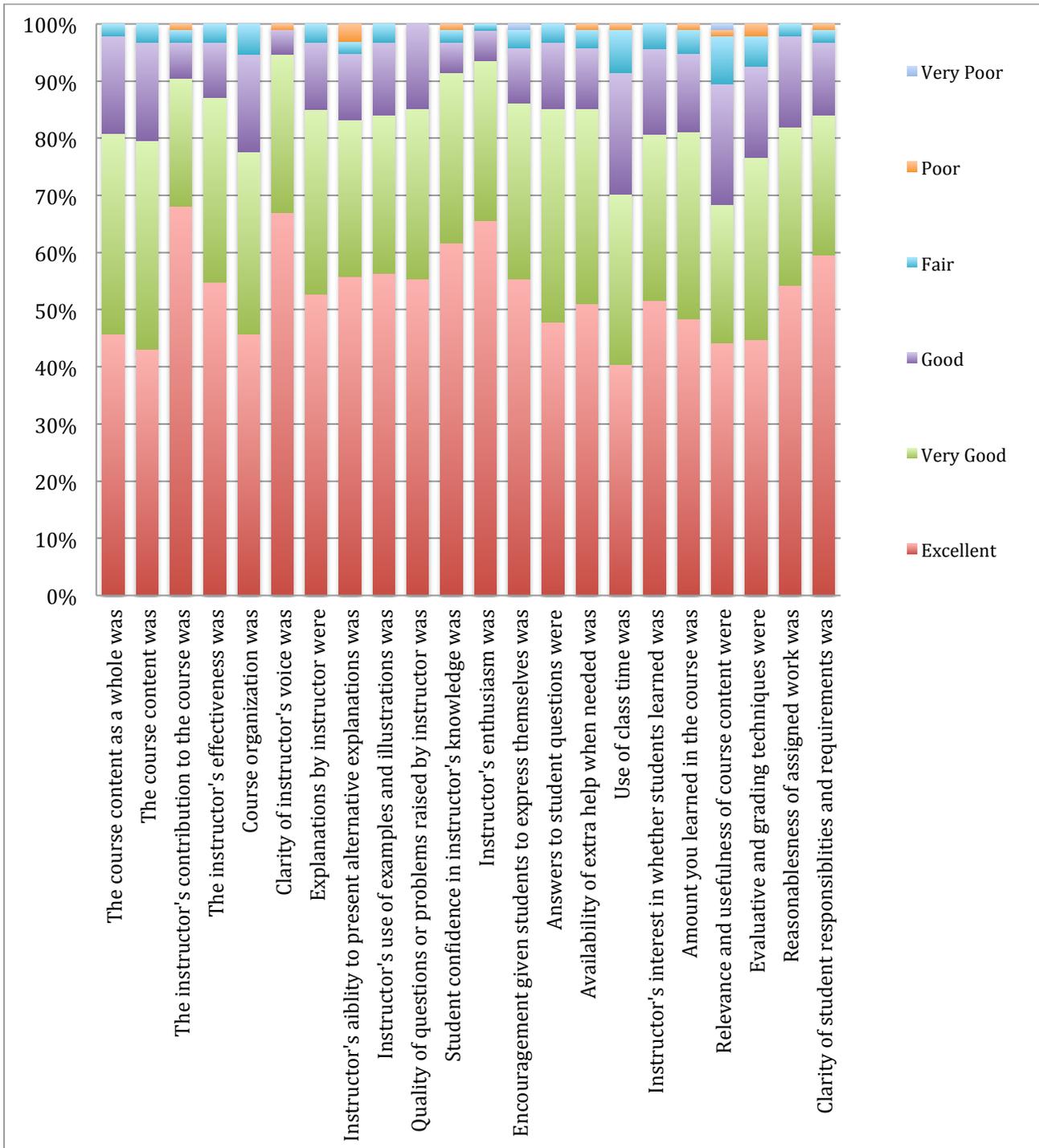
## 2. Teaching Evaluations

The following charts represent aggregated student evaluation data from courses I have taught at Kalamazoo College and at the University of Washington. These represent all of the courses I have taught in my career for which the following three conditions have been met: I was the primary instructor of record, I was responsible for the content of the course, and I taught more than three courses at that institution. Student evaluations for other courses I have taught are available on request.

### 2.1 Kalamazoo College



## 2.2 University of Washington



### **3. Unabridged Student Comments**

The following are the collected, complete and unabridged comments from the last five courses I have taught. The comments are presented as written with no attempt to correct content or grammar. Additional student comments are available on request.

#### **3.1 Philosophy 322: Modern Philosophy University of Washington—Summer 2013**

Was this class intellectually stimulating? Did it stretch your thinking?

- Yes. Material was both thought provoking and challenging.
- Yes. Blew my mind. Loved it!
- Yes.
- Yes. It made me think critically of the issues and it made me see things in a new light.
- Yes. We discussed tons of ideas (obviously—it's philosophy). Lars spent a ton of time letting us argue & voice our views regarding the material, so that was excellent.

What aspects of this class contributed most to your learning?

- The lectures. It gave life to the reading.
- diagrams/drawings were the most helpful for explicating difficult concepts.
- The examples and the comparison of ideas. The way it was all tied together.
- (1) Discussion & Lars could explain things extremely succinctly & clearly. (2) Lars made plenty of time to discuss essays & answer questions after class. My questions never went unanswered.

What aspects of this class detracted from your learning?

- Nothing in particular comes to mind!
- Nothing. It was a great class.
- there seemed to be some disorganization and things off topic.
- None.

What suggestions do you have for improving the class?

- Would prefer to have one weekly material summary that I can put more thought into instead of daily discussion posts. Also, I would have preferred the discussion posts to have been private.
- more organized lectures, more focus on Kant, less on Hume.
- It was a great class. They should all be taught this way.

### 3.2 Philosophy 350: Epistemology University of Washington—Spring 2013

Was this class intellectually stimulating? Did it stretch your thinking?

- Yes. Class was very intellectually stimulating!
- Yes. I was previously familiar with much of the material but a great deal of it was new to me as well. Lars is good at challenging the beliefs of myself and those of the other students as well.
- Yes. Absolutely. I enjoyed the material. Though a bit of it was rushed at times, it was explained very well (even for non-phil majors). Going into it I had a very vague idea of epistemology, but it is a class I wish everyone were required to take 😊
- Yes, Epistemology is a very confusing topic but Lars is excellent at breaking it down in a way that allows one to grasp the topics.
- Yes.
- Yes. Very engaging material, great reading excerpts, thorough class structure, great lectures.
- Yes.
- Yes. fun class, second phil class and was fascinating. Large range of topics presents fairly.
- Yes. It was a discussion and question friendly environment.
- Yes. Amazing introduction to the field of epistemology.
- Yes.
- Yes.
- Yes: well organized to explain difficult views.
- Yes. It was my first experience with college philosophy I had a great time!

What aspects of this class contributed most to your learning?

- discussion, intensity within breadth of material.
- Classroom discussions, more so than usual (generally I speak very little in class, This class was an exception, The material was open ended).
- Class discussions, reading questions, professor's teaching style. Openness to opinions, despite how crazy they may seem. Thank you for the notes on RQ's. Helpful.
- lectures
- The textbooks and Lar's knowledge of the topic.
- Explicating and Formulating specific theories as a class helps; these theories require fleshing out, and discussion is the best way to do it.
- I loved the lectures of course, but also requiring a reading each day, and a response. Kept me very focused, and helped me with learning material.
- The discussion.
- The in-class discussions.
- The willingness to engage in discussion.
- the examples and lectures.

- discussion, clear outline/explanation of views.
- Classtime & Lars' explanations were very clear and thorough.

What aspects of this class detracted from your learning?

- initial confusion about definitions and concepts allowed to linger well into first half of quarter.
- Nope.
- Tangents on stuff that sometimes don't pertain to the main topic.
- Sometimes I think student questions led on to tangents that weren't very relevant or interesting.
- It was right when I usually nap.
- Can't really think of any.
- Nothing comes to mind.
- Being able to get away with not doing the reading.

What suggestions do you have for improving the class?

- introduction and overview with more info.
- I don't know how to improve the class. Lars does a great job with it.
- Class "trip."
- End some of the discussion that doesn't contribute a whole lot to the topic.
- Always use examples, drawings, and visual demonstrations when you can...awesome job, Lars.
- A final review session & a review session would have been great because we covered so much material. Great course though I'm excited to take another course with you this summer!
- You're very good with listening to all kinds of questions, but you might want to wrap up tangential discussions quicker.
- None.
- Just to keep things as they are.
- more office hours; more books with differing views. Wittingstein
- Encourage/force people to discuss. I never talked once all year (sorry) and my grade will probably be somewhat high. Make sure students actually do the reading (forcing them to discuss might help). Also the reading questions were a bit dry; I'd suggest spicing them up. Thanks!

### 3.3 Philosophy 335: Plato's *Republic* University of Washington—Winter 2013

Was this class intellectually stimulating? Did it stretch your thinking?

- Yes. Great book, leads one to consider stimulating topics.
- Yes. It gave me a new insight into the human soul and politics. Made me a firm conservative and Plato follower.
- Yes.
- Yes. Very interesting class.
- Yes. Deeper analysis of a single book.
- Yes. The teacher made a daunting, canonical book approachable.
- Yes. This class was surprisingly interesting considering I don't like political philosophy. Enden was a very good instructor.
- Yes. Raises interesting questions. Make ! connections.
- Yes. The instructor's prompts were extremely helpful in expanding my understanding of the material.
- Yes. Very much so, discussions were engaging.
- Yes. It had some cool material.
- Yes. Plato's *Republic* was analyzed very thoroughly & steadily. Lars walked us through the book with clarity and interest.
- Yes.
- Yes. It helped improve critical thinking & argumentation.

What aspects of this class contributed most to your learning?

- Class discussion.
- The lectures were good and helped clarity a lot.
- The teacher's excellent personality & sense of humor.
- Discussions.
- Reading questions.
- The teachers ability to relate particular passages of the text to philosophy at large.
- The reading assignments were very helpful b/c it made sure I kept myself on pace w/ the content.
- Lecture, reading questions.
- Reading questions.
- Reading questions & discussions.
- Lectures.
- Lars was able to help us grasp difficult concepts and criticisms of Plato. Very capable and personable professor, highly recommend (this is my second time as a student of Lars).
- Reading questions were useful to keep on track of reading.
- Homework assignments.
- Reading questions to help guide reading.

What aspects of this class detracted from your learning?

- Nothing
- The fact there was no right answer.
- Certain in class discussions.
- Nothing.
- Not really?
- Nil.
- Nada.
- The temperature in the classroom.

What suggestions do you have for improving the class?

- More of Platos work like the laws or some dialogue to clarify things in the republic.
- Nothing.
- I would feel a bit presumptuous saying I know how this class could be better taught.
- Maybe sometimes we go really far off tangent?
- Nil.
- Nada.
- Overall this class was great; however, the structure or flow of the class could be improved upon. A means to connect the homework to w/ the content of the class. For the lecture material feels a tad dislocated from the HW material (ie. I can't seem to get a feel for what to expect next lecture from the HW alone).

### **3.4 Philosophy 107: Logic and Reasoning Kalamazoo College—Fall 2012 & Fall 2013**

What I Learned

- It's not the sort of philosophy class I was expecting, but I still found it quite interesting, if not difficult.
- This was a completely new course for me, meaning unlike anything I've taken before and I learned a lot.
- Lars does a great job motivating the class.
- The answers to questions 4-8 are marked as N/A only because I already possessed these skills not because of Lars's failing.
- Collaboration was not a part of this course as homework was online.
- This is a great course, not only opening my eyes to logic, but really helped with writing papers in other classes from learning how to argue. Great class!
- Most of the class was skill based and then application through relatively strict methods.
- Very interesting course. It was fun to attend lectures.
- Course was suggested for psychology majors & I strongly disagree. It did not supplement my major at all.

- This class really expanded my mental capacity.

### Learning Environment

- Always willing to help me out during office hours, and was REALLY helpful.
- This class went painfully slow. It made coming to class a waste of my time.
- Office hours were hard to get to & APLIA
- great professor. Very helpful & clear explanations.
- Course was not taught in an engaging manner or giving students a chance to attempt problems or ask about them.
- Lars did a great job of engaging a quiet class.
- Very good instructor. I could email him at any point with questions and he would email right back. He was extremely helpful. A+.
- I liked the class. It's just a little early.
- I felt Professor Enden did an excellent job.

### Overall Evaluation

- Proof by distraction:  $P \rightarrow Q / \text{☺} // Q$
- Lars, I'm sad that you're leaving. For being very distant from that which I usually study in philosophy, you did a great job making logic interesting and I wish I had the change to sign up with further course with you on the subject. The best of luck to you upon returning to Washington.
- Logic was a very interesting course that I really did enjoy, which led to me putting in more effort.
- Thanks a bunch for the help. Office hours were incredibly helpful.
- Awesome teacher. Always had feedback and helpful suggestions. Very clear teaching.
- Way to go!
- I want a logic round 2!!
- Very interesting & well organized.
- This course was probably my favorite course at K, just because the homework felt like a puzzle I could do at my leisure, but for a grade. Fantastic! The whole course has made me more aware and self-aware of what it means to have a logical conclusion and what a good argument actually contains.
- The bomb. Other than minor aplia issues, the whole course was great. All examples were great. Thank you!
- I really enjoyed & learned a lot.
- Professor Enden is great at teaching and explaining complicated concepts.
- The course was surprisingly easy. I'm assuming I had such an easy time because I indirectly learned many of these 'logical thinking skills' in organic chemistry...
- Worst class I took this quarter & did not benefit me at all.
- Just didn't grip my interest, but good teacher/learning environment.
- Aplia was great.

- Lars did a very effective job.
- Teacher was grade A+. Always answered emails and helped me while struggling.
- A lot of thinking required.
- Lars knows the material well & can answer questions about it.

#### **4. Sample Syllabi**

The following pages contain sample syllabi. The first is for an upper-division class within one of my areas of specialization (Epistemology); the second is for the lower-division class that I have taught most often (Logic and Reasoning); and the last is for a special topics class on modality that I designed (Philosophy of Possibility and Necessity).

**Philosophy 350: Epistemology**  
**University of Washington**  
**Spring 2013**

Instructor: Lars Enden  
Meeting Location: Art 317  
Meeting Times: MWF 2:00-3:20 p.m.

Email: enden@uw.edu  
Office Location: Sav 384  
Office Hours: MW 3:30-4:30

**Course Description and Learning Objectives**

Epistemology concerns philosophical questions about knowledge. We will study many of the most important of these questions and the most important answers that have been offered to them. We will mainly focus on contemporary epistemology, but we will occasionally look at historical issues as well. Along the way, we will serve the broader goal of learning and practicing distinctly philosophical skills, including reading critically, thinking carefully, and writing clearly.

**Required Texts**

BonJour, Laurence, *Epistemology: Classic Problems and Contemporary Responses*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Lanham, MA: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010.  
Bernecker, Sven, *Reading Epistemology: Selected Texts with Interactive Commentary*, Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006.

NB: A selection of additional texts is available on the course website.

**Student Responsibilities**

**Reading and Discussion:** Reading is due every class period. You are expected to have read the material and to be in class ready to discuss it on the day it is due. See the reading schedule for reading due dates.

**Writing:** There are two kinds of writing assignment for this course: Reading Questions and Exams.

Reading Questions (RQs) are due every class period. You must type your responses, print them out and bring them to class. During class you can write on your RQs if you wish to change your answers, but any changes will be graded at less than full credit. The RQs are designed to help keep you motivated in your studies, to help guide your reading, to help test your reading comprehension, and to help get you thinking about the philosophical topics on your own before class discussions. You must attend class on the day the RQ is due in order to receive credit for it. You cannot submit these assignments electronically, you cannot turn them in late, and you cannot have someone else hand them in for you.

There will be two exams, one at midterm and a final exam. They are equally weighted, and non-cumulative. I will provide a study guide for each of the exams.

## **Grading**

Grading is based on a point system as follows. 500 points possible.

Reading questions: There will be 27 reading questions assignments throughout the term. Only your best 25 count. Each is worth 10 points. (10 X 25 = 250 points)

Exam 1: 125 points

Exam 2: 125 points

## **Classroom Policies**

No electronic devices of any kind are allowed in class. This means that all laptops, cell phones, ipods, etc. must be silenced and stored away before class begins.

Late work, in general, is not accepted. You cannot usually hand in a late assignment. If you are not in class with your homework ready, do not expect to receive credit for it. However, you should talk to me if you find yourself in a position that you cannot turn in an assignment on time.

Be respectful. You may have strong opinions about some of the issues we will discuss, and your peers may not agree with you. It is important that everyone feels that they are welcome to contribute to the conversation. The important thing to remember is that in philosophy we criticize ideas not people. Any student who acts in a disrespectful manner will be asked to leave.

## **General Advice**

Reading: You will probably find some of the reading difficult. Please try not to be discouraged; professional philosophers struggle with this stuff, too. Instead just keep reading even if you feel that you do not understand much of what is being said. For one thing, you probably understand more than you think, and for another thing, reading difficult texts actually gets easier with practice. Try to remind yourself during these difficult times that you are developing an important skill—reading carefully and critically. Sometimes this is painful, but anything worth learning will not be easy. Just keep reading, and do your best to understand.

Writing: Pay attention to detail in your writing. Philosophical writing is demanding work; it requires clarity of thought and precision of language. Your job as a philosophical writer is to help to clear up some of the confusion on a difficult question. Poor thinking and unclear writing only add to the confusion. So in all your writing in this class, try to be as clear as you possibly can.

Keep up with the reading; come to every class; give yourself time to think and to write; and ask lots and lots of questions.

**Schedule:** Be sure to consult this schedule daily to ensure that you are keeping up on the reading assignments.

Monday	Wednesday	Friday
<b>April 1</b> Syllabus	<b>April 3</b> Descartes: Meditation I-II; BonJour: 1-14	<b>April 5</b> Descartes: Meditation III; BonJour: 14-22
<b>April 8</b> BonJour: 23-39	<b>April 10</b> Bernecker: 4-14 BonJour: 39-45	<b>April 12</b> Bernecker: 14-26
<b>April 15</b> BonJour: 71-96	<b>April 17</b> Ayer: "The <i>A Priori</i> "	<b>April 19</b> Berkeley: <i>Three Dialogues</i> (excerpt)
<b>April 22</b> BonJour: 97-117	<b>April 24</b> BonJour: 177-186 Bernecker: 122-138	<b>April 26</b> Bernecker: 139-155
<b>April 29</b> BonJour: 186-202	<b>May 1</b> Hume: "Sceptical Doubts ..."	<b>May 3</b> BonJour: 57-69
<b>May 6</b> <b>Midterm Exam</b>	<b>May 8</b> BonJour: 119-134	<b>May 10</b> BonJour: 134-148
<b>May 13</b> BonJour: 203-210 Bernecker: 27-44	<b>May 15</b> BonJour: 210-219 Bernecker: 44-56	<b>May 17</b> Bernecker: 57-80
<b>May 20</b> Bernecker: 80-92	<b>May 22</b> Quine: "Epistemology Naturalized"; BonJour: 221-227	<b>May 24</b> Kim: "What is..."; BonJour: 227-235
<b>May 27</b> <b>Holiday – No Class</b>	<b>May 29</b> Moore: "Proof of..."; BonJour: 237-246	<b>May 31</b> BonJour: 246-256
<b>June 3</b> BonJour: 149-155; 164-171	<b>June 5</b> BonJour: 155-164	<b>June 7</b> Bernecker: 93-121

**Final Exam: Tuesday, June 11, 2:30-4:20 p.m.**

**Philosophy 107: Logic and Reasoning**  
**Kalamazoo College**  
**Fall 2015**

Instructor: Lars Enden  
Meeting Location: Dewing 205  
Meeting Times: MWF 8:30–9:45 a.m.

Email: [lenden@kzoo.edu](mailto:lenden@kzoo.edu)  
Office Location: Humphrey House 209  
Office Hours: MWF 10:00–11:30 a.m.

### **Objectives and Content**

In this course, we will ask the difficult question “What is good reasoning?” The course will be divided into two parts. In the first part of the course, we will study logic from an informal perspective, and in the second part, we will study the techniques of formal logic. Informal logic is the study of logic from within a natural language, like English. Formal logic tries to do away with the difficulties of natural languages by developing a formal language, like a computer language, and studying logic from within the formal language. The main goal of the course will be to increase our skills in analytical and abstract reasoning, but along the way we will encounter questions about the applicability of logic to such fields as mathematics, linguistics, natural science, social science, computer science, cognitive science, and of course philosophy.

### **Resources**

Aplia: [www.aplia.com](http://www.aplia.com) (Course Key: ???-???-???)

Text: Hurley, Patrick. *A Concise Introduction to Logic*, 11<sup>th</sup> edition (an electronic version is available on the Aplia website. You are not required to purchase a separate copy of the text.)

### **Reading**

All required reading should be completed before class on the day that the reading is due. Check the schedule below every day to be sure that you are keeping up on your reading. It is also a good idea to reread a section after we have talked about it. This helps to increase your understanding dramatically.

### **Graded Work**

There are three types of graded work: (a) **Participation**, (b) **Homework**, and (c) **Exams**.

(a) **Participation**: Logic involves skills that require continual practice. Therefore, classroom attendance and engagement is required every day from all students. I recommend that you do not miss this class unless you absolutely have no choice.

(b) **Homework**: All homework will be done on the Aplia website and is due at 8:30 a.m. every class day (except the day after an exam or review). Check the Aplia website every day to be sure that you are keeping up with your assignments.

(c) **Exams**: There are two exams. The first exam will cover informal logic, and the second exam will cover formal logic.

## **Grading Procedures**

(a) **Participation** (10% of final grade): you have the opportunity to receive two points every day for participation. One point is for attendance, and the other is for engagement. To receive the attendance point, simply come to class on time and stay until the end. To receive the engagement point, be an active member of the class. Every student has a responsibility to contribute to the learning environment. So, stay on task with the rest of the class in all of our activities.

(b) **Homework** (50% of final grade): the Aplia website automatically grades homework. For most homework problems, if you get it wrong, you are permitted to retry the problem up to two more times. The average of all of your attempts will be your score for that problem. Some problems are randomized so that different students see different problems. If you think that the Aplia website has made a mistake, please bring it to my attention so that I can resolve the issue.

(c) **Exams** (40% of final grade): the first exam will be administered during class time, and the second exam will be administered during our allotted final exam period. The exams will be graded more strictly than homework assignments because it will be expected that students will have achieved a higher level of mastery over the material by exam time.

## **Classroom Policies**

- Electronic devices are distracting to everyone in a classroom. So, all electronic devices are prohibited during class. This includes laptops and cell phones. All electronic devices should be silenced and stored away before class begins.
- Studying and doing homework in pairs or in groups is an excellent idea, and it is encouraged. However, any work that you turn in for a grade must be your own work. All students who work in a group have a responsibility to contribute to the group effort. Simply copying the work of others is cheating. In any case, if you do not learn to do this work on their own, you will not likely pass the exams.

## **General Advice for Students**

- Expect to make a lot of mistakes. Try to learn from them. That is why we are here.
- You will find that the course increases in difficulty as we proceed. Try not to get discouraged if you do not understand something right away.
- Nearly every student struggles at some point in this class. The sooner you talk with me about your particular struggles, the easier they will be for us to handle. Do not just assume that you will “catch on” later. More than likely you will just become more and more confused until you seek out help. Come and talk with me the moment you feel yourself becoming confused.
- The Aplia website is a very valuable tool, since it gives you immediate feedback on your work. However, some of the functions of the website can be frustrating, and it occasionally even gives the wrong answer. If you suspect that Aplia has made a mistake, bring it to my attention.

## Class Schedule

<b>Monday</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Friday</b>
<b>Sept 14</b>	Sections 1.1-1.2 <b>Sept 16</b>	Sections 1.3-1.4 <b>Sept 18</b>
Section 2.1 <b>Sept 21</b>	Sections 3.1-3.2 <b>Sept 23</b>	Section 3.3 <b>Sept 25</b>
Section 3.4 <b>Sept 28</b>	Section 3.5 <b>Sept 30</b>	Sections 9.1-9.3 <b>Oct 2</b>
Sections 13.1-13.4 <b>Oct 5</b>	Sections 14.1-14.5 <b>Oct 7</b>	<u><b>Review</b></u> <b>Oct 9</b>
<u><b>Exam 1</b></u> <b>Oct 12</b>	Section 6.1 <b>Oct 14</b>	<b>Break: No Class</b> <b>Oct 16</b>
Section 6.2 <b>Oct 19</b>	Section 6.3 <b>Oct 21</b>	Section 6.4 <b>Oct 23</b>
Section 6.5 <b>Oct 26</b>	Section 7.1 <b>Oct 28</b>	Section 7.2 <b>Oct 30</b>
Section 7.3 <b>Nov 2</b>	Section 7.4 <b>Nov 4</b>	Section 7.5 <b>Nov 6</b>
Section 7.6 <b>Nov 9</b>	Section 8.1 <b>Nov 11</b>	Section 8.2 <b>Nov 13</b>
Section 8.3 <b>Nov 16</b>	Section 8.4 <b>Nov 18</b>	<u><b>Review</b></u> <b>Nov 20</b>

**Exam 2 will take place on Tuesday, November 24<sup>th</sup> 8:30-11:00 a.m.**

**Philosophy 200**  
**Special Topics: Philosophy of Possibility and Necessity**  
**Fall 2009**

Instructor: Lars Enden  
Office: Savery Hall 384  
Office Hours: M & Th 1:00-2:00

Email: enden@u.washington.edu  
Meeting Location: MEB 237  
Meeting Times: Daily 2:30-3:20

**Course Objectives:** In this course we will examine several of the most important philosophical theories of possibility and necessity. We will study and critically evaluate many of the answers that have been offered for questions such as: What do claims about possibility and necessity mean? What is a possible world? How can we know that something is possible? How can we know that something is necessary? How can we know that something is impossible? Our main learning objectives will be to improve our abilities to think critically, to read and evaluate philosophical arguments, and to write clearly and precisely about philosophically challenging topics.

**Texts:** All texts for this course will be made available online.

**Grades:** Because philosophy is a combination of specialized knowledge and specialized skills, there will be two types of graded work in this class. The first is designed to improve and test your knowledge of the material; the second is designed to improve and test your developing philosophical skills. For improving and testing knowledge, we will have a midterm and a final (worth 50 points each), consisting of short-answer style questions. For improving and testing philosophical skills, we will have five very short papers (1-2 pages, worth 20 points each) due approximately every 2 weeks. 50% of your final grade (100 points) will be determined by the exams, and the other 50% (100 points) will be determined by your papers.

**Point Scale:** The following scale represents *minimum* grades based upon points earned. I reserve the right to increase grades based upon such factors as participation, effort, and improvement, but I will not lower your grade below the minimum set by this scale.

185 points = 4.0	135 points = 2.0
170 points = 3.5	128 points = 1.5
160 points = 3.0	120 points = 1.0
140 points = 2.5	115 points = 0.7

Below 115 points is a failing grade. Also, you must achieve at least 53 points on the exams combined and at least 53 points on the papers combined to pass this class, even if your total score is 115 or more. Do not skip an exam or a paper.

**Topics and Tentative Reading Schedule:** Because it is difficult to predict how much time we will want to devote to each topic, the following is only a rough guide to how we will proceed. We may skip one or more of these topics and/or readings depending on time and student interests.

NOTE: 'SEP' below indicates articles from the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. It is available online here: <http://plato.stanford.edu/>

Week 1: ***Introduction and Classic Problems of Philosophy***

Readings: SEP "Problem of Evil" Sec 1.1; SEP "Descartes' Ontological Argument" Sec 1; SEP "Arguments for Incompatibilism" Sec 3.1; SEP "Brains in a Vat" Sec 1; SEP "Zombies" Sec 3.

Weeks 2-3: ***What Do We MEAN by 'Possible' and 'Necessary'?***

Readings: Blackburn, *Spreading the Word* 3-10; Divers, *Possible Worlds* 3-21; SEP "Correspondence Theory of Truth" Sec 3; SEP "Analysis of Knowledge" Sec 1.

Weeks 4-6: ***How Do We KNOW Possibilities and Necessities?***

Readings: Hume, *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* Sec 4, Part I; Gendler & Hawthorne, Introduction to *Conceivability and Possibility*; Berglund, Chapter 2 of *From Conceivability to Possibility*; Sorenson, "The Art of the Impossible"; Currie, "Desire in Imagination"; Tidman, "Conceivability as a Test for Possibility".

**Midterm:** (Tentatively) November 9<sup>th</sup>

Weeks 7-8: ***What ARE Possibilities and Necessities? Part I: Concretism***

Readings: SEP "Logic and Ontology" Sec 3.1; Leibniz, *Monadology* Sec 53-58; Beebe & Dodd, *Reading Metaphysics* 175-182; Lewis, "Possible Worlds"; Lycan, "The Metaphysics of Possibilia".

Week 9: ***What ARE Possibilities and Necessities? Part II: Actualism***

Readings: SEP "Actualism" Sec 1.1; Stalnaker, "Possible Worlds"; Adams, "Theories of Actuality"; Pruss, "The Actual and the Possible".

Week 10: (As time permits) ***Miscellaneous Topics***

Readings: Rosen, "Modal Fictionalism"; Jubien, "Modality"; Hart, "The Music of Modality".

**Final Exam:** Tuesday, December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2:30-4:20

## 5. Philosophy Lab Sample Assignments

The following are examples of philosophy lab, a unique set of assignments that I have used in my classes to help students learn and practice specific philosophical skills.

### 5.1 Philosophy Lab: Concept Analysis

Step 1: Elect a Scribe.

Elect someone in your group to be the scribe for this lab. This person is responsible for writing the lab report. Make sure everyone reviews the report and accepts it before it gets turned in because you all get the same grade for it.

Step 2: Necessary Conditions

I will give your group an ordinary object. What kind of object is it? Brainstorm a list of properties that your chosen object *must* possess in order to qualify as a thing of that kind. For example, if you were given a chair as your object, then you might say that some of the properties it has that qualify it as a chair are that it has legs, it has an elevated flat surface (suitable for sitting on), and it has a back. Be open to questioning some of your assumptions here. For example, I might wonder whether having a back is really *necessary* for being a chair: do barstools count as chairs?

Step 3: Sufficient Conditions

Look over your list and try to imagine an object that possesses all of the properties listed but still fails to be a thing of that kind. Let your imagination run wild here. For example, I might imagine an object with legs, an elevated flat surface, and a back, but that is made of jam. I might then question whether or not an object made of jam can count as a chair even if it looks like one otherwise. Be willing to modify your original list to accommodate insights you might develop while doing this exercise. For example, I might decide that a chair cannot be made of jam and wish to add to my list to fix this. I might add that a chair *must* be made of a sturdy material.

Step 4: Concept Analysis

Congratulations you have now done what philosophers call concept analysis. To analyze a concept is to determine what is contained within that concept and also what is not contained in that concept. In other words, to analyze a concept, one must discover a list of conditions that are *each necessary* for the determination of the application of the concept and that are *jointly sufficient* for the determination of the application of the concept. To put it in the simplest possible terms, to understand a concept we need to know what a thing *must* be in order to count as falling under the concept, and we need to know what a thing *cannot* be if it is to count as falling under the concept.

## 5.2 Philosophy Lab: Reconstructing an Argument

### Step 1: Elect a Scribe.

Elect someone in your group to be the scribe for this lab. This person is responsible for writing the lab report. Make sure everyone reviews the report and accepts it before it gets turned in because you all get the same grade for it.

### Step 2: Study an Example

Have someone read aloud the following passage from Plato's *Apology*. (Socrates is the speaker. He is speaking at his trial after being condemned to death.)

“Let us reflect in another way, and we shall see that there is great reason to hope that death is a good, for one of two things: either death is a state of nothingness and utter unconsciousness, or, as men say, there is a change and migration of the soul from this world to another. Now if you suppose that there is no consciousness, but a sleep like the sleep of him who is undisturbed even by the sight of dreams, death will be an unspeakable gain. For if a person were to select the night in which his sleep was undisturbed even by dreams, and were to compare with this the other days and nights of his life, and then were to tell us how many days and nights he had passed in the course of his life better and more pleasantly than this one, I think that any man, I will not say a private man, but even the great king, will not find many such days or nights, when compared with the others. Now if death is like this, I say that to die is gain; for eternity is then only a single night. But if death is the journey to another place, and there, as men say, all the dead are, what good, O my friends and judges, can be greater than this? If indeed when the pilgrim arrives in the world below, he is delivered from the professors of justice in this world, and finds the true judges who are said to give judgment there, Minos and Rhadamanthus and Aeacus and Triptolemus, and other sons of God who were righteous in their own life, that pilgrimage will be worth making. ....What infinite delight would there be in conversing with them and asking them questions! For in that world they do not put a man to death for this; certainly not. For besides being happier in that world than in this, they will be immortal, if what is said is true.”

Take note of the bits I've underlined above. They indicate the premises and the conclusion of the argument. Here is my attempt to reconstruct the argument in standard form:

1. Either death is a state of nothingness, or death is a migration of the soul from this world to another.
2. If death is a state of nothingness, then death is good.
3. If death is a migration of the soul from this world to another, then death is good.
4. Therefore, death is good.

I was able to reconstruct the argument by asking myself these questions:

1. What is Socrates trying to persuade his audience to believe? In other words, what is the *conclusion* of his argument?
2. What specific reasons does he offer for his conclusion? In other words, what are the *premises* of his argument?

Notice that the reconstruction just presents the basic points of the argument without all of the rhetorical flourishes that are thrown in for effect and without the various explanations and support offered for each of the premises. Reconstructions should always be clear, direct, and easily understandable. The *logic* of the argument should be evident: the reasoning should *flow* from the premises to the conclusion in a fairly obvious way.

### Step 3: Reconstruct an Argument

Have someone read the following passage aloud. It is from the 18<sup>th</sup> century Irish Philosopher George Berkeley (pronounced BARK-lee. Yes, the city in California was named after him, but it is mispronounced.)

It is but looking into your own thoughts, and so trying whether you can conceive it possible for a sound, or figure, or motion, or color to exist without the mind or unperceived. This easy trial may perhaps make you see that what you contend for is a downright contradiction. Inasmuch that I am content to put the whole upon this issue: If you can but conceive it possible for one extended movable substance, or, in general, for any one idea, or anything like an idea, to exist otherwise than in a mind perceiving it, I shall readily give up the cause. And, as for all that...I shall grant you its existence, though you cannot either give me any reason why you believe it exists, or assign any use to it when it is supposed to exist. I say, the bare possibility of your opinions being true shall pass for an argument that it is so.

“But, say you, surely there is nothing easier than for me to imagine trees, for instance, in a park, or books existing in a closet, and nobody by to perceive them. I answer, you may so, there is no difficulty in it; but what is all this, I beseech you, more than framing in your mind certain ideas which you call books and trees, and the same time omitting to frame the idea of any one that may perceive them? But do not you yourself perceive or think of them all the while? This therefore is nothing to the purpose; it only shows you have the power of imagining or forming ideas in your mind: but it does not show that you can conceive it possible the objects of your thought may exist without the mind. To make out this, it is necessary that you conceive them existing unconceived or unthought of, which is a manifest repugnancy. When we do our utmost to conceive the existence of external bodies, we are all the while only contemplating our own ideas. But the mind taking no notice of itself, is deluded to think it can and does conceive bodies existing unthought of or without the mind, though at the same time they are apprehended by or exist in itself. A little attention will discover to any one the truth and evidence of what is here said, and make it unnecessary to insist on any other proofs against the existence of material substance.”

Do your best to reconstruct Berkeley's argument. Use the questions I presented earlier to help you: find the conclusion first; then try to figure out the premises.