

**Vanessa de Harven**  
**University of California, Berkeley**

*Teaching Dossier*

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**AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST**

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Expanded Teaching Data & Highlights of Teaching Evaluations  
(Also available online at <http://philosophy.berkeley.edu/people/detail/55>)

Full Sets of Teaching Evaluations, by Class

## **TEACHING STATEMENT**

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The study of philosophy is central to an education in the humanities for three reasons. One is for the context it gives to our cultural and intellectual landscape. The history and progress of ideas is inextricable from philosophy, which students may not understand until they engage in the practice directly. It's one thing to know (for example) that Aristotle, Descartes and Nietzsche were seminal thinkers, and quite another to be acquainted with their work and engage in the interplay of ideas that informs dominant world views.

Secondly, philosophy is a practice that develops intellectual skills that pay dividends in other academic domains and, indeed, throughout life. The ability to pinpoint the logical flow of argument, identify salient insights from clutter, and respond effectively to other viewpoints is an analytical method that goes beyond the subject matter of philosophy to the heart of whatever topic is at hand. One might think of philosophy as a certain intellectual hygiene; on the other hand, such a characterization is quite sterile and, indeed, too analytic to capture the true spirit of a philosophical education.

So, the third reason to study philosophy is that it nourishes a sense of curiosity whose satisfaction involves a unique form of creativity. The philosophical itch requires not just the historical and technical chops described above, but the kind of puzzlement and awe first described by Plato when he said that philosophy begins in wonder (*Theaetetus* 155d). Teaching students to think abstractly about the world, engage in thought experiments and conceive paradigm shifts can awaken the intellectual creativity that is unique to philosophy and yet applicable to all aspects of life.

The study of Ancient Philosophy holds an important place of its own in a philosophical education. It is the first instance of the Western philosophical itch, yielding a purity and simplicity of inquiry that demands equal elegance from the answers it considers. Such clarity makes the Greeks and Romans a natural introduction to philosophy: for the raw sense of wonder that they foster, for framing the questions that have continued to vex philosophers in their wake, and for offering answers that remain active philosophical currency today.

Philosophy is more technical and specialized now than ever, but the ancients are at its foundation not just as a matter of history but as the inextricable root of contemporary debates. For example, the problem of universals and a creative array of answers ranging from full-blown realism to austere nominalism are already to be found in the Greeks and Romans. As are remarkably subtle theories of space-time, atomism, and continuum physics (gunk); to say nothing of the ancients' logical, epistemological, psychological, ethical and political contributions. When philosophy is grounded in ancient perspectives, the resulting dialectic is broader, deeper and richer for it.

Teaching philosophy is a matter of giving students the philosophical itch and the tools to scratch it. In order to summon that wonder, there is no substitute for generating examples and applying theory to concrete cases; if the link between abstract terms and the world is not front and center, it is easy to lose your audience. To scratch the itch once they've got it, students must learn how to formulate problems, analyze arguments and think creatively about solutions (and dissolutions); such critical thinking is the most practical aspect of philosophy, building intellectual skills for a lifetime. But the most successful teacher engenders philosophy as a practice rather than a set of skills—a certain perspective on the world, an ongoing sense of curiosity about our surroundings. With a good teacher, philosophy is contagious.

**SUMMARY OF STUDENT EVALUATIONS**

*Questions scored on a scale of 1 (poor) to 7 (excellent)*

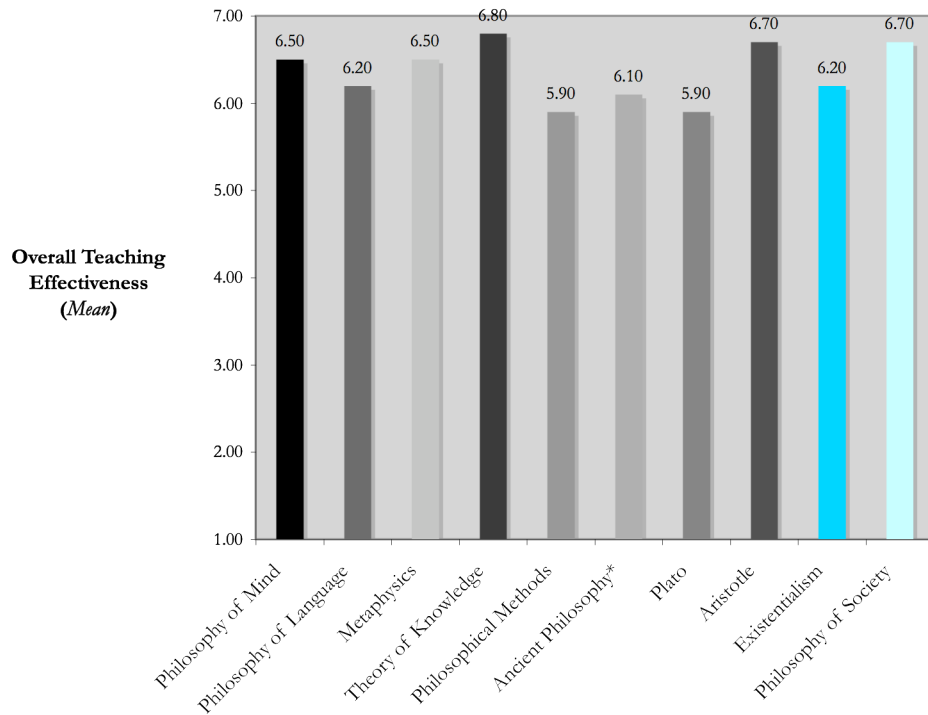
**As Primary Instructor**

**Ancient Philosophy**  
*(Mean, Summer 2010 & 2011)*

Organization of lectures and course	6.1
Clarity of lectures	5.8
Responsiveness to student questions during lecture	6.5
Stimulating and holding class interest	5.9
Intellectually rewarding	6.2
Overall teaching effectiveness	6.2

**As Teaching Assistant (GSI, or Graduate Student Instructor, at UC Berkeley)**

*Overall Teaching Effectiveness on a scale of 1 (not at all effective) to 7 (extremely effective)*



*\*Average scores Fall 2002 & Summer 2003*

David Lynaugh  
Graduate Student Affairs Officer  
Department of Philosophy, UC Berkeley

## **HIGHLIGHTS OF STUDENT EVALUATIONS**

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*An expanded teaching dossier with more data and evaluations for each class is available by request, or at:*

*<http://philosophy.berkeley.edu/people/detail/55>, or by request.*

*Full sets of student evaluations available upon request*

### **As Primary Instructor**

Phil 25A: Ancient Philosophy (*Summer 2011*)

- Best instructor I've had at Cal. Engaging, personable. People clapped at the end of some lectures.
- She has a great sense of humor and great personality. Excellent teacher and very knowledgeable.
- I thought that it was a very intellectually stimulating class, despite the time constraints.
- Six weeks is too little.
- This course was awesome! Thank you for teaching this course so beautifully:)

Phil 25A: Ancient Philosophy (*Summer 2010*)

- My favorite phil. prof so far!
- A great class and instructor. I really enjoyed the class. Thank you! I may even consider minoring in Philosophy :)
- Great lecturer!
- Vanessa did a superior job teaching this course. She was patient with us and I feel I've learned quite a bit.
- Good course. Teacher was very enthusiastic, funny, knowledgeable.

### **As Teaching Assistant (GSI, or Graduate Student Instructor, at UC Berkeley)**

Phil. 138: Philosophy of Society, John R. Searle (*Fall 2010*)

- Vanessa is an exceptional GSI. She was always prepared to answer students' questions and she did indeed show great experience and knowledge of the material. Without exaggeration I can say she was the best GSI I have had.
- A+, extremely knowledgeable, explains very clearly, funny and extremely nice as well as helpful...Best GSI I've ever had at Berkeley.

Phil. 7: Existentialism in Film and Literature, Hubert Dreyfus (*Fall 2009*)

- Vanessa was exemplary...above and beyond my other GSIs.
- She has been wonderful and has my great respect. Sections have been thoughtful and the discussions engaging.

Phil. 100: Philosophical Methods, Alva Noë (*Spring 2009*)

- I really enjoyed the class and I feel like I learned more from it and from the tutoring discussion than most of my other classes at Cal. She was the best GSI I've had at Berkeley.
- Vanessa is just as fun and approachable as she is intelligent; I always left feeling like I learned something, and she was on my side.

Phil. 132: Philosophy of Mind, John R. Searle (*Fall 2008*)

- Vanessa is the best GSI in the philosophy department of the philosophy courses I've taken so far. And I've taken quite a few.
- I know this isn't helpful, but I can't imagine Vanessa doing a better job. She's on par with many professors.

Phil. 161: Aristotle, Dorothea Frede (*Spring 2008*)

- The best GSI I've ever had!
- Vanessa knows Aristotle so well I think the university could let her teach an upper division philosophy class on Aristotle starting next semester. She's that good. In addition to being extremely knowledgeable, Vanessa is enthusiastic about Aristotle and philosophy and her enthusiasm makes the topics she discusses even more interesting.

Phil. 160: Plato, David Ebrey (*Fall 2007*)

- Vanessa is an excellent lecturer (she lectured once) and an awesome GSI. She is extremely organized, well prepared and enthusiastic about the material. She has helped us understand concepts—she makes sections fun because she clarifies difficult arguments and gives clear examples.
- She is an excellent teacher and an excellent communicator. I felt very comfortable around her to ask any questions I wanted, and in return she showed a lot of patience and made sure I thoroughly understood what she was saying.

Phil. 122: Theory of Knowledge, Branden Fitelson (*Spring 2007*)

- Vanessa has been one of the greatest GSIs I have ever had. She really understands the material and is able to convey her knowledge to us in a way that is not demeaning. She has the ability to connect with her students...She's Amazing! She takes what was done in lecture and is able to explain and clarify wonderfully.
- Vanessa is one of the most awesome GSIs I've had. She has many interesting things to say about the material, is well acquainted with it, and always encourages questions and responds to them in a clear and to-the-point fashion. Awesome!

Phil. 125: Metaphysics, Branden Fitelson (*Fall 2003*)

- It would be impossible for her to improve on her extremely helpful sections.
- I wouldn't know what was going on in class without these sections. Simply said, she made the material completely clear.

Phil. 25A: Ancient Philosophy, Andreas Anagnostopoulos (*Summer 2003*) & John MacFarlane (*Fall 2002*)

- If these considerations define a good GSI, then Vanessa is a superlative GSI. She's consistently capable of reformulating the material—representing and unpacking it into useful forms.
- My GSI met (if not went beyond) all of the above [criteria]. She is able to present the material clearly and concisely and then bring in applicable and interesting points of view, which get the student to think of the material in a different light.

Phil. 25B: Modern Philosophy, Hannah Ginsborg (*Spring 2003*)

- All in all Vanessa was the best GSI ever.
- I chose Vanessa's sections specifically because I had been informed that she was extremely clear in presenting material, and all the other qualities mentioned above. She lived up to my every expectation.

Phil. 133: Philosophy of Language, John R. Searle (*Fall 2001*)

- Vanessa has a real gift for teaching. She is lucid and concise.
- Vanessa was an exceptional GSI. She always came prepared for section with diagrams to show relation of theories, terms, etc.

**Phil. 25A — Ancient Philosophy**

**UC Berkeley, Summer 2011**

**Syllabus**

Instructor: Vanessa de Harven  
[vanessadeharven@berkeley.edu](mailto:vanessadeharven@berkeley.edu)  
GSI: Austin Andrews, [austinandrews@berkeley.edu](mailto:austinandrews@berkeley.edu)

Lecture: M–Th 10 –12 in 229 Dwinelle  
OH: Tues. 12:30–2 in 132 Moses & by appt.

**Description**

This course is designed as an introduction to philosophical thinking generally, and to ancient philosophy in particular. Those new to philosophy will learn the landscape by reading and writing about knowledge (epistemology), the nature of reality (metaphysics), psychology, philosophy of mind, politics, and ethics as the ancients saw it. Those with experience in philosophy will get acquainted with the striking differences between ancient and modern thinkers and the very elements for which the Greeks are considered the founders of Western philosophy. The ancient perspective is an excellent starting point not just for its formative role in philosophy, but also for its contrast to many of our modern instincts.

**Requirements**

There are no particular prerequisites for the course. Students should expect to spend a lot of time reading, analyzing and rereading assigned texts. The following four books are required for the course.

1. Plato, *Five Dialogues*, G.M.A. Grube (trns.)
2. Plato, *Protagoras*, Stanley Lombardo, Karen Bell (trns.), Michael Frede (intr.)
3. Plato, *Republic*, G.R.F. Ferrari (ed.), Tom Griffith (trns.),
4. Aristotle, *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, Richard McKeon (ed.), C.D.C. Reeve (intr.)

Additional course materials, assignments and announcements will be posted to bSpace or distributed in class. Please be sure your bSpace email address is current; you are responsible for emails sent there.

Grades will be based on:

- Three 4–page papers, one each on Socrates, Plato and Aristotle (25% each)
- Final exam (25%): several short–answer essay questions plus one longer essay
- Attendance and participation, which will help determine borderline grades

Late papers are accepted up to three days late with penalty. All assignments must be completed in order to pass the course. Attendance in lecture and discussion section is required. No electronic devices are allowed in the classroom without instructor approval, including laptop computers.

Plagiarism and cheating will not be tolerated. Any time you use someone else’s ideas and present them as your own, you are plagiarizing. It is your responsibility to understand the University’s Guide to Academic Integrity, at <http://students.berkeley.edu/osl/sja.asp?id=928>. You may be surprised at what constitutes plagiarism.

The best thing you can do is engage with the reading, participate in lecture and section, and answer the essay questions based on your own thoughts and intuitions. Philosophy is not the sort of thing you learn through data or research, but by doing it yourself. When you write an essay, your job is not to make a play list by gathering other people’s ideas online, but to create an original composition of your own<sup>1</sup>. Every assignment is designed for you to practice philosophy yourself with nothing more than the material on the syllabus. Make yourself an interlocutor, and you’ll be off to a great start.

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<sup>1</sup> Thanks to Jessica Gelber for this analogy. And look how easy it is to put in a footnote!

**Phil. 25A — Ancient Philosophy****Course Schedule****UC Berkeley, Summer 2011****Week One**

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Mon	5/23	Why study ancient philosophy? Introduction to the pre-Socratics
Tues	5/24	Heraclitus and Parmenides (handout); introduction to Socrates (begin reading <i>Euthyphro</i> )
Weds	5/25	<i>Euthyphro</i> (all); <i>Apology</i> (through 35d)
Thurs	5/26	<i>Apology</i> (finish); <i>Crito</i> (all); <i>Phaedo</i> (115a–end)

**Week Two**

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Mon	5/30	Memorial Day holiday—no lecture. <b>First paper due by 12:00 p.m.</b>
Tues	5/31	<i>Protagoras</i> (through 335a)
Weds	6/1	<i>Protagoras</i> (347c–end); <i>Meno</i> (through 80b)
Thurs	6/2	<i>Meno</i> (finish)

**Week Three**

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Mon	6/6	<i>Republic</i> , Book I (all)
Tues	6/7	<i>Republic</i> , Book II (all)
Weds	6/8	<i>Republic</i> , Book III (412c–end); Book IV (427d–end); Book V (to 466e)
Thurs	6/9	<i>Republic</i> , Book V (471c–end); Book VI (487a–end)
Fri	6/10	<b>Second paper due by 4:00 p.m.</b>

**Week Four**

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Mon	6/13	<i>Republic</i> , Book VII (all); <i>Phaedo</i> (65a8–67c4, 72c2–84b, 96a–102a)
Tues	6/14	<i>Republic</i> , Book X (all)
Weds	6/15	Aristotle, <i>Physics</i> I.1–3, 7–8; <i>Categories</i> 1–5
Thurs	6/16	Aristotle, <i>Physics</i> II (all)

**Week Five**

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Mon	6/20	Aristotle, <i>Metaphysics</i> I.1–2; IV.1–3; <i>Posterior Analytics</i> I.1–3, 34; II.19
Tues	6/21	Aristotle, <i>De Anima</i> I.1; II.1–4, 12; <i>Nicomachean Ethics (NE)</i> I.7, 13
Weds	6/22	Aristotle, <i>NE</i> I.1–3; II.3–7; X.6–7
Thurs	6/23	Aristotle, <i>NE</i> V.1–5; VII.1–3
Fri	6/24	<b>Third paper due by 4:00 p.m.</b>

**Week Six**

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Mon	6/27	Hellenistic philosophy: Skeptics and Epicureans (readings to be provided)
Tues	6/28	Hellenistic philosophy: Stoic philosophy (readings to be provided)
Weds	6/29	Course review
Thurs	6/30	<b>Final exam in class</b>