Learning Outcomes and Writing Expectations

PHILOSOPHICAL INQUIRY

Approved by the Liberal Studies Council, Spring 2006

Philosophical Inquiry examines the most basic questions of human existence. It considers the fundamental beliefs and convictions that shape what it means to be human, our relationships with others, and the nature of the world itself. Its aim is to develop our critical, imaginative, and analytical abilities, and it enables students to understand various kinds of important intellectual problems from a variety of perspectives and approaches, interpret and assess historical and contemporary texts concerned with these issues, and articulate reasoned judgments about these most basic concerns of human life. Philosophical inquiry is thus committed to the task of reflecting on the ideas and events that make up the cultures, societies, and traditions within which we live and to enhancing our understanding of their significance and complexity. Courses in Philosophical Inquiry support the mission of the Liberal Studies Program by fostering deeper understanding and appreciation of the worlds of meaning and of value and of the enterprise of intellectual inquiry and social dialogue.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Using multiple perspectives, students will be able to address, critically think about, and analyze philosophical questions and problems.

2. Students will be able to evaluate philosophical questions, issues and/or problems using informed judgment.

3. Students will be able to analyze and interpret the methods used by philosophers in addressing philosophical questions, issues, and/or problems.

4. Students will be able to develop an understanding of the historical context of philosophical topics, figures, and texts.

5. Students will be able to write an analytic essay treating a philosophical question, issue and/or problem that forwards an identifiable thesis,
argument, and conclusion.

6. Students will be able to address, critically think about, and analyze ethical issues, applying philosophical tools drawn from various ethical traditions to concrete cases pertinent to a variety of subject matters.

Writing Expectations:

The expectation of the Philosophical Inquiry Liberal Studies Learning Domain is that students taking courses in this domain will write at least 10 pages per quarter. This writing may take the form of essays, response papers, reading journals, take-home essay exams, critical analyses, etc. At least one assignment should involve revision, which may count (but only once, not twice) towards the 10 page minimum.