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CALL FOR PAPERS

FROM THE EDITOR

Aaron Champene
SAINT LOUIS COMMUNITY COLLEGE, MERAMEC

It is my pleasure to announce the appointment of Dr. Marc Bobro as co-editor of the *APA Newsletter on Philosophy in Two-Year Colleges* beginning with the fall 2019 issue. Dr. Bobro is professor and chair of Philosophy at Santa Barbara City College in California, where he has taught since 2005, and has served the APA in a number of capacities. He holds a PhD in philosophy from the University of Washington, an MA from King's College London, and a BA from the University of Arizona. He specializes in the history of modern philosophy, especially Leibniz, and has a blog on teaching (https://whatleibnizneverdid.wordpress.com/). Dr. Bobro coaches debate teams for the Ethics Bowl as well as the International Business Ethics Case Competition. He is also the bassist and tubist for the mythopoetic punk band Crying 4 Kafka and collaborates on art with Elizabeth Folk.

I am very excited to have the opportunity to work with Dr. Bobro. The editorial board and I feel that we can attract even greater numbers of first-rate submissions and build our readership if editorial responsibilities are shared. So I thank Dr. Bobro in advance for his service.

I am also very excited about the present issue of the newsletter. In the first article of this issue, Dr. Rebecca Scott, a newly hired assistant professor of philosophy, offers a one-semester retrospective of her time at Harper College. And, in the final article of this issue, Professor Bill Hartmann offers his own retrospective as he approaches retirement after a twenty-four-year career at Saint Louis Community College, and provides some advice to those seeking positions in philosophy at community colleges. Between these bookends are two thought-provoking essays on approaches to teaching philosophy. In the first, Dr. Kristina Grob argues that philosophy instructors should design their courses to sharpen students' metacognitive skills in order to address several problems that community college students frequently face. In the second, Dr. Hoon J. Lee discusses his experience with, and the benefits of, teaching a "no-cost" course in philosophy.

I hope the reader enjoys these articles as much as I did.

ARTICLES

One Semester In

Rebecca Scott
HARPER COLLEGE

As I reflect back on my first semester as a full-time faculty member at a community college, I feel a mix of emotions—exhilaration, pride, anxiety, and a whole lot of gratitude. The path to getting a tenure-track job in philosophy has been difficult. A year ago, I had all but given up on academia, and I was struggling to let go of my dream of being a philosophy professor and to reimagine my future in a different career. I had taken a number of temporary jobs—a one-semester sabbatical replacement, a one-year job in North Carolina away from my spouse, an adjunct position in Chicago that I had to supplement with substitute teaching—and I was totally done with living in precarity. I wanted to start a life. I wanted a steady income. I wanted health insurance. I wanted to know what I would be doing more than six months in the future. I wanted to be seen and to see myself as a professional with a career. And I had also come to realize how much I loved my city, Chicago. I wanted so badly to be able to stay where I had planted roots. But I was beginning to realize that I was going to have to choose between teaching philosophy and everything else.

And then, all of a sudden, I didn't have to choose. In my last attempt at getting a job in philosophy, I was offered a tenure-track position at Harper College, a two-year college in the Northwest suburbs of Chicago. I could stay in Chicago *and* be a philosophy professor. It may sound dramatic, but getting the position at Harper has been something of a miracle for me. Even though the people that love me will tell me that I got the job because I worked hard and deserve it, the truth is that there are a hundred other people (some of whom I know personally) who worked just as hard and are just as, if not more, deserving. The job market in philosophy is brutal and unfair and soul-crushing. So I feel incredibly lucky and I am deeply grateful.

For some people, the idea that teaching at a community college is a dream come true might sound strange. There remains a stigma surrounding community colleges, and within academia, most people view being at a four-year research institution as the ultimate achievement. But I've always known that I would be perfectly happy, if not happier, at a two-year school. Early in my career in philosophy, I had the opportunity to teach philosophy at a college access program, the Elon Academy, a program at Elon University for

high school students who are low-income and/or the first in their families to attend college. Through this experience, and subsequent work teaching students who are much wealthier and more privileged, I realized that I find every teaching situation uniquely fascinating and challenging, both philosophically and pedagogically.

In my view, the site of the classroom is the ultimate meeting ground of all of the most important and interesting philosophical questions. Thinking about teaching and learning involves thinking about who we are, the nature of knowledge, the roles of power and authority, our moral and political responsibilities, discourse and language, and much more. The practice of teaching is, for me, endlessly philosophically interesting, and each particular context in which teaching and learning happen raises all of these important questions. So for me, *who* I'm teaching has always been less important than *that* I'm teaching. Every group of students brings their own strengths, weaknesses, and needs to the learning community and, as clichéd as it may sound, I truly believe that every educational context presents its own opportunities and challenges that are worth taking up.

But, of course, there are institutional structures and policies that can promote or prevent the flourishing of teaching and learning. And in this way, I feel incredibly lucky to be at Harper. My biggest concern coming in was the fact that I was going to be teaching a 5/5 load. I worried that teaching five courses at a time would not allow me to provide students with the individualized attention and care that is central to my pedagogical approach. I have been pleasantly surprised, however, by the class sizes at Harper. While I'm teaching five courses, my classes have been smaller than they were at other institutions, and I have fewer total students than I did when I was teaching four courses at other schools. Moreover, I'm lucky to be in a department in which, even as a junior faculty member, I am largely able to choose the courses and schedule that work best for me.

In addition to worrying about the load, I was also concerned about having the freedom to be pedagogically innovative. I thrive on perpetually re-thinking and re-imagining my courses and teaching methods. It is rare for one of my courses to stay the same for more than one or two semesters in a row, and I often take risks in the classroom by introducing out-of-the-box activities and assignments, some of which are successful and some of which, of course, fall flat. Although I had the impression in the interview process that Harper was a place that would support my pedagogical experimentation, I couldn't be totally sure until I was on the ground.

I am happy to say that the opportunities and support that I have received for pedagogical innovation so far have been incredible. In my first year, I will have attended three conferences—the National Collegiate Honors Council conference, the Lilly Conference on Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, and the Central APA, where I organized the APA/AAPT Teaching Hub. In the fall, I took an Action Research class with colleagues from various departments at Harper in which we conducted mini research projects in our classes. Next semester, I am co-teaching a

course on Existentialism with a faculty member from the English department. And I have received support from my department for a grant I was given by the American Association of Philosophy Teachers (AAPT) for innovation in pedagogy.

In short, I have found Harper to be a place where focusing on the development of my pedagogical craft is encouraged and celebrated. At many four-year institutions, the emphasis on research leads some faculty members to see teaching as what they *have* to do so that they can do what they really *want* to do. Furthermore, at some institutions there is disregard or even disdain for the scholarship of teaching and learning. People who care too much about teaching are viewed as not being serious philosophers and researchers. At Harper, however, I feel completely free to express my passion for thinking philosophically about pedagogy and have found that many of my colleagues are equally passionate and thoughtful about education.

But the best and most important part of my experience this semester has been the students. Of course, the stigma surrounding community college students extends also to them. Many people assume that community college students are less academically "prepared" than other students and less capable of "high-level" academic work. And students at two-year schools are commonly viewed through a deficit lens. That is, people often focus on what the students lack—money, time, support, stability, a family history of college, academic skills, and so on. And while it is certainly true that my students face a number obstacles that most students at institutions with wealthier and more privileged populations do not—for example, my students work on average 30–40 hours per week on top of going to school—my community college students bring so many strengths to the classroom.

For example, right away I have discovered that they are refreshingly authentic and honest. On the first day of my Intro to Philosophy class, I asked students why they were taking the class, and one student flatly said that he was there because otherwise he would have to pay rent to his parents. He didn't think that he wanted to go to college, but his parents were forcing him. While this may not be the answer that we hope to hear as professors, it was refreshing to have students who weren't just telling me what I wanted to hear because they knew how to "play the game." In fact, unlike at some community colleges, many of my students grew up in wealthy suburbs and they are at Harper because they don't quite fit the traditional mold of the suburban kid who goes to a prestigious four-year school. I have found my students to be restless, rebellious, searching, and honest—all properties that are assets in philosophical inquiry.

And while many of my younger students are at Harper because they aren't really sure of what they want, other students know exactly why they are there. For example, last semester I had one student who was going through a divorce and was determined to finish her dream of getting her associate's degree. One of my students was a combat veteran who had done several tours in Afghanistan and was now hoping to get a job in law enforcement. One student

was a young mom seeking more financial stability for her son. And several of my students were back in school after having gone straight into a job after high school that they realized was unsatisfying for them. All of these students brought life experience to the classroom that enriched and grounded our philosophical conversations in ways that I have not experienced at more "elite" institutions with "better" students (whatever that means).

So, in sum, I'm one semester in and I could not be happier. In just a few months, I have already learned so much from my students and my colleagues about how to be a better community college professor, and I am excited about the future in a way that I never could be when I lacked the security of a full-time faculty position. I feel that, at Harper, I have finally found my place in academia, a world that can often be alienating for so many people. I am beyond grateful to have found this home, and I can't wait to see what comes next.

Teaching the Students We Have So They Become the Learners They Need to Be: Metacognition in Philosophy at Two-Year Colleges

Kristina Grob
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA, SUMTER

In this paper, I note three problems that students face: (1) many of our students don't know how to be college students and to take charge of their own learning; (2) many of our students don't see how philosophy (and the humanities in general) can help their lives or their careers in any practical way; (3) many of our students think they already know how to learn, and this, when combined with a fixed mindset regarding intelligence, keeps them from being open-minded, flexible, teachable students. These problems may be endemic among undergraduate students as a whole, but they are particularly damaging for students at two-year schools. Not only do two-year schools have higher proportions of underprepared students, but even when there are available resources for helping students to learn what it means to be prepared and successful, our students face greater obstacles in making use of such resources. Job and family commitments reduce the amount of time they might be able to spend in a tutoring or writing center; insufficient financial aid may keep them from taking "welcome to college" courses, assuming they are available; perhaps most importantly, shame at being perceived as too far behind, dumb, demanding, entitled, or otherwise inadequate too frequently keeps them from asking for or making use of available help.

There are things we as philosophy faculty can do to address these problems: We can design our courses to model for them what college learning and behavior can look like; we can create assignments and classroom activities that require our students to work at the higher levels of Bloom's taxonomy, which can help them make

connections between philosophy and the world outside the philosophy classroom; and we can create frequent opportunities for controlled failure so they learn cognitive resilience and become more open to trying new ways of learning. Additionally, by incorporating elements of metaphilosophy at the intro level, we can accelerate our students' metacognitive gains. The benefit to this is that we increase our student retention and, over time, hope to see stronger graduation and transfer rates.

Making increased metacognition one of our central outcomes in our classes may help mitigate the shame some students feel because this doesn't single anyone out as being underprepared. Students may be more receptive to the methods we teach when we pitch strategies for self-reflection and scholarly experimentation as an invitation to the study of philosophy rather than as a remedial activity meant to catch them up to their better-prepared peers elsewhere. As we teach our students such philosophical methods as how to think about thinking and how to pay attention to beliefs, attitudes, values, and habits, we can help them apply those methods to themselves. Because the questions and methods at the heart of philosophical study are already so closely linked to metacognition, those of us who teach philosophy may have more opportunities than our colleagues in other disciplines to teach to strengthen our students' metacognitive skills because we can do so without reinforcing any existing beliefs about lack of ability. By teaching metacognitive skills as being the standards of the discipline and not as remedial work, we give our students the necessary assurance they need that we believe they have the ability to succeed. This helps us to undo some of the damage done by social stereotypes about students in two-year colleges.[1]

Students who are already aiming for a four-year degree and have developed an educational plan that includes a start at a two-year college may have less need of foundational training in metacognition, but such students are more likely to think that they have learning figured out and so can be less open to learning more about the learning process than students who are already persuaded that they're not good at learning. Students who study at community colleges because they've failed out of a four-year school already or because their high school GPAs were insufficiently strong may be held back by a belief that intelligence is fixed, and so may see as futile any attempt to learn about new ways to learn. Last, students who are testing the waters of higher education at a two-year school because they aren't sure whether a four-year degree will benefit them may arrive in the philosophy classroom with even greater suspicion about the practicality of a course in philosophy. Structuring our courses with specific attention to strengthening metacognitive skills benefits all three groups of students.

PROBLEM 1: OUR STUDENTS ARE UNAWARE OF THE EXPECTATIONS OF COLLEGE LEARNING

In recent years, college educators have noticed a difference in our students, much of which may be the results of more widely spread implementation of No Child Left Behind. Our students are excellent at memorization but weak in synthesis and application.[2] They're largely "performance

avoiders," which Ken Bain describes as "surface learners, never willing to invest enough of themselves to probe a topic deeply because they fear failure, so they stick with trying to cope, to survive. They often resort to memorizing and trying simply to reproduce what they hear."[3] Most faculty, on the other hand, have invested decades of our lives to probing a topic deeply, and many of us might have forgotten what it was like to be an intimidated first-year student (we might never have been intimidated by learning). Moreover, it is still currently the case that most faculty came of age before primary and secondary education were aimed primarily at passing standardized tests. We might therefore struggle to understand our students' fears and their limitations.

For most of us at two-year schools, our students are non-residential and are surrounded by higher proportions of first-generation college students than their peers at four-year and residential institutions. This means they have fewer aspirational models than their four-year school counterparts: at residential (and) four-year schools, first-generation students can model themselves on the students who appear to know what they're doing, and for residential students in particular, they get many opportunities to notice what more prepared students do. At associates-level schools there tends to be less of a campus culture (though it may not be absent), as more students fit their classes in around work and family commitments, coming to campus for class and finding community elsewhere.

Even if we've not experienced the same limitations our students appear to have, we can still teach the students we have and help them become the students they need to be without sacrificing course content and without the "coddling" others worry about.[4] As we design our courses, we should think about the kinds of skills a college student needs to have and then create or shape our assignments, readings, and classroom culture to help develop those skills. Some of those skills include the following:

- Knowing how to read and use a syllabus
- Understanding the purpose of office hours and letting go of the worry that they're wasting our time
- Becoming their own best advocates, asking for help early and often (the grade grubbing at four-year schools may be quite different than that at two-year schools)
- Finding ways to value schoolwork and so to make time for it among competing obligations
- How to read a challenging text without giving up
- How to identify main points of a reading and how to arrange key points into a hierarchy
- What constitutes a good discussion question and why
- How to write a logically structured paper
- How to do well in a class even when you don't like the subject matter
- What it means to come to class prepared

We can teach philosophy and help develop college-student skills at the same time, and doing so can also fit with best practices in our discipline. To help our students learn how to read challenging texts, for example, we can create

reading guides, require weekly or daily reading journals, teach them Socratic note-taking techniques,[5] or some combination of these to help students to pay attention to and engage with texts they feel to be over their heads. If we spend a semester requiring and modeling these guides, showing them how they can be used for a variety of texts in our classrooms, we can encourage them to try them out in other courses, thereby teaching them methods for understanding written material in any area.

Designing assignments as well as class discussions and short lectures that help students see how philosophical ideas and methods apply to areas of life outside the philosophy classroom can help them to see that philosophy can help them work to become better students. For example, I recently taught the *Encheiridion* of Epictetus, as I usually do in my Introduction to Philosophy class, but I also required all students to pick any one text or idea from a text and live by it for a week. They then had to write up their results and give a brief presentation to the class. Several of my students applied Stoic principles to their lives and tested out the idea that their grades might be among the things that are in their control. They discovered that they could do well even in classes they disliked, and several students reported to the class that they saw their grades go up in all classes as a result of reading and applying Stoic philosophy. I didn't tell them to try using Stoic principles to improve their study habits, and because they got to make that connection on their own, they learned more about managing their mental and emotional energy than they might have in a lesson explicitly devoted to persuading them that their learning is in their control.

PROBLEM 2: OUR STUDENTS BELIEVE THAT PHILOSOPHY IS IMPRACTICAL AND, LIKE, JUST YOUR OPINION

I assume anyone reading this has heard more times than they can bear to remember that philosophy is just about opinions and feelings, so it's squishy and means anything you want it to mean, and no one can ever be wrong. For those of us teaching Introduction to Philosophy semester by semester by semester, we have an opportunity to pitch to our students a course-long argument for the possibility of truth-oriented inquiry that takes place outside of the hard sciences. This can help shake up their beliefs about the differences between the sciences and humanities, and that experience of being (possibly) wrong about academic disciplines can be an example of the sort of controlled failure I'll discuss below.

There are as many ways of teaching philosophy as there are those teaching it, but one approach that many appear to share is a preference for having have students *doing* philosophy instead of merely memorizing facts about philosophy.[6] Many of us aim to teach in such a way that students start generating philosophical questions their own and then applying those questions beyond the course material. Put differently, many of us, if we had to choose, would prefer that students come to value and to be able to employ Socratic styles of questioning than that they remember for all time the dates of Socrates's birth and death.

Teaching students how to *do* philosophy means working at higher cognitive levels. In Bloom's taxonomy, the bottom two cognitive levels are remembering and understanding.[7] Remembering is what they're best at, as noted above, and when it comes to philosophical texts, understanding may be challenging. However, by teaching them to work at the applying, analyzing, and evaluating levels, we might also help them to find ways to better understand the text, while also helping them to gain the higher-level cognitive skills that will make them more flexible thinkers and learners. Philosophy is a discipline of both questions and of arguments, so initiating students into philosophy means making them better at questioning claims and organizing them. This means that if we teach some of the canonical texts (and plenty outside the canon, too), half our job is already done for us. By teaching them about Cartesian doubt or Socratic questioning, we show them methods already developed for asking more and better questions about the physical world around us, about metaphysical assumptions, and about the moral claims we take for granted. Moreover, we can do so in ways that resist their belief that the strength of philosophical argumentation rests on appeals to popularity. When we teach them what makes an argument strong and how to develop stronger arguments themselves, we show them that there are rational methods for persuasion, and that these methods can be used anywhere.

PROBLEM 3: OUR STUDENTS THINK THEY ALREADY KNOW WHAT THERE IS TO KNOW ABOUT LEARNING

Some of our students come to us believing they're the "smart kids" and so have nothing to learn from us except for extractable course content. Some of our students think they're at our schools because they're not the smart kids, so they're expecting mediocre grades (and they often receive them). Few of our students think they can learn about how better to learn, and too rarely do they treat their courses as places to experiment with different learning techniques. We can help our students to become more teachable by designing our classes to foster a growth mindset in our students and to show them that they haven't learned all there is to know about how to learn simply because they've graduated high school (or are taking college courses while still in high school).

Fostering a growth mindset means helping our students to discover that their intelligence can be developed.[8] Students who haven't yet discovered this may hold, however implicitly, that intelligence is fixed. These students tend to be risk-averse and avoid challenges, they give up more easily, they see effort as futile, they don't use critical feedback to improve their work, and so they fail to achieve as much as they might.[9] Faced with challenging material or difficult topics, these students may be more likely to retreat, retrench, or experience cognitive dissonance than they are to remain open, curious, inquisitive, and vulnerable.[10] Students with a fixed mindset are less teachable because they are not (yet) convinced that intelligence grows as a result of facing challenges.

One way to help students transition from a fixed to a growth mindset (or to become more growth-oriented than they currently are) is to create multiple opportunities for controlled failure and then to divorce failure (or imperfection) in an assignment from how they and we understand their character or self-worth. Saundra McGuire cites a study on American, Japanese, and Taiwanese parents and their children on high school math performance to show that external expectations that a student will continue to work to understand the material regardless of perceived natural or innate ability help to foster internalized beliefs about one's own ability to persist and improve.[11] Ken Bain underscores this in his study of exceptional college teachers: when outstanding teachers offered negative or critical feedback, they were able to convince their students "that their critique didn't intend to judge anyone's soul or worth as a human being. It was, instead, based on the high standards of the best scientific, scholarly, or artistic thinking, and came not because the professor thought less of the student but because he or she believed the student had the capacity to benefit from the advice."[12]

In the philosophy classroom, we can do something similar by creating many small low-stakes assignments spaced throughout the semester and by giving clear guidance for how to improve going forward. If we set up our courses so that no one assignment could make or break their grade, then we help students to see failures as normal events from which they can recover.[13] If a student fails their first paper but the first paper is only worth 5 or 10 percent of their overall grade, then it makes sense for them to learn from the failure to do better on future papers because it's still possible for them to earn a strong grade in the class. When papers are worth a small percent of their overall grade, we as educators may be more willing to grade them strictly, holding them to very high standards, so that they have a lot of feedback for improving future papers without overwhelming them. Students who say they've always gotten high grades on papers may be shocked to receive their first C or D, but they may also find themselves in a better position to learn that there are still things they can learn about how to write stronger papers. Students who are familiar with failure may be similarly surprised to realize that an early F or two needn't determine failure in the course, but that with steady work and improvement, they can still accomplish enough to pass the class.

AN OPPORTUNITY: BUILDING STUDENT INTEREST IN PHILOSOPHY IN TWO-YEAR SCHOOLS

All faculty at liberal-arts schools, whether two- or four-year, public or private, can help students to strengthen their metacognitive skills and to become successful students who become even more successful graduates. All disciplines can help students learn methods of inquiry that can make them better learners in and beyond the classroom. Nevertheless, introductory-level philosophy courses, particularly those that build in training in metaphilosophical questioning—asking such questions as "What evidence do I have for this claim?" "Why should anyone care about this?" "If I don't care about this, what good reasons might someone else have for caring about it?" "Why is this argument structured in this way?"—are particularly suited to help students in

strengthening their metacognitive skills, and this enables students to think more nimbly in other areas of life. Renee Smith asserts that teaching students metaphilosophy "gives students the opportunity to attend to and reflect on what they have or have not learned about what philosophy is, how it is done, what its value is, etc. It helps them to become aware of their assumptions about what philosophy is, and it directs them to attend to their own philosophical thinking as they employ it in their academic work."[14] Smith developed her metaphilosophy course for undergraduate majors, but I think her insights are easily applied at the introductory level: While we may have less control over who initially signs up for our intro-level courses at two-year schools where we may never see a philosophy major, once they're in our classes, we can draw them into the study of philosophy by showing them that we understand their very first question (frequently), namely, "Why should anyone care about any of this at all?" When in our course design we anticipate their fears about impracticality, we can show them from the beginning that there are ways to ask questions about meaning and value that don't devolve into cynicism, and that the class they've found themselves in can help them learn how to ask those questions about anything they're confronted with.

CONCLUSION

If we can develop institution-wide reputations for courses that help students fare better in their other classes, philosophy instructors may be able to retain greater numbers of students in our philosophy courses while improving student learning. Students who arrive in our classes prepared for college success will learn still more about how to advance in their abilities to prepare for academic work. Underprepared students will be able to catch up to their better-prepared peers without the demoralizing shame of remedial seminars. Students at all levels should be better positioned to speak to the usefulness of their philosophy classes in helping them to become more engaged, critical, nimble learners. While philosophy faculty at all kinds of institutions of higher education can, and possibly should, design courses to help students make noticeable metacognitive gains, according to some measures, students enrolled in two-year colleges make up somewhere between one quarter to nearly half of all college students enrolled in the US.[15] This means philosophy faculty at two-year colleges may be the only philosophy faculty many non-majors will ever encounter, and those of us who teach at two-year schools may therefore bear more of that responsibility than others.

NOTES

1. Ken Bain cites examples of faculty-driven course design aimed at helping students excel in courses where a stereotype bias may hinder student performance in chapter four of *What the Best College Teachers Do* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 68–97. In particular, he points to the work of Claude Steele, Joshua Aronson, and Geoffrey Cohen to show that inviting students to meet high standards coupled with the assurance that they can meet those standards helps to bridge achievement gaps for historically underperforming groups of students, demonstrating that some groups of students are held back by stereotype vulnerabilities whereby the difficulty of the academic work is made even harder by the emotional effort to overcome anxieties about living down to expectations for, e.g., women, black students, etc. See Claude M. Steele and Joshua Aronson, "Stereotype Threat and Intellectual Test Performance of African Americans," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 69, no. 5 (1995): 797–811; Claude M. Steele, "Thin Ice: 'Stereotype Threat' and Black College Students," *The Atlantic* (August 1999).

2. Kathy Hirsh-Pasek and Laurence Steinberg, "Beyond the Midterms: Helping Students Overcome the Impact of No Child Left Behind," *Brookings Institute*, Wednesday, November 21, 2018.

3. Bain, *What the Best College Teachers Do*, 40.

4. Greg Lukianoff and Jonathan Haidt, "The Coddling of the American Mind," *The Atlantic* (September 2015).

5. Mark Walker, David Trafimow, and Jamie Bronstein, "The Socratic Note Taking Technique: Addressing the Problem of Students Not Engaging with Assigned Readings before Class," *Teaching Philosophy* 40, no. 3 (September 2017): 341–65; Andre de Avillez, "Not Quite Pre-College, Not Yet College-Ready: Maintaining Rigor When Teaching Dual-Credit and Unprepared Students," workshop delivered at the 2018 meeting of the American Association of Philosophy Teachers, Thursday, July 26, 2018.

6. Among many possible others, see David Concepción, "Reading Philosophy with Background Knowledge and Metacognition," *Teaching Philosophy* 27, no. 4 (December 2004): 352; John Rudisill, "The Transition from Studying Philosophy to Doing Philosophy," *Teaching Philosophy* 34, no. 3 (September 2011): 241–71.

7. Saundra McGuire, *Teach Students How to Learn* (Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing 2015), 37. Also, Robert H. Ennis, "A Logical Basis for Measuring Critical Thinking Skills," *Educational Leadership* (October 1985): 44–48.

8. McGuire, *Teach Students How to Learn*, 62.

9. Ibid.

10. David Concepción and Juli Thorson Eflin, "Enabling Change: Transformative and Transgressive Learning in Feminist Ethics and Epistemology," *Teaching Philosophy* 32, no. 2 (June 2009): 177–98.

11. McGuire, *Teach Students How to Learn*, 63.

12. Bain, *What the Best College Teachers Do*, 77.

13. David Concepción, "Engaging Novices: Transparent Alignment, Flow, and Controlled Failure," in *Philosophy Through Teaching*, ed. Emily Esch, Kevin Hermberg, and Rory E. Kraft, Jr., 129–36 (Charlottesville, VA: Philosophy Documentation Center, 2014).

14. Renée Smith, "A Course in Metaphilosophy for Undergraduates," *Teaching Philosophy* 40, no. 1 (March 2017): 57–85.

15. Jennifer Ma and Sandy Baum, "Trends in Community Colleges: Enrollment, Student Debt, and Completion," Research Brief, *College Board Research*, April 2016; Carla Hickman, "Increasing Enrollment in Today's Community Colleges: Eight Strategies to Reverse Declining Market Share," *EAB* Infographic, August 21, 2017.

Teaching a No-Cost Class

Hoon J. Lee
TRITON COLLEGE

Last year, I converted an Introduction to Philosophy course to a no-cost class. My primary objective was to get rid of the expensive textbook that I usually required. I found the text readable, with succinct chapters organized in a typical chronological order. As long as students did the reading, the text was helpful in introducing them to ideas before discussing them in class. If students ever missed a class, they could keep up with the reading and not fall too far behind. The book also aided class activities and allowed the class to go over difficult concepts collectively.

Of course, it is always a challenge to get students to do the reading. Without fail, some students commented on the length of the chapters and the difficulty of the readings. The chapters do cover complex concepts, and without any orientation they can be an arduous read. The size of the book can be cumbersome, especially when I wanted students to bring the book for in-class use. However, the biggest complaint had always been the price. Understandably, at almost a hundred dollars, the text was a financial commitment.

The central concern was the cost of the book, which many students struggled with. I had looked at cheaper alternative textbooks but found them either limited or just not inexpensive enough. Purchasing a used text can be hit-or-miss, especially if purchasing an older edition with different pagination. Renting lowered the cost, but did not get rid of it entirely. Also, some rental sites required the student to return the book before the semester was over.

A secondary concern was that even if students got ahold of the textbook, getting them to read it was an entirely different matter. My thoughts on the text did not always match up with students' evaluation of the text. Chapter after chapter of difficult reading can discourage a student from even attempting to do the reading, contributing to low readership. Ultimately, based on these issues, I decided against using a textbook at all.

In hopes of addressing these two concerns, in lieu of a textbook, I assigned primary readings. In the past I assigned both textbook and primary readings. All the readings were available as open-access documents but tended to be older translations, and none were critical editions. I provided either PDFs or links to the sites where the readings were available. Limiting the readings to just portions of a larger text, I often provided the exact page numbers or sections that the students were to read. In addition to primary sources, I also used videos that would accompany the readings and address concepts within the readings.

I say no cost, but, obviously, there is some cost. A student would need a device to view the readings and internet to access the readings. However, most students confirmed that they had devices that could be used to access the readings. The internet was not a problem since free Wi-Fi is readily available. For those who did not have a device, students could always use the college's computers. Hence, the cost was absorbed into past purchases and not new expenses.

Having satisfied the first concern, I turned my attention to the second concern. Even if the readings came at no cost, if students did not do the reading, the sacrifice of a textbook may not be worth it. To be honest, I could not guess whether readership would go up or down. To my pleasant surprise, readership went up slightly and would eventually increase (something I will address later).

As far as I can tell, there were two main factors that contributed to readership. First, primary readings were shorter than the textbook chapters. I could easily dictate how much of the primary work I would assign; thus, I concentrated on short key passages. Second, there were fewer readings. Since I had usually assigned a reading from the textbook and a primary text reading, the number of readings went down when I only assigned a primary reading. Also, we covered slightly less material with the switch to only primary readings. More will be said on this below.

Changing over to a no-cost course impacted the nature of the class in several ways. As I was hoping, primary readings were more conducive to in-class use than textbooks. Everyone was using the same edition with the same pagination. The vast majority of students had phones and laptops so that they could access the readings in class. Some students chose to print out the readings if they did not have a device, and some brought hard copies for readability. There were never excuses about leaving the book at home or leaving it in the car.

The most significant impact on the class was how it affected the pacing. Concentrating on primary texts slowed down the class. Whereas a typical chapter in the textbook laid out various philosophical concepts in orderly sections, unpacking these same concepts from a primary text took more time.

I still used a chronological format, but now I added an extra class period or two to each philosopher. Previous to the switch to a no-cost course, I spent two or three class periods going over an individual philosopher (other class periods were dedicated to thematic topics, exams, class activities, etc.). Without a textbook, I now spent one or two classes going over the philosophy of an individual philosopher. This is before we turned to the primary readings. In part, these class periods replaced the information the student would have gotten from the textbook. After students were introduced to the philosopher and various concepts, we spent an additional one or two class periods going over the reading.

As everyone is aware, reading philosophy can be difficult. Whether it be the dialogues of Plato or the seemingly impenetrable *Critique* of Kant, philosophical texts require time. Now that primary texts were the exclusive readings, I structured the course around them. To get the most out of the readings, the course slowed down so that we could delve deeper.

I found that this pacing significantly contributed to the students' learning. Having no philosophy majors, the class tended to be the first philosophy course the students ever took. The concepts, methodology, and terminology were all new and came with a learning curve. By going slower, there was more opportunity to work through these concepts and ideas.

Not only was there more time, the learning process became more active. By going over the primary reading after the initial lectures, students could identify for themselves the concepts we previously discussed. This reinforcement was done by the students themselves, with minimal guidance needed. Students were able to identify the philosopher's arguments more clearly and effectively.

I found that the students were more active with the text. Since we were spending more time with the text, it gave us more opportunities to read and reread the text. As I stated earlier, readership went up with this new format. Part of this was out of necessity. With the course structured around the readings, students quickly found that reading was essential to earning a good grade. Also, now that there was more class time for going over the texts, the class got to read together certain sections and discuss at length what we read together.

In addition, the primary readings helped the students see the philosophical concepts organically. Rather than relying on a textbook, which typically divides up a philosopher's thought into distinct sections, the primary readings demonstrated how these concepts relate to one another and work in unison with each other.

I am a firm believer that the best way to understand how a philosophical system operates is by reading the philosopher's works. Secondary sources always help, but nothing replaces reading the primary text. By focusing on primary texts, this was explicitly and implicitly stated throughout the semester.

Not only does this aid in understanding the individual philosopher, it contributes to comprehending the methodology of the discipline. Identifying arguments and testing their soundness became a running theme. Students learned to distinguish between a mere belief and a valid argument. The question "What makes a good argument?" was the backdrop for every text we read.

For example, I selected certain texts of which the students had to write an analysis. The analysis was a short paper that consisted of three components. First, they had to succinctly articulate the central argument of the text. Second, they had to identify the most significant ways the philosopher supported the argument. Finally, the student had to respond to the argument and support. They were required to justify their response.

Articulating the central argument taught them to perceive what the philosopher was actually saying. Early in the semester, many students misunderstood the topic or subject matter of the text as the philosopher's argument. Students learned that it was not enough to merely understand what topic the text addressed. They had to read more deeply to clearly state the philosopher's position on that topic. Students also learned to distinguish between the central argument and supporting arguments. This required comprehending the entirety of the text and not just a section. Figuring out the structure of the arguments was key to the first component of the paper.

The second section of the paper got students to move beyond being able to summarize the text to an analysis. The papers were short; thus, a student could not just list all that the text covered. Rather, they were compelled to focus only on what mattered most and dedicate the limited word count requirement to these concerns. This too was a challenge in the beginning. Students were accustomed to providing a summary of everything in a text. This approach

provided breadth but little critical thinking. The short length of the paper proved to be more difficult and required an in-depth analysis.

Now that the student comprehended the reading, the student was on much firmer ground to respond. Having a specific argument and understanding of how the argument worked brought out the student's own beliefs. The weakest responses came from students with the weakest analysis of the text, and the reciprocal often proved to be true. Having a clear argument to respond to challenged the student to formulate her own thoughts with clarity and focus.

In addition to these short analysis papers, students also wrote a larger term paper. The term paper greatly benefited from the switch to a no-cost course. Rather than a research paper, students were asked to present their own philosophical belief. The nature of the paper was intentionally very open, as students were allowed to write on any concept they chose. They were required to articulate a significant and clear argument of their own. The body of the paper was to be a defense of this argument.

By concentrating on their writing, it was now their turn to be the philosopher. The idea was that since they had worked through numerous philosophical texts, they were positioned to write about their own philosophy. Students were encouraged to write a paper that the reader could write an analysis of, just as they did with the primary texts that they were reading for class.

This paper focused their thoughts on a central argument. They had to formulate their thoughts as an argument and not merely a statement of their beliefs. They had to demonstrate that they could support their argument and that there was cohesion to their thought. Comparing papers written before the switch to after the switch revealed an increase in the overall quality of papers.

The no-cost course was not all positives. As stated earlier, primary texts can be difficult reads. An unforeseen drawback was the impact on students who missed class for whatever reason. Each class period covered significant material and was not easily replaced. If a student missed a class, she missed quite a bit and it was hard to get caught up. Previously, a student could keep up with the textbook reading to get them back on track. Now that there was no textbook, there was little outside class time assistance. The video links on the learning management system helped to a degree, but fell short of what the class discussed that day. I did my best to get absent students to use office hours, but convincing students to use office hours is an entirely different problem.

If you have been considering switching to a no-cost course, I hope my small experience provides helpful insight into the process. While the subtraction of an expensive textbook is helpful, a no-cost course offers much more than a financial benefit.

Some Advice for Graduate Students Considering the Community College

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My twenty-four-year career as a full-time community college philosophy instructor was most worthwhile. Though it has significantly changed over the years, the position is still worth pursuing. However, competition for these positions has greatly increased. Overall, students are academically more wanting and require more accommodations for various psychological disorders. The 5/5 community college teaching load norm has sometimes increased to 6/6. While enrollments decline, administrator numbers increase, creating more bureaucracy. Also, the philosophy instructor's administrative and committee work has expanded. Why then teach at a community college? Often pay is significantly better than many smaller private and teaching-oriented state institutions. You meet some amazing students from diverse backgrounds, both academically and socio-economically. Just last year, two of my high school-aged students transferred to the University of Chicago and Princeton. The student body is not dull, to say the least. By being elitist and obscure, philosophy lacks pertinence to minorities, the lower and middle classes (the very groups served most by philosophy). This is killing the discipline. There is now a nationwide decline in philosophy majors and general education enrollments. But there is hope if Alasdair MacIntyre's prescriptive prediction is adopted by the profession in the near future, "real philosophy will be done in community colleges and other strange places."

Serving on several hiring committees over the years, I have read hundreds of job applications. I have also served on the APA Committee on Two-Year Colleges, which has offered panel discussions on the community college application process. Many times as a panelist, I found that the application process is an anomaly for most graduate students and placement officers. If you like to teach, you should apply to a community college. Here are some tips that have gotten me and dozens of graduate students interviews.

THE COVER LETTER
Usually, the cover letter should be no more than two pages in length. Keep in mind, the hiring committees are frequently interdisciplinary, often having hundreds of applications to read. **If you graduated from a community college or took community college courses, mention this in your first paragraph.** This is a huge asset. Use it. Next, state your philosophy teaching in a short paragraph. (If asked for, this might be expanded in a separate document.) Customize the cover letter to the institution at hand. Oftentimes, the college is asking for expertise, say, in Logic and/or Applied Ethics. Examine the college's web site to find obvious needs that you can fill. Read the ad thoroughly and then, in a paragraph or two, explain you are what they are looking for. Canned, generic cover letters will not get you an interview.

VITAE/RESUME
Teaching experience is wanted. On your CV, put teaching experience first, followed by publications and conference presentations. Make the reader's experience easy. No more than two or three pages for the vitae/resume. Teaching experience is overlooked with cumbersome, lengthy documents. The larger the variety of community college philosophy courses taught, the better.

DOSSIER
Should you send the dossier with the application? Send only solicited documents. Many times, during panel discussions on the topic, audience members voice their desire to send syllabi, student evaluations, and copies of publications. Most likely, these documents may not be on the hiring committee's rubric and thus are unlikely to be read. Oftentimes, sending unsolicited documents may seem pretentious and/or a sign of desperation. Fifty-page applications are a big turnoff.

ONLINE TEACHING
Teaching online will greatly enhance your interview prospects. Even better, develop online courses. Be familiar with various platforms like Canvas and Blackboard. Get online training certificates. With online teaching and development comes education-based lingo. Learn the lingo. Do not miss out on these necessary opportunities. Even your lecture and hybrid courses will improve as you master online teaching and online course development.

THE INTERVIEW
Congratulations, your cover letter and CV got you an interview. What should you expect? Expect to pay for your travel if asked to come in person. Again, the community college hiring committee is oftentimes interdisciplinary. Answer questions accordingly. Expect a question on diversity, and prepare to sincerely explain how you effectively teach to a wide variety of students both academically and socioeconomically. Share how diversity affects your teaching strategies, textbook selection, and other aspects of teaching. Research the college's demographics, initiatives, and the philosophy department's book adoptions (do not inadvertently insult the department's text selection). There are other common interview topics and questions: What are your plans for philosophy at this institution? Explain a problematic situation with a student. Was it resolved? How so? How do you use technology in your courses? Community colleges want down-to-earth colleagues who can readily relate to students. Avoid pretentiousness.

THE TEACHING DEMONSTRATION
Oftentimes, twenty to thirty minutes are allotted for a teaching demonstration. You may be given either a topic or a choice of topics, or you might be allowed to pick a topic. Practice. (I have witnessed too many unpracticed teaching demonstrations.) Demonstrate your teaching for instructors and administrators where you teach. Get feedback. Teach to the hiring committee as if they are actual students. Do not interrupt your teaching demonstration to explain pedagogy; do so only at demonstration's end, if you feel compelled. The committee members might be assigned specific student roles: the not-so-swift, the student with

problematic behavior, the know-it-all, etc. Sometimes a philosophically untrained hiring committee member thinks they know philosophy (after all, they have a background in theology and/or have read Ayn Rand). Stealthily steer around them or appease them without selling out your integrity.

After the committee interview and teaching demonstration, there might be a separate interview with an administrator such as a dean or academic vice president. Rest assured, the administrator will be sizing you up, wanting low-maintenance faculty who won't add to their acid reflux. Often, the hiring committee submits three to five nominees to an administrator, with the administrator having the final say.

I HOPE TO MEET SOME OF YOU

The above tips are just the tip of the iceberg as far as the community college application and interview process. They are rules of thumb with many exceptions. Recently, at UCSB (my alma mater), I presented the above tips and **much more** to about twenty philosophy graduate students. The graduate students and the placement officer peppered me with questions for about three hours. Since then, students have contacted me for advice about adjunct and full-time applications. My hope is to replicate this presentation at other philosophy departments throughout United States (with eventual workshops on cover letters and teaching demonstrations). More graduate students and placement officers need to be reached than just those at the APA conferences.

So consider this a solicitation. Graduate students, graduate advisors, and placement officers, please invite me to your institution to present on the community college application process. No fee, of course, just room and board. In the early nineties, I was teaching seven classes a semester at four institutions. I wrote over sixty applications in three years, getting about ten interviews and two full-time positions. Learning on my own, I had no idea or guidance about the community college application process. I wish to make the process easier and more effective for job seekers.

CALL FOR PAPERS

The APA committee for philosophy in two-year colleges invites papers for inclusion in the fall 2019 issue of the *APA Newsletter on Philosophy in Two-Year Colleges*.

Papers should be devoted to topics of particular interest to two-year and community college faculty, and graduate students who are considering a two-year or community college career path. These include but should not be construed as limited to the following: lower division teaching pedagogy; text and textbook selections including the use of open-access resources; cross-disciplinary initiatives; student demographics and advising; student learning evaluation; program evaluation and program growth initiatives; faculty credentialing and hiring, including concerns for women and minorities, and the status of adjunct faculty; faculty scholarship opportunities; issues

dealing with program administration; and topics of general philosophical interest. Co-authored papers are welcome.

Submission Deadline: May 17, 2019

All paper submissions should be send electronically to the co-editor of the newsletter, Aaron Champene, at achampene@stlcc.edu. Papers should be attached as Word documents.

All paper submissions should adhere to the following guidelines:

- Papers should be in the range of 1,500 to 3,000 words, including endnotes. Exceptional papers that fall outside this range may be considered, though this is not guaranteed.

- Papers should be prepared for anonymous review. Papers should contain nothing that identifies either the author(s) or her/his/their institution, including any such references in the endnotes. A separate page with the author's name, paper title, and full mailing address should also be submitted.

- Authors are advised to read the APA publishing guidelines available on the APA website. Please pay close attention to all APA formatting restrictions.

All papers will undergo anonymous review and evaluation by an editorial committee composed of current and/or past two-year college committee members. This committee will report its findings to the co-editors of the newsletter, and the co-editors will make all publishing decisions based on those anonymously refereed results.