

## Learning Goals for Majors and Minors Useful Resources

*Version dated July 15, 2014*

### What are learning goals and what are they good for?

Learning goals are statements indicating what you want students to know and what you want them to be able to do when they graduate with a major or minor in your field. Faculty members in all departments and programs have implicit ideas regarding benefits of studying their fields and what their curriculum should look like. Making learning goals for your students more explicit, and assessing the degree to which these goals are met, can help you:

- Design general requirements and individual courses (teaching methods, materials, and assignments) that relate to your goals.
- Identify strengths and weaknesses in your curriculum and institute changes that improve the quality of student learning.
- Communicate to students and to external entities (e.g., accreditation agencies, the media, and potential employers of your students) what skills and knowledge students gain by majoring or minoring in your field.

### Developing learning goals

Possible starting points for developing department/program learning goals:

- Goals brainstormed and refined by faculty members in the department/program
- Goals derived from a broader mission statement developed by faculty members
- Learning objectives already developed for individual department/program courses.
- Learning goals developed by comparable units at other institutions (see relevant links below)
- Learning goals developed by national organizations (see page 2)
- Learning goals developed by other units in Weinberg College (see page 3)

**University of Washington Learning Goals Website:** <http://depts.washington.edu/learning/>

This site provides a wealth of resources. The page on “Department/Program Goals” is especially relevant and links to advice on how a unit might go about identifying goals, to examples of goals for several departments, and more.

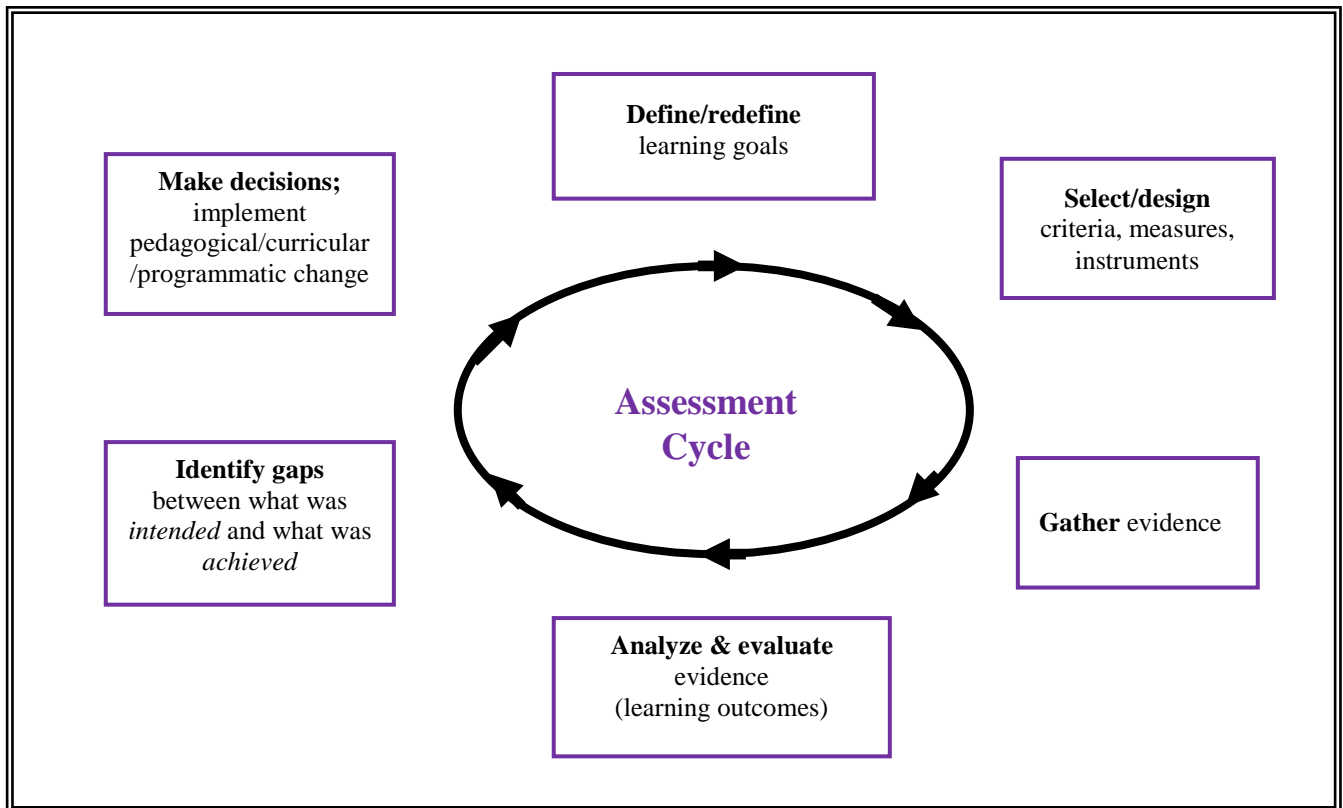
**Learning goals developed at other universities.** To find more examples, search the Internet for “learning goals [name of major] or “learning objectives [name of minor].”

- Ohio University: <http://www.ohio.edu/learningobjectives/>
- University of Maryland: <https://www.irpa.umd.edu/Assessment/AssessmentUM/goals-index.shtml>
- University of Illinois: [http://cte.illinois.edu/outcomes/unit\\_assess.html](http://cte.illinois.edu/outcomes/unit_assess.html)
- Georgetown University: <http://assessment.georgetown.edu/program-level-assessment/conceptualizing-program-learning-goals/examples-of-program-level-goals/>

**Learning goals developed by national organizations.** Several national organizations have identified learning goals for students in their fields. Some examples:

- American Historical Association: <http://www.historians.org/teaching-and-learning/current-projects/tuning/history-discipline-core>
- American Psychological Association: <http://www.apa.org/ed/precollege/about/psymajor-guidelines.pdf>
- American Sociological Association: [http://www.asanet.org/documents/teaching/pdfs/Lib\\_Learning\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.asanet.org/documents/teaching/pdfs/Lib_Learning_FINAL.pdf) (see page 51)

**Learning goals and assessment.** The figure below, derived from one in Northwestern University's *Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Framework* (2010), illustrates the key role of learning goals in the design and evaluation of curriculum.



## Learning Goals for Some Weinberg College Majors

Several Weinberg departments and programs have developed learning goals for their students as part of the design and revision of their curricula. Examples are included here. The document can be expanded as more units participate in this College-wide project.

### **Anthropology**

The goal of an undergraduate education in Anthropology is to develop an understanding of human diversity across time, and across social, cultural, and physical space. The world is changing and shrinking. People from differing cultures, races, classes, and backgrounds meet and interact more often and more intensely than ever before. Understanding and appreciating the origins and implications of human diversity is essential to engaged citizenship, and a valuable asset for almost any career choice.

Anthropology is a holistic discipline that uniquely spans the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences. In order to develop an understanding of human variation, undergraduates will explore the four subfields of anthropology (archaeology, biological anthropology, cultural anthropology, and linguistic anthropology) and develop a specialization in one of these.

### **Knowledge**

Students will acquire breadth of knowledge in the discipline, and depth of knowledge in one sub-field (e.g., archaeology, biological anthropology, cultural anthropology, linguistic anthropology). Students completing an anthropology major will have a strong understanding of:

- Human variation and diversity across time and space
- The interrelationship of biology, culture, language, and history in shaping the human species
- The transformation of human biology and social structures and cultural patterns over time
- Global connections among different societies
- Inequality in power relations within and between societies, both past and present

### **Global Citizenship and Engagement**

With its critical and integrative approach to understanding humanity, anthropology provides particularly rigorous training in the skills and knowledge needed to become an informed member of global society. Graduates of our program will be able to:

- Convey anthropological concepts and insights to public audiences
- Serve as ambassadors of global tolerance and understanding of different cultures and societies
- Provide critical perspectives on and informed solutions to historical and contemporary problems of global inequality and injustice based on class, gender, race/ethnicity, religion, and sexual orientation

### **Core Skills**

Students will acquire core skills in critical thinking, research, and written and oral communication. These skills, rooted in the holistic discipline of anthropology, will be widely applicable in a range of fields. Upon completion of the program, students will have the following abilities:

- To critically evaluate information, positions, and arguments

- To access credible information using paper-based (primary, secondary, and tertiary), electronic, oral (oral histories, interviews), and material resources
- To plan, design, and execute an original piece of research using a variety of textual sources and/or anthropological research methodologies, including interviews, participant-observation, excavation, and laboratory analysis
- To formulate strong arguments supported by evidence
- To clearly communicate evaluation of information and research results in both oral and written forms
- To apply anthropological training in the breadth and depth of human societies to a range of intra-cultural and cross-cultural contexts. This includes being sensitive to cultural difference and inequality.

## **Middle East and North Africa Studies**

### **Mission Statement:**

The goal of an undergraduate education in Middle East and North African Studies is twofold: to develop an understanding of the history, politics, cultural expression, and societies of the Middle East and North Africa; and to develop an ability to analyze critically structures of power within and involving the region. These goals are met through interdisciplinary training that emphasizes the importance of in-depth research on the region along with an understanding of its place in a global context.

### **Goals:**

Upon completion of the program, students will have the following:

1. Broad knowledge of early modern/modern and contemporary history and politics across the region
2. Broad knowledge of key contemporary cultural trends and phenomena in the region
3. In-depth knowledge in one historical, political, and/or cultural issue in the region
4. Broad knowledge of critical links between MENA and other world regions
5. Capability to evaluate critically sources of knowledge about the region (scholarship, journalism, media, etc.)
6. Capability to analyze critically structures of power in the region
7. Proficiency in at least one Middle Eastern language
8. Significant learning experience in a Middle Eastern or North African society

## **Philosophy**

An education in philosophy is mainly aimed at equipping students with general-purpose conceptual resources that are needed for rationally penetrating problems of any nature and for communicating the results. Strength in philosophical work requires superior reasoning and writing skills. Critical reasoning, clarity in thought and language, and competence in synthesizing a good deal of information into a systematic, coherent picture are thus the main skills students acquire through the systematic engagement with the main accomplishments and milestones in philosophy.

Given its own curriculum, but also its central position between the special sciences (humanities, social and natural sciences alike), philosophy is relevant to foundational and conceptual questions arising in almost all other disciplines, with which it often shares its subject matter. By rigorous engagement with main figures,

theories and concepts in philosophical fields, students also accumulate knowledge of principled approaches to ideas and conceptions that form a guiding background of our culture and the sciences.

Success in the program can thus be measured by assessing two related kinds of competence: (1) the skills needed for the critical discussion of conceptual and foundational issues in written and oral form, and (2) the knowledge of substantive philosophical contributions to our understanding of the history, rational structure and conceptual connections that make general human phenomena what they are.

### ***Objectives I: Skills***

Students completing the major in philosophy acquire the core skills involved in the philosophically competent written and oral presentation, interpretation and critical discussion of important philosophical positions. These abilities are widely applicable in all fields that require superior writing skills and superior abilities in theoretical research and imaginative problem-solving, such as

- formal and informal analytic use of critical reasoning,
- clarity in thought and language, especially through writing and presentation of complex and abstract subject matters,
- the ability to synthesize large amounts of information into a systematic, adequate and coherent picture,
- the capacity to identify, impartially present, compare and critically assess systems of positions found in (philosophical) texts and classics,
- the ability to define questions and to answer them in open-minded and rigorous discussion by using arguments in support of reasoned conclusions,
- rational independence and attention to conceptual connections that enable principled research of alternatives to extant approaches.

### ***Objectives II: Knowledge***

The course of study requires students to develop a broad competence in general issues in philosophy from an appreciation of the classics, followed by focusing on central positions in at least two of the areas metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, social and political philosophy, philosophy of language, of science, logic, phenomenology, critical theory, hermeneutics, history of philosophy. Upon completion, the student will show

- a strong understanding of canonical texts, figures, and key concepts developed in the history of philosophy (ancient and modern),
- a basic mastery of formal logic and other theories of valid argument,
- a trained awareness of the structural relationships between culturally, scientifically and normatively fundamental concepts, positions and approaches,
- a developed ability to use and analyze a variety of principled ways of approaching questions of reality, knowledge, normative correctness, beauty, social justice, mutual understanding,
- a schooled capacity to recognize and critically examine conceptual structures and patterns of reasoning in systems of argument, aimed at developing and defending stronger alternatives.

### ***Expected Outcomes: Excellence in critical, enlightened and engaged global citizenship***

Students who have completed our major will be in an excellent position to take on responsibilities a complex, diverse, multicultural world because of their training in communicating and writing on complex and abstract matters with clarity. The resulting mindset typically can be expected

- to be conscious that the way existing theoretical and practical conceptions are at a time only rarely is necessary,
- to imaginatively but rigorously think about alternative proposals in principled ways
- to offer new perspectives on sometimes very complex entrenched assumptions and institutions and communicate these to wider audiences in written and also oral form.

Certain post-college careers in law, education, politics, medicine, social activism, but also in the cutting edge regions of the natural and social sciences will typically be very receptive to students who have acquired this overall range of abilities.