St. Lawrence University Philosophy Department: Learning Goals

1. **Philosophical Knowledge**

   1.1. That every culture has philosophical legacies contested within the culture; that these legacies change over time; and that they change with encounters with other cultures.

   1.2. A basic philosophical lexicon: terms such as *premise, conclusion, epistemology, metaphysics, ethics, presupposition, relativism*, etc.

   1.3. Basic dimensions of the Greek philosophical tradition, and possibly an overview of the basic outline of the history of Western philosophy.

   1.4. An understanding of the basic map of academic philosophy today. This would include an understanding of the basic differences between analytic philosophy and continental philosophy in the Western tradition, plus an understanding that there are critical traditions within Western philosophy. This would also include an understanding that there are philosophical traditions beyond mainstream Western philosophy: Asian philosophies, African philosophies, Latin American philosophies, etc. And, finally, this would include an understanding of what counts as the central philosophical problems and questions across various philosophical traditions.

   1.5. The ability to answer major philosophical questions from at least two different philosophical perspectives, historical periods, or traditions:

      1.5.1. What is knowledge? What does it mean to know something?

      1.5.2. What does it mean to live a good life?

      1.5.3. What is the self? Who am I?

      1.5.4. What is (the nature of) reality? What is real?

      1.5.5. What is beauty?

      1.5.6. What is justice?

      1.5.7. What is truth?

      1.5.8. What is right? (What is goodness?)

2. **What Students Should Be Able to Do (Skills, Competencies)**

   2.1. Understand philosophical ideas (e.g., ability to read and accurately interpret philosophical texts; but this also includes the ability to perceive the basic philosophical ideas underlying the rest of human thought and actions).

   2.2. Enter into and work within a system of thought (philosophical empathy). This includes, for example, the ability to track and stay with the definitions of key concepts, lines of argument, and methods of argumentation within a system of thought, before engaging in critique of that system of thought.

   2.3. Discern how all human actions are justified implicitly or explicitly by ideas
2.4. Recognize patterns of reasoning (arguments).

2.5. Analyze and evaluate arguments, with awareness of one's methods of analysis and standards of evaluation. (This includes the ability to recognize consistency and inconsistency.)

2.6. Ability to unpack implications (e.g., logical, metaphysical, ethical) from ideas.

2.7. Construct an argument in support of a belief.

2.8. Generate good philosophical questions.

2.9. Develop (and argue for) answers to major philosophical questions.

2.10. Synthesize new philosophical ideas from existing philosophical ideas.

2.11. Communicate effectively to a variety of audiences about philosophical questions and ideas.

2.12. Students who wish to continue studying philosophy at the graduate level should be able to conduct research in philosophy and write formal academic papers adhering to proper standards of citation.

3. Habits of Mind (Philosophical Dispositions)

3.1. Philosophical curiosity and a habit of generating good philosophical questions to pursue.

3.2. Awareness of one’s own philosophical presuppositions (one’s metaphysical views, epistemological views, and values); and the ongoing inclination to reflect on one’s beliefs and values.

3.3. Epistemic modesty: a willingness to consider that your own ideas might be wrong.

3.4. Not just an ability, but also a habit of philosophical empathy (see above).

3.5. A habit of critical evaluation of ideas: checking for logical coherence among ideas, asking what a given idea presupposes, looking for evidential support of key ideas, and, considering how a given set of ideas might conflict with other ideas or evidence.

3.6. A habit of synthesizing the best of the ideas you encounter, with careful attention to how ideas are related to other ideas, and also with an awareness of the implications of ideas (implications of individual ideas, and implications of sets of ideas jointly).

3.7. Living in light of one's values—that is, adopting an ethical orientation as a way of being in the world.

3.8. A habit of continuing to explore the questions, “Who am I?” “Who are we?” “Who do I/we want to become?” (And: “With whom?” and “By what means?”) In a world divided by the powerful into "us" and "them," this set of questions is crucially important, and a philosophical education prepares students well to live effectively into the integrative power of these questions.