

Student Evaluation of Instruction and Course

University of Missouri-Columbia

Form B - 3

Instructor: Shields, Kenneth Wesley

Semester: Summer 2013

Course Subject: PHIL

Section: 03

Catalog Number: 1100

Course Id: 010959

Description: INTRODUCTION TO ETHICS

Class Number: 14552

Department or Unit: MU-D PHIL

Number of Respondents: 14

Section I Consumer Information	Percent Responding				# Resp.	Mean	
	SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1			
1. Course content and expectations were presented clearly	57.1	28.6	14.3	0.0	14	3.4	
2. The instructor was interested in student learning	78.6	14.3	7.1	0.0	14	3.7	
3. All things considered, the instructor taught effectively	50.0	28.6	14.3	7.1	14	3.2	
Section II Diagnostic Feedback	High 5	4	3	2	Low 1	# Resp.	Mean
1. Instructor's organization of the course	50.0	35.7	14.3	0.0	0.0	14	4.4
2. Sequential presentation of concepts	35.7	28.6	14.3	7.1	14.3	14	3.6
3. Instructor's explanations	28.6	28.6	21.4	21.4	0.0	14	3.6
4. Ability to present alternative explanations	23.1	46.2	23.1	0.0	7.7	13	3.8
5. Use of examples and illustrations	38.5	23.1	7.7	15.4	15.4	13	3.5
6. Instructor's enhancement of student interest	42.9	35.7	7.1	0.0	14.3	14	3.9
7. Student confidence in instructor's knowledge	85.7	7.1	0.0	7.1	0.0	14	4.7
8. Instructor's enthusiasm	64.3	14.3	14.3	7.1	0.0	14	4.4
9. Clarity of course objectives	57.1	21.4	7.1	0.0	14.3	14	4.1
10. Interest level of class sessions	35.7	35.7	0.0	7.1	21.4	14	3.6
11. Availability of extra help when needed	92.3	0.0	7.7	0.0	0.0	13	4.8
12. Instructor's language proficiency	69.2	7.7	15.4	0.0	7.7	13	4.3
13. Instructor's use of technology	78.6	0.0	7.1	0.0	14.3	14	4.3
Section III General Evaluation	E	QG	S	F	P	# Resp.	Mean
1. The course as a whole	7.1	64.3	7.1	7.1	14.3	14	3.4
2. The content of the course	35.7	35.7	14.3	7.1	7.1	14	3.9
Section IV Information for Other Students	E	QG	S	F	P	# Resp.	Mean
1. Use of class time	55.6	22.2	22.2	0.0	0.0	9	4.3
2. Amount you learned in the course	21.4	50.0	7.1	7.1	14.3	14	3.6
3. Relevance and usefulness of course content	28.6	42.9	14.3	0.0	14.3	14	3.7
4. Evaluative and grading techniques (tests,papers,projects)	28.6	28.6	14.3	7.1	21.4	14	3.4
5. Reasonableness of assigned work	42.9	21.4	21.4	7.1	7.1	14	3.9
6. Clarity of student responsibilities and requirements	28.6	35.7	14.3	14.3	7.1	14	3.6

Section V General Information About Your Students (percent of respondents)									% Completed Assigned Work		
Wanted Course	Course Is	Class	Expected Grade	% Attendance							
Yes	42.9	In major	28.6	Freshman	14.3	A	35.7	0-25	0.0	0-25	7.1
No	35.7	In minor	0.0	Sophomore	7.1	B	50.0	26-50	0.0	26-50	0.0
Neutral	21.4	Elective	7.1	Junior	42.9	C	14.3	51-75	0.0	51-75	0.0
Omit	0.0	General	64.3	Senior	35.7	D	0.0	76-90	0.0	76-90	0.0
		Other	0.0	Graduate	0.0	F	0.0	91-100	42.9	91-100	71.4
		Omit	0.0	Other	0.0	S	0.0	NA	57.1	NA	21.4
				Omit	0.0	U	0.0	Omit	0.0	Omit	0.0
						Omit	0.0				

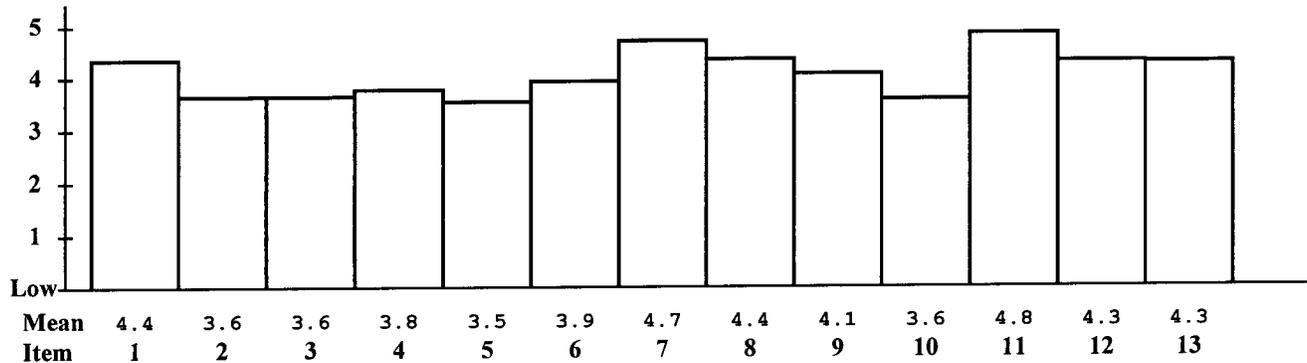
Section VI Optional Items		E	QG	S	F	P	# Resp.	Mean
E = Excellent	1.	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0	0.0
QS = Quite Good	2.	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0	0.0
S = Satisfactory	3.	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0	0.0
F = Fair	4.	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0	0.0
P = Poor								

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	# Resp.	Mean
5.	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0	0.0
6.	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0	0.0
7.	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0	0.0
8.	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0	0.0



Section II Graphic Representation of Means of Items in Section II

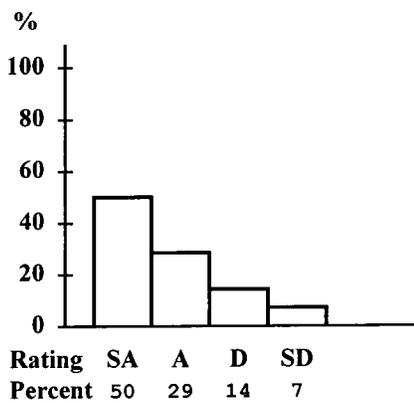
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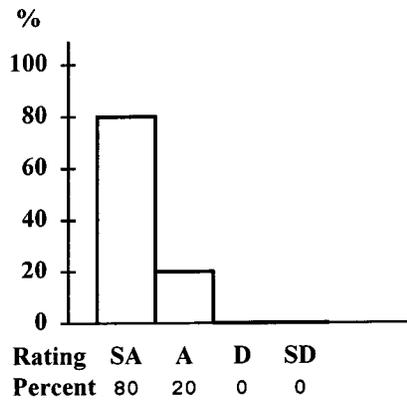
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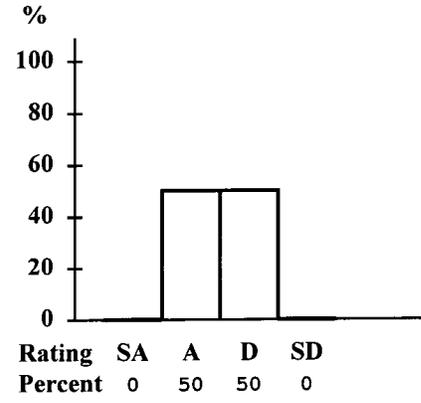
Section I Consumer Information Item 3: Overall Teaching Effectiveness



All Respondents: 14



Respondents Expecting "A": 5



Respondents Expecting "C": 2



Processed at the Assessment Resource Center
Phone: (573)882-4694

Review and Reflections

14552

1100

Introduction to Ethics

Instructor Shields, Kenneth

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Instructor Improve

Your Experience

He really wanted us to do well.

I think this instructor did a great job teaching. He knew what he was taking about and used many examples. Also, after the week's discussions, he emailed us and cleared up any confusion. He definitely wanted us to do well in the class.

I liked how the class was set up. I got all my work done, but did it on my own time.

Not exactly. This course did help me with interaction on the internet I guess.

The notes were extremely well thought out and easy to follow.

The tests were a bit difficult compared to the quizzes

Pretty much

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Your Experience

A lot of his instructions were unclear, and many times the entire class couldn't comprehend what he wanted us to do. Here's an excerpt from his week 1 discussion prompt: "But where's the false premise in each argument? (pick at least one to discuss at length, and give your reasons for either endorsing it or challenging it - but feel free to discuss them all)."

He then sent this follow up email when week 1 was over: "Some students have told me that last week's discussion prompt led them to think they could either respond to (1) or (2) without having to respond to both. Although I think a careful reading of the prompt rules out such an interpretation, I am willing to give the benefit of the doubt. Thus, I will not mark off for those posts that didn't address both - but only this time."

He pretty fucking clearly stated to "pick at least one to discuss at length"

He takes himself very seriously, and his long-winded weekly diatribes about the "correct" choice in a god damn philosophy class were hard to get through. I didn't read them, and I doubt many people did. He is very passionate about the subject, but through an online class he seemed hard to relate to, even through text.

Something that might benefit him would be blackboard collaborate sessions where he can video chat with students, and actually make it seem like he's a real person.

This guy blows.

Here's one of his diatribes - he sends these out weekly. I don't think a single person would read them.

Hello fellow philosophers!

Very cool stuff this week! I was blown away by the difference in posts' quality when compared to the first week - especially the response posts! Some of you are really getting in there, reading other people's posts very closely and picking out inconsistencies and potential confusions. I love it so much - keep up the good work!

So here's some of the good stuff I'm seeing:

(1) Highlighting the plausibility of conflicting views (but make sure you follow this up with either a defense of one of the positions, or some argument as to why they only appear to conflict, or perhaps an argument for a new position).

(2) Calling out posts that involve interpretation mistakes. For example, many students tried to defend DS theory by referencing "better" desires to have, but a couple of you (correctly) didn't let that slide. DS theory views all desires as equally worthwhile, no matter what they are. However, don't forget that one can desire to have certain desires, or desire to not have certain desires - this isn't inconsistent with DS theory.

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Your Experience

(3) Reflecting on the relationship between DS theory and other related concepts, such as our concept of time (e.g., must DS theory be committed to an entire life going better once a desire is satisfied, or can it just focus on certain time slices within one's life?)

(4) Attempting to save DS theory by moving the discussion to what ideal versions of ourselves would desire, believing that all ideal agents would desire to have certain things and avoid other things. I applaud the move to the more abstract and hypothetical, but one must take caution here as well - see #7 below for one complication concerning this move.

Perhaps the best learning occurs when you learn from your mistakes. With that said, let's move to some issues with week 3's discussion:

(1) I initially intended for you to play "devil's advocate" if you believed that all of Shafer-Landau's arguments against DS theory are sound. But since I didn't make that clear, it's no problem. Playing devil's advocate in this context just means attempting to defend a position you do not actually hold. This is a useful way to sharpen your philosophical sword - you can actually do better philosophy

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sometimes when you don't feel a personal attachment to the conclusion. Your attachments can sometimes hinder your ability to see faults in reasoning.

(2) There's a difference between (a) the view that one has the moral right to make decisions about one's own life, on the one hand, and (b) what DS theorists are talking about. DS theory isn't a theory about right and wrong – we haven't gotten to those theories yet (that starts this upcoming week!). Rather, DS theory is a theory about value: what is worth pursuing. And DS theory's answer to this question of value is this: whatever you want to pursue, that is worth pursuing. Think of it this way: health is generally considered to be a valuable thing, but that doesn't imply that it is morally okay to achieve it by any means necessary. This is a very important distinction: the difference between what is morally right and wrong to do (the actions one takes to achieve certain ends), versus what is objectively worth pursuing (the value of the ends themselves).

(3) Confusion about Shafer-Landau's self-sacrifice example. Let's take a simple scenario: throwing yourself in front of a truck to save your child. Your life doesn't go better in this scenario – let's stipulate that you die as a result of the truck hitting you. Of course, your desire was to save your child's life, not your own. But that's Shafer-

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Landau's entire point: it seems that we can desire to do things that do not benefit us. But DS theory views this as impossible: what it means for a life to go well is just for one to satisfy their desires, whatever they are. But despite DS theory, the above result seems obviously possible! That's the problem.

(4) Pointing out what people will do isn't relevant to whether what they are doing is plausibly good for them. For example, suppose it's quite certain that I will cut my own leg off, no matter what anyone tries to do to stop me. Is that relevant to whether cutting my own leg off is good for me? Surely not. The mere fact that I will end up doing it anyway is irrelevant to whether this is good for me. At least remember this for the last two discussion prompts of the course, because it will be very tempting to make this mistake again when we get to the applied ethics section.

(5) Many of you referenced your own desires as support for the plausibility of DS theory. But notice that it is not enough to merely point to desires that you happen to have. It only takes a single individual that desires something that seems (to us) clearly bad for them, or doesn't desire something that seems (to us) clearly good for them, to cause trouble for DS theory. The fact that you aren't that individual is irrelevant to the plausibility of DS theory. Now if you could show that

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no one could possibly be that individual.....

(6) Some of you did say, or got very close to saying, that everyone desires to live the good life, so if they get that desire satisfied, then they will be living the good life precisely because they got what they desired, and thus DS theory is true! The problem with this is that, according to DS theory, the sentence "the desire to live the good life" just means the same as the sentence "the desire to live the life where you get your desires satisfied." The same thing goes for the sentence "the desire for good things to happen." Remember that the whole point of the discussion within value theory is to determine what, exactly, is the good? What I think many of you are trying to do is rely on some shared notion of what the good life is (e.g., a life filled with health, a satisfying job, a happy home, good friends, etc.), and then show how everyone desires THAT life. If you mean that those things are what make for a truly good life, then you are an objectivist about the good, something which is incompatible with advocating DS theory. However, you could be making a different claim: that it just turns out that everyone desires those things even if they say they don't, and even if they think they don't, and even if they scream at you saying that they desire the opposite of those things. If you meant the latter, see the next point.

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(7) In an attempt to defend DS theory from Shafer-Landau's objections, many of you straight out denied that anyone really desires things that seem (to us) bad for them, or you denied that anyone really doesn't desire things that seem (to us) good for them. More cautiously, some of you claimed that people eventually only desire things that seem (to us) good for them, and so forth. But how are you going to support this claim? To take an example that Amos Atibilla used, if someone says they desire illicit drugs, but satisfying this desire seems (to us) clearly bad for them, then aren't you in the odd position of telling someone that they don't really want what they think they want? Your parents would be so proud! ;) Joking aside, this line of defense may not be entirely hopeless, but it will require a lot of philosophical work to get over its counter-intuitiveness.

Keep striving and keep up the good work!

Best regards,

Kenny

The instructor did a great job with the powerpoint and responding to questions about the class. The exams were extremely hard and did not seem to even resemble to weekly quizzes, which did not prepare me for what to expect. Also this is an online course and not an in class course so I believe you really cant expect the same thing from students.

To some degree, the exams were really hard and worth way to much of the overall percentage of the course. It is an ONLINE course and therefore I believe the majority of points should lie with posts.

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Didn't learn a thing from this course.	I have learned to be more patient. The discussion board were full of answers you don't necessarily agree with and you have to learn to accept other peoples opinions. I also had to be patient with the professor while he bullied me and called me a liar and a cheater.	Not a lot of impact	Reviewing the covered material afterwards so we can see where we went wrong	He can learn to be patient with his students as this is the first ethics class for most of us. He can also make the exams more like the quizzes instead of trying to make them trick questions. He can also work on his communication with his students. He lacked empathy. He also needs to learn when to say things and when not to say things. Calling students liars and cheaters when they have done no such thing is not only bullying towards the student but a mark on their character and is something I do not take lightly. This professor was a terrible professor with his lack of explanation for big papers or how to study for the trick question exams... He was by far the worst professor I have ever had!	I have taken other online classes before and am currently in another one now and this course was the worse course I have ever taken in college. The professor was terrible, the material was not useful for our everyday lives, and I do not think I learned a single thing from this class. I truly believe it to be a waste of my time and money. I truly believe the professor could have made the material more relatable but the professor was absolutely terrible! I would avoid taking him for future classes!

I don't think students should have the opportunity to change their first exam grade with the grade of their second or third exam grade because for students like me who received a 92.5% on the first exam this is not very fair. Especially when my third exam grade was lowest but there's no opportunity to change that one.

The instructor was great in giving us lengthy emails explaining alternative answers to our discussion questions each week. Since this was an ethics course and it was online he did a great job explaining even our most difficult lessons.

BEing able to truly think about moral dimemnas and weigh all options.

Be available to students, caring about students and their success, and providing enough resources to learn concepts.

I think he did a great job, Ethics is just a really hard subject to understand.

Yes, given that it was a summer class and online class, I expected that it was going to be a challenge with the amount of work to do.

I Believe that I think more critically and am able to break down points that people make in a way that i understand them.

It has impacted the way I think now, I believe I'm much more open-minded.

Possibly provide study guides for each exam throughout the course.

Yes this was the experience i was expecting to get. I have taken online courses before and usually you just have a schedule with due-dates of all assignments and different assignments due every week.

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Instructor *Shields, Kenneth*

<i>Useful Applications</i>	<i>Teach or Work</i>	<i>Environment</i>	<i>Ints. Excel</i>	<i>Instructor Improve</i>	<i>Your Experience</i>
<p>I can now construct arguments from passages, grasp the meaning of various philosophical theories and defend my view point.</p>	<p>I had to opportunity to critic various posts from other students and that help me better articulate my points. I was told my instructor never to let my position distract me from understanding the views of other people. For instance, I might disagree on a particular reading, but that should not prevent me from accepting the views of others. I have a different perception about life now and I have learnt to present meaningful arguments.</p>	<p>Assignments and readings have increased my stock of knowledge about philosophy.</p>	<p>His explanation were guidelines for me in writing my papers.</p>	<p>Possibly comment on each individual weekly posts.</p>	<p>Its no new thing to me but things can be a bit hazy when you have no steady internet connection.</p>

I thought the weekly unit were very useful and helped me a lot when it came to better understanding the material.

Kenny was great at setting up his weekly units on all the readings and I really loved his emails he sent regularly after discussion posts were due so we all knew where we went wrong or had misinterpreted the readings for that week. I also liked that he was regularly available if we needed help with pretty much anything.

Just specifying again the set up of the written assignments would have been great, because I missed that part on the Syllabus and ended up getting points off I think for my mistakes. So a reminder of how he wants it to be when you submit would be great, I mean we're students we make mistakes/forget things/misread things especially when it comes to Syllabus stuff.

No, but in a good way. I thought it was going to be a lot harder for me to keep with the course because we never meet in real life as a class, but everything was very structured just like an in-person class would be, so it helped me stay on track and get all my work done on time.

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Your Experience

Generally the instructor knew all of the topics he was discussing quite well.

Even if there was a particular question or matter of opinion to consider in some situation, all of his positions were justified in a philosophical way. At no point did it seem

ridiculous to draw a conclusion he presented.

Also, just a really good teaching style. There is always a potential for someone to feel robbed by some arbitrary factor- who knows what. This was never the case privately or publicly on the discussion boards.

None really. I know that sounds stupid, but it's just the case. Maybe if it were a classroom situation there could be more said, but for a paced course like this everything was spot on.

No. Honestly I thought it would be dumb, boring, and useless. It's a summer course online. I ended up liking it more than my in person classes where people just drone on and pull the arbitrary stunts that have been given by millions.