



Philosophy: Writing broadens the scope of the philosophical canon

A course entitled "Philosophy 1006: Philosophy and Cultural Diversity" by Dr. Douglas Lewis, University of Minnesota (1998)

Course Design:

The course serves as a prerequisite-to-the major, as well as an option to fulfill the university's requirement of a course in U.S. cultural diversity. Unlike other philosophy courses, Philosophy 1006 promotes students' active participation in their own learning by encouraging the integration of personal experience with the class texts through numerous writing exercises.

Philosophy 1006 is organized into three main philosophical inquiries: views of the self (as discussed in Anzaldua, Descartes, Du Bois, and Majaj), human beings in relation to each other (as discussed in Sarris, Plato, Locke, Malcolm X, and Lorde), and human beings in relation to the nonhuman world (as discussed in Descartes, Camus, Black Elk, and Locke).

Recitation sections, which meet once per week, are organized into three or four student writing groups which work together for part of each section meeting. The first twenty-five minutes of section meetings are spent working on informal writing projects, and the remainder is used for group discussions of topics raised in the lectures, readings, and writing projects. Outside of class, students write a weekly journal, in a stream of consciousness style, about their personal experiences as they relate to the course materials. In "focused writes" students analyze specific philosophical questions in a more thorough manner and share their thoughts with their writing group. Students also brainstorm ideas for formal papers in the writing group. Before each of the three formal papers, designed to integrate personal experience with critical analysis, students write a detailed outline which they also discuss in their writing group.

Higher Level Learning:

Students in Philosophy 1006 uncover a variety of philosophies which are new to them and come to understand how these philosophies mesh with their own experiences and those of others (**Thinking, Self, Others**). The course introduces students to the possibility that philosophy in general is relevant to their lives as is the way in which different philosophies complement and contradict each other (**Connecting**).

Active Learning:

The variety of assigned texts and the reflective writing assignments encourage students to engage the material (**Doing, Thinking about Self**). Integration of the material depends upon students using their experiences to substantiate and illustrate the relevance of the readings (**Dialogue with Others**). Students are encouraged not only to examine their own views (**Dialogue with Self**), but also to discuss the perspectives of others (**Dialogue with Others**).

Lewis, D. et al. (1998). Black Elk Speaks, John Locke Listens, and the Students Write: Designing and Teaching a Writing Intensive Introduction to Philosophy and Cultural Diversity. Teaching Philosophy, 21, 1 (pp.35-55) Teaching Philosophy Association, Inc.