

Vanessa de Harven
University of California, Berkeley

Extended Teaching Dossier

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AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST

Full sets of Teaching Evaluations, by class

TEACHING STATEMENT

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. Teaching students to think abstractly about the world, engage in thought experiments and conceive paradigm shifts can awaken the intellectual creativity that is, on the one hand, unique to philosophy and on the other, 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)

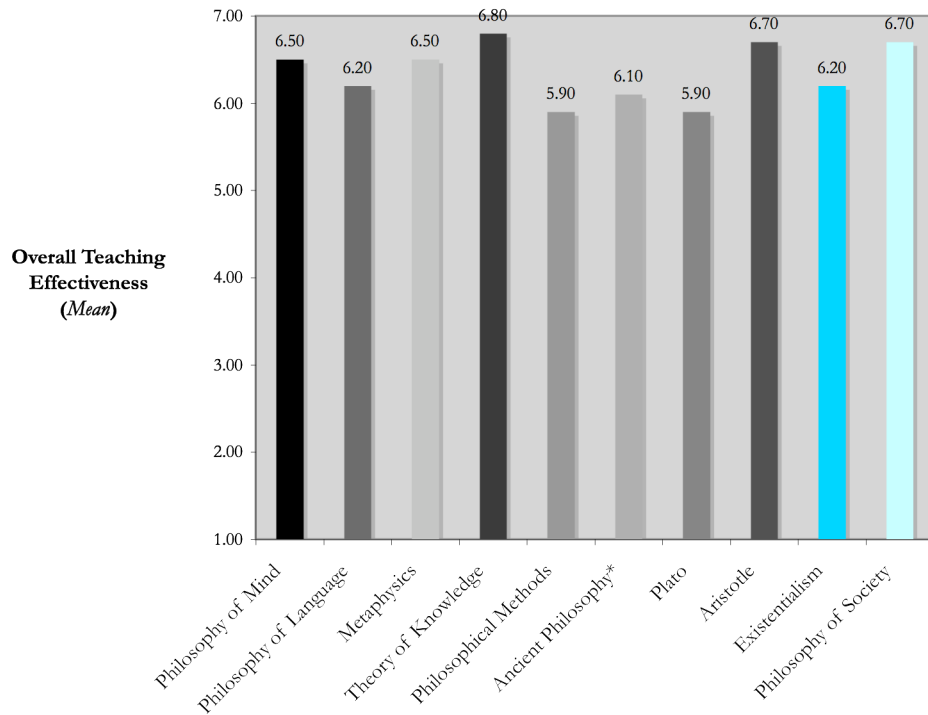
As Primary Instructor

**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*

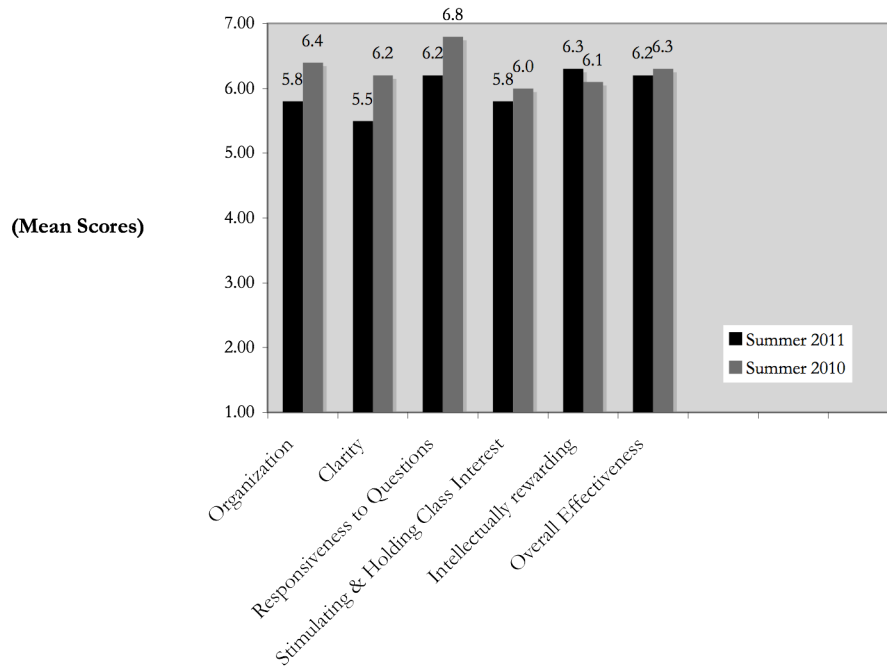
David Lynaugh
 Graduate Student Affairs Officer
 Department of Philosophy, UC Berkeley

HIGHLIGHTS OF STUDENT EVALUATIONS

Full sets of evaluations available upon request

As Primary Instructor

Philosophy 25A: Ancient Philosophy



Comments: Summer 2011

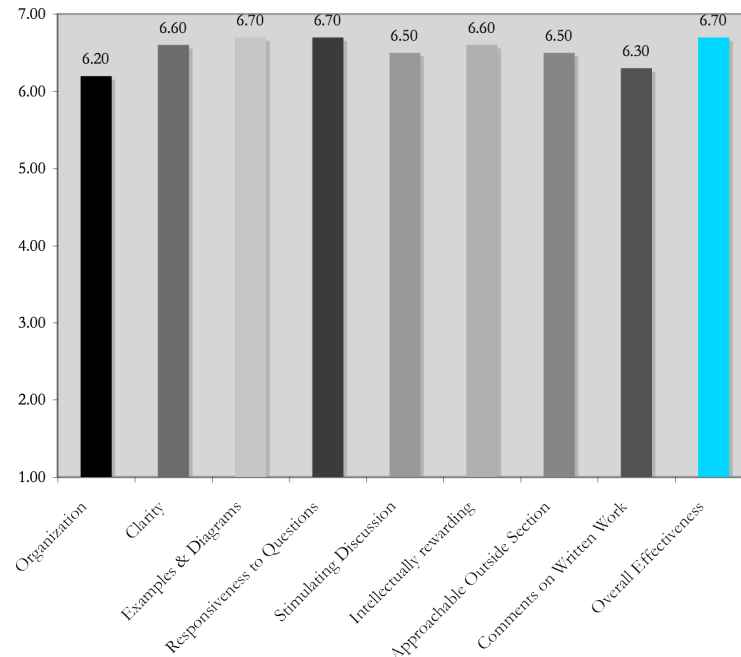
- Best instructor I've had at Cal. Engaging, personable. People clapped at the end of some lectures.
- She has a great sense of humor and great personality. Excellent teacher and very knowledgeable.
- Great class. Great instructor.
- Enjoyed the lectures and course immensely!
- Vanessa was awesome. Very fun and entertaining. Good lecturer and good at addressing questions.
- 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:)

Comments: 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!
- She has a great sense of humor and great personality. Excellent teacher and very knowledgeable.
- Vanessa did a superior job teaching this course. She was patient with us and I feel I've learned quite a bit.
- Thank you very much. Your lecture was awesome.
- Good course. Teacher was very enthusiastic, funny, knowledgeable.
- Wonderful

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

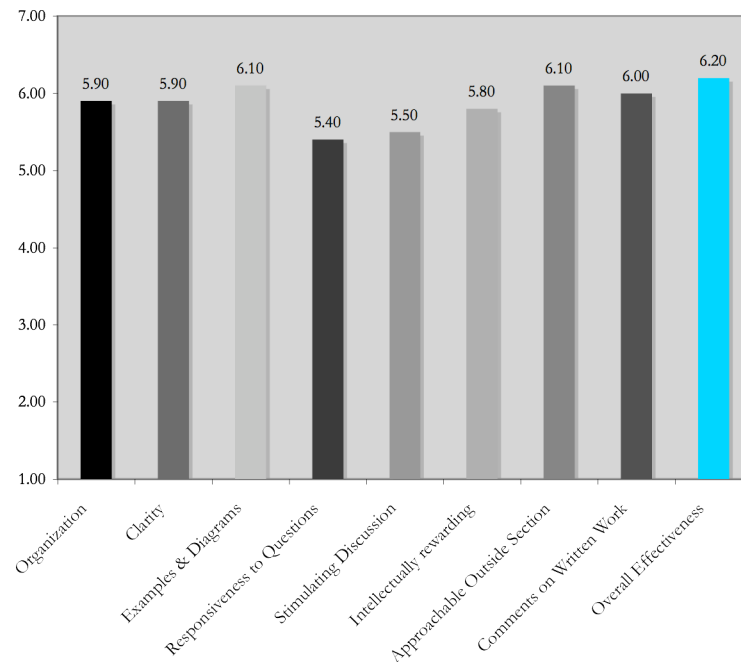
Phil. 138: Philosophy of Society, John R. Searle (*Fall 2010*)



Comments

- 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.
- Wish I could have her for all of the courses I took here at UC Berkeley, but alas I am graduating this semester...The GSI was very, very clear with what she was trying to get us to take away from section. Her diagrams were streamlined and extremely helpful, which flowed with her presentation style.
- Sections were enormously helpful. She made them fun, interesting, and the material understandable. I would love to have Vanessa as a GSI for any class...It was fantastic.
- One of the best GSIs I have ever had!
- Vanessa was an exemplary GSI in all respects.
- Vanessa personifies a good GSI. She has been so great. I only have positive comments...She allowed for students to drive the discussion but still did a good job teaching. She has a great demeanor and was SO engaging.

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

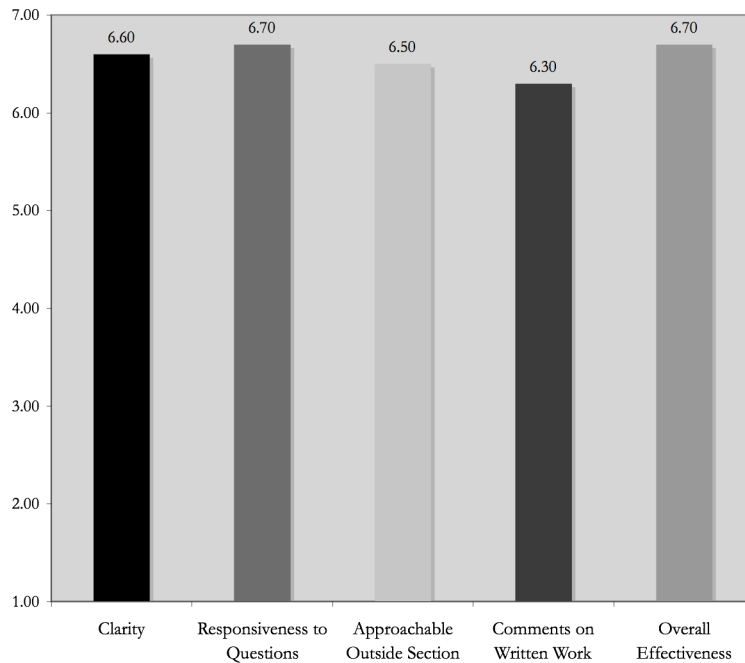


Comments

- 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.
- Vanessa knew all the material immaculately. She was the best GSI I have had this semester...She helped me grow as a writer and a thinker, she was very helpful in all ways possible...I attended sections by other GSIs in this class and none could rival Vanessa...We learned so much in just an hour.
- Feedback on papers was more thorough than with any other paper grader I've ever had—very helpful.
- Vanessa gave fantastic feedback on papers. I really feel that all her comments made me a better writer.
- She had a lively personality which helped in grasping the material since she made the material exciting to learn about.
- My favorite thing about her is how she guides you to the right answer by asking other questions and allows you to think things through.
- Discussion was very useful and a joy to attend.
- It is clear that she has a devotion to teaching and does a great job.
- She was awesome! One of the best GSIs I've ever had.
- I wish there was more than just an hour of discussion.

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

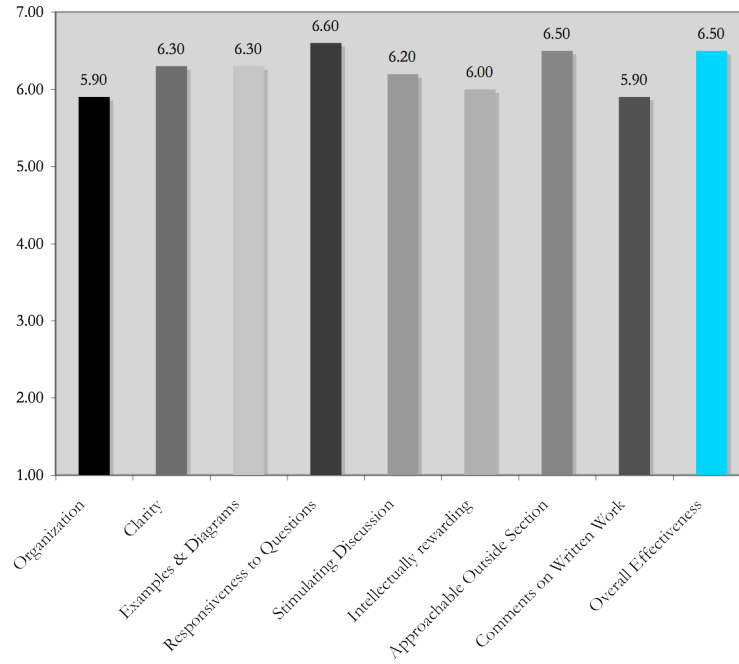
Philosophical Methods is a writing-intensive course for which the TA (GSI) holds weekly one-on-one tutorials with about 10 students to discuss their analytic skills in reading philosophy, give detailed feedback on weekly short essays, and guide plans for a longer paper due at the end of the term.



Comments

- 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.
- Vanessa is extremely good at analyzing the flow of a paper's dialectic and trimming the fat, so to speak. Her awesome charts and grasp of the material helped elucidate the concepts.
- The comments on the written work were fantastic.
- The tutorials and office hours were fantastic. She also did a great job leading discussions.
- Good job and thank you for pushing me!

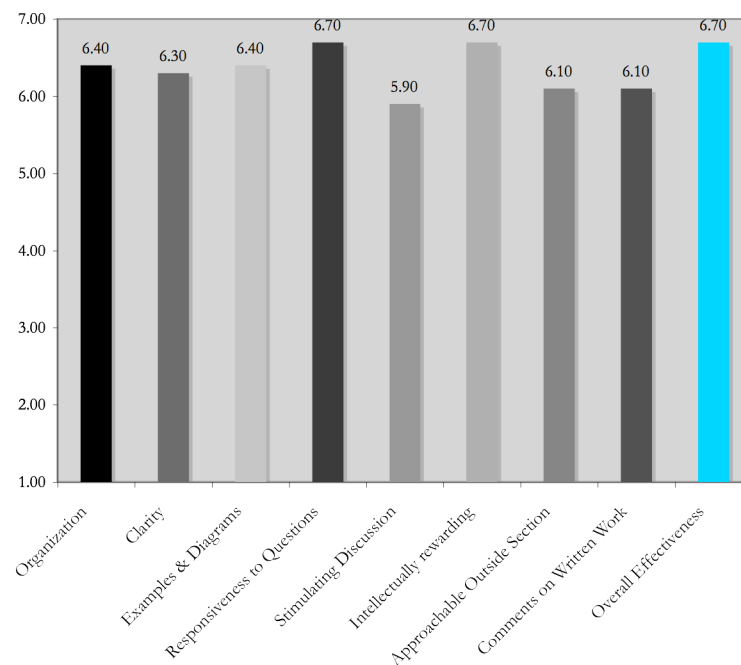
Phil. 132: Philosophy of Mind, John R. Searle (Fall 2008)



Comments

- 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.
- Vanessa did an amazing job.
- I really appreciated how much she charted out the discussions on the board. I could visually see how we were constructing our answers to philosophical problems.
- She was ideal: excellent diagramming and exploratory questions.
- Vanessa always had a clear plan on what section was going to cover, while being flexible to the class's needs, which I appreciated.
- Vanessa was always prepared. Her sections always cleared up the lingering questions from lecture. She made the material much clearer. All of her comments on written work were useful and insightful, she clearly made my writing better.
- The ability to handle strange questions with grace and speed
- Vanessa did an excellent job in guiding my writing skills. Vanessa's deciphering of complex philosophical concepts and translations to the students was exemplary.
- Second course I have had with this GSI and I hope I will be lucky enough to have her for another. Extremely competent and helpful. Office hours always available and helpful. Great stuff!

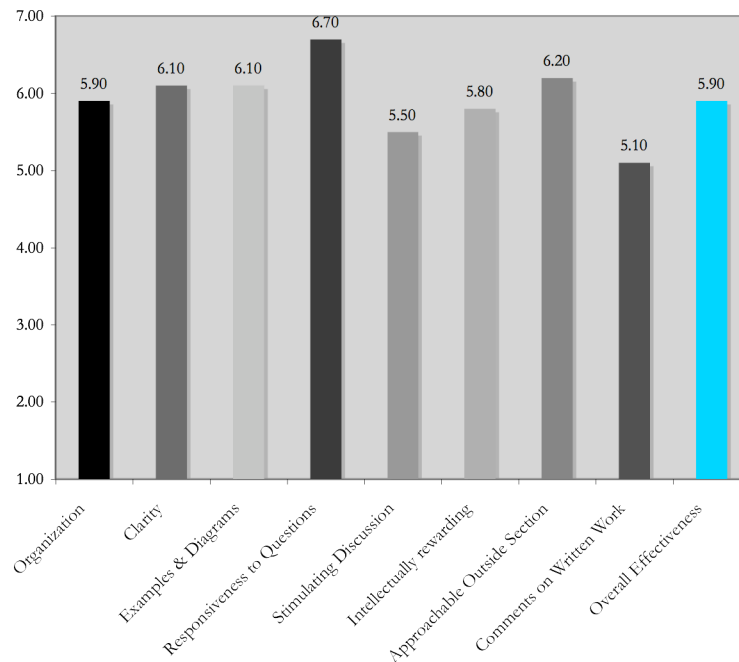
Phil. 161: Aristotle, Dorothea Frede (*Spring 2008*)



Comments

- 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.
- Vanessa has both a profound grasp of her material and a driving enthusiasm for her subject. Vanessa made every section specific to the needs of her students.
- Vanessa is extremely well-prepared, organized, thorough. She makes discussions engaging and stimulating.
- Vanessa is one of the most informative GSIs that I have had since I have attended UC Berkeley.
- I really liked her diagrams, mapping out points. They become like equations, a picture that you can follow.
- Vanessa exhibits all of the characteristics described to a professional and "above and beyond" extent. She provides extremely good feedback on written work and exams. She is extremely flexible with her schedule to accommodate others. She is personable, kind, understanding, wise, and very knowledgeable. By no means do I mean that she is a push-over; the opposite is true. She is constantly challenging, but in a way that makes me feel comfortable.
- Nothing "unhelpful" comes to mind. If anything, the most unhelpful thing is that her excellence is uncommon in the department. She is the exemplar GSI and should be emulated.

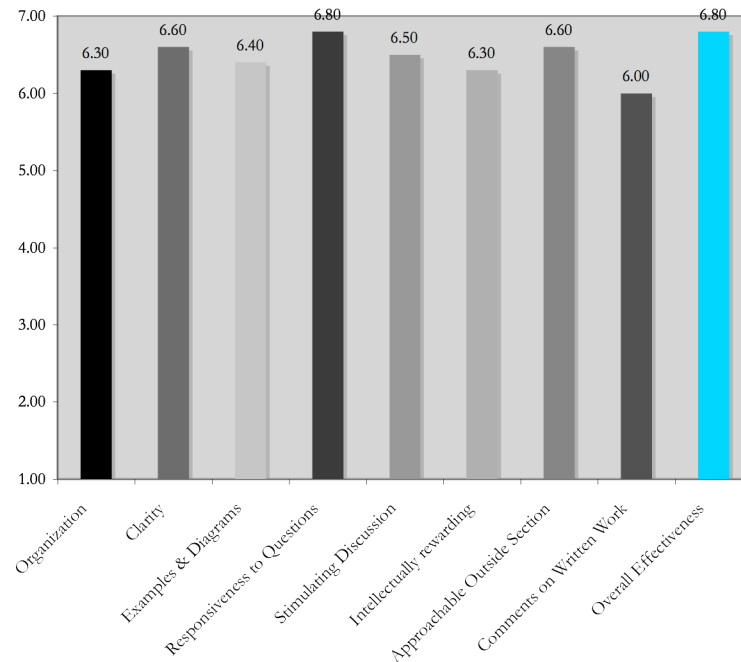
Phil. 160: Plato, David Ebrey (Fall 2007)



Comments

- 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 brilliant! She knows her material well, challenges us and guides us through our processes. Her diagrams on the board are extremely helpful.
- 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.
- Vanessa did a really wonderful job of being responsive to questions, providing good, interesting, and relevant info during section that wasn't just repeating lecture work. That is often hard to do and she succeeded.
- Vanessa was incredibly helpful and informative, and cleared up the confusions left by lecture. Her paper comments were constructive, and she was happy to answer questions in section.
- Vanessa was always extremely well prepared and led discussion like a pro!

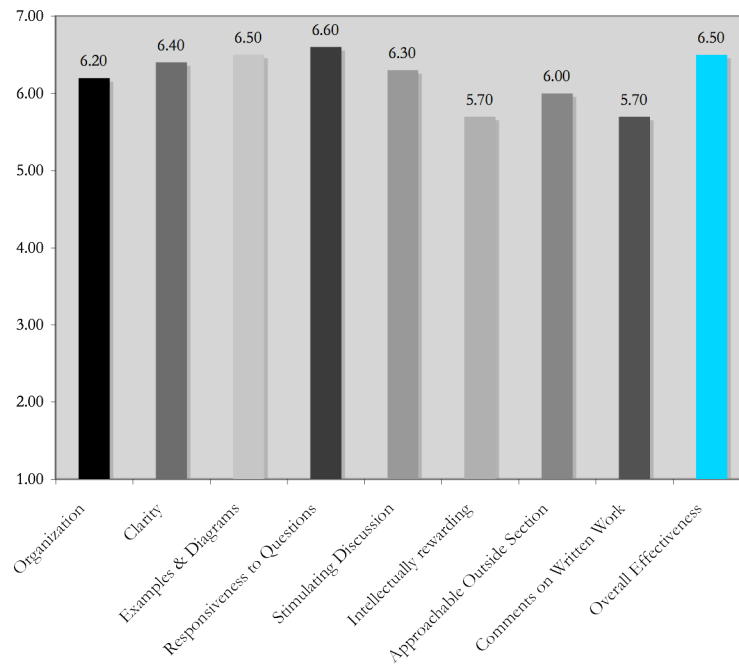
Phil. 122: Theory of Knowledge, Branden Fitelson (*Spring 2007*)



Comments

- 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!
- Vanessa was an excellent GSI. She always came prepared. She supplemented the professor's dogmatic views with other "radical" theories. She brought the history of philosophy into our discussions so that we could feel the rich meaningfulness of intellectual history—how ideas came from real people not the air.
- Vanessa is an amazing GSI. She has great enthusiasm for philosophy and presents the subject in a clear and concise manner. She is very helpful with questions and also knows the material very well. In terms of effort on her part, she is one of the best I've had.
- Wonderful section teacher; one of the best, very energizing and knowledgeable of material. Very hospitable in entertaining all points of view; comfortable experience.
- Brilliant! It's all good.
- Incredibly helpful, and I feel I made really good progress with her.
- Vanessa really cares about her students and their learning. She is enthusiastic, responsive, and enjoys teaching. This made my experience better, and that's helpful.
- Vanessa is awesome, period!

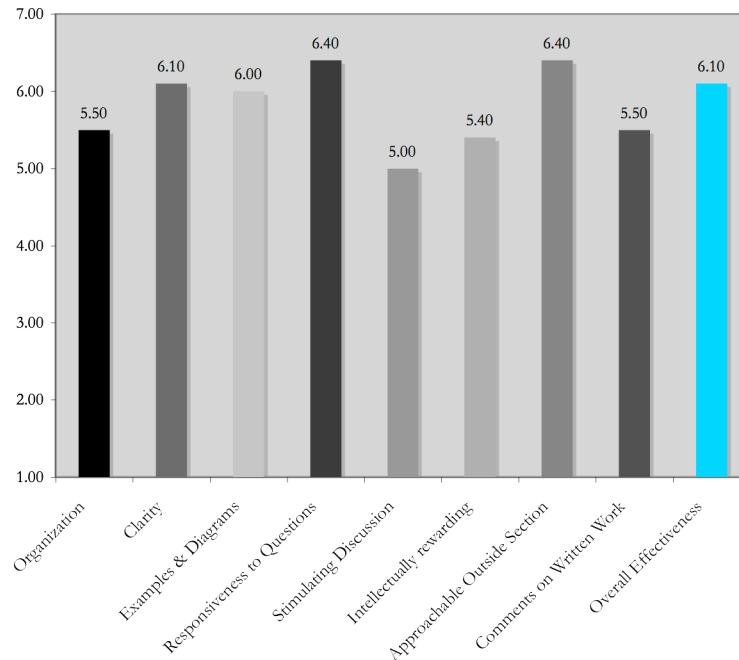
Phil. 125: Metaphysics, Branden Fitelson (*Fall 2003*)



Comments

- 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.
- She was very funny and made good examples to help us understand the material. Section was a good setting for open discussion, something hard to do in lecture.
- One to one discussion was very fruitful. Vanessa and I worked patiently on clarifying some difficult subject material.
- Focused but flexible
- Sections were organized and interesting. Her willingness and ability to answer questions encouraged discussion amongst students and kept things lively.

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



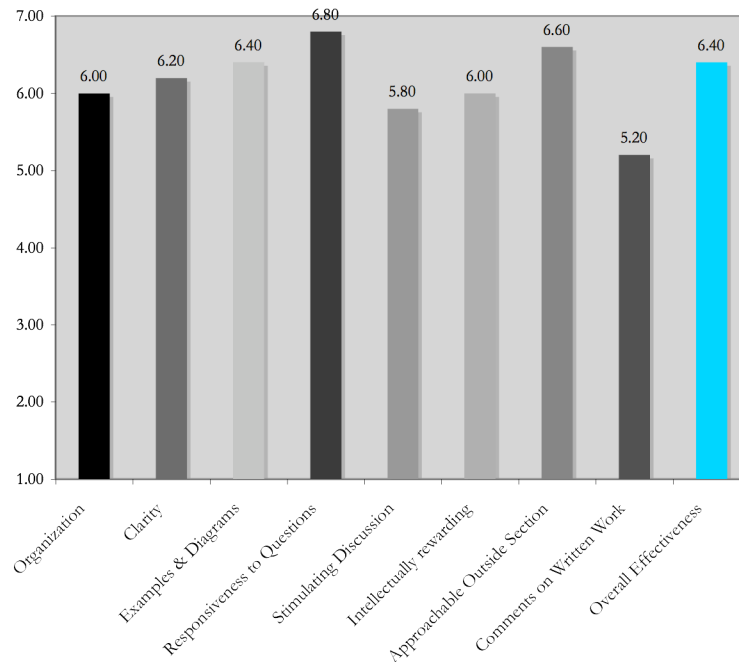
Comments: Fall 2002

- 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.
- Expressive, clear, concise. She spoke very well, was clear and definitely knew her stuff, no doubt about that.
- She definitely explains the material clearly—if not more clearly than the professor. She's tough and critical but also reasonable in her expectations. I've learned how to write a philosophical paper and feel prepared for more philosophy classes in the future.
- She is very clear, patient and eager to help students. She assessed our written work accurately and fairly.

Comments: Summer 2003

- 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.
- Encouraged improvement without causing discouragement. Knows material extremely well.
- She was interesting/thoughtful despite dull material. She really encouraged group discussion/participation.
- She was extremely clear & well prepared for all discussions.
- Honestly, she was great with no problems at all.
- Vanessa really knew what she was talking about. She was not only ready to answer every question asked but also came up with some pretty amazing examples that really helped clarify what was going on.
- She's knowledgeable about the material and always happy and energetic during section. Comments on written work were helpful and on-point. Good job Vanessa.

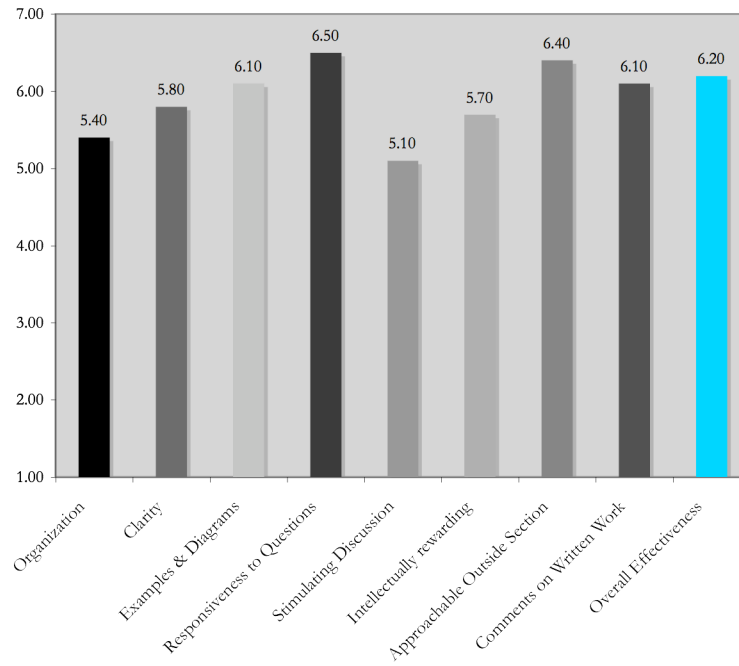
Phil. 25B: Modern Philosophy, Hannah Ginsborg (*Spring 2003*)



Comments

- 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.
- Sections were always where I grasped the concepts more and that is why I attended all of them.
- Vanessa was 100% on the ball. She's always responsive, always available, and willing to help.
- Vanessa was helpful in having students participate in section but extra office hours were particularly helpful.
- Vanessa knows her stuff.
- She was able to teach things in different ways to help us if we didn't understand how it was taught in lecture.
- Amazing, interesting, prepared, responsive. Truly brought the material into our lives.

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



Comments

- 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.
- Vanessa is very knowledgeable and explains things clearly. She has a good sense of humor & promotes relaxed discussion sections.
- Her responses on my four papers were very helpful, and I was able to improve throughout the semester.
- Vanessa was always prepared for sections and did an excellent job of explaining difficult and complex concepts. She was receptive to questions and encouraged participation.
- She managed to cover a huge amount of course material in a limited time, and did so in a way that actually made things clear.
- Section was essential for me.

Phil. 25A — Ancient Philosophy

Syllabus

UC Berkeley, Summer 2011

Instructor: Vanessa de Harven

vanessadeharven@berkeley.edu

GSI: Austin Andrews, 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 by what constitutes plagiarism. All assignments will be submitted to turnitin.com as a precaution.

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 own¹. 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.

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

Week One

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

Mon	5/30	Memorial Day holiday—no lecture. First paper due by 12:00 p.m.
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

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	Second paper due by 4:00 p.m.

Week Four

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

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</i> (NE) I.7, 13
Weds	6/22	Aristotle, NE I.1–3; II.3–7; X.6–7
Thurs	6/23	Aristotle, NE V.1–5; VII.1–3
Fri	6/24	Third paper due by 4:00 p.m.

Week Six

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	Final exam in class