



# Teaching Summary

## Stephen M. Nelson

This document contains evidence of my teaching experience and effectiveness. Included are my Teaching Philosophy, a chronological list of courses I've taught and TA'd, syllabus summaries of all courses I've taught, detailed student course evaluation data and comments, and a statement on my research on the teaching of philosophical writing.

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## I. Teaching Philosophy

My teaching philosophy is focused on student-centered practice; I place a central emphasis on engaging students in practicing the skills that are central to the discipline of philosophy. I find it most helpful to view philosophy as an activity, rather than as a body of knowledge, which shapes my approach to teaching. I'll briefly explain how I view the activity of philosophy, and then I'll illustrate how that ties into and shapes my teaching philosophy.

The philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein wrote, "A philosophical problem has the form: 'I don't know my way about.'" Later in the same work, he added, "What is your aim in philosophy?—To show the fly the way out of the fly bottle." The first statement captures an important feature of philosophy that is surprisingly difficult to learn: allowing oneself to get lost in a puzzle. The second follows up with a metaphor that brings to mind the image of a fly buzzing around aimlessly in the bottle until someone shows it the way out, possibly saying that the aim of philosophy is to come to know our way about. This view provides us with a two-part conception of philosophy: first, it involves problems that cannot be solved through obvious methods (otherwise we would at least know our way about!); and second, it involves the activity of working through the puzzle, at least until we discover some ways out of it.

Wittgenstein's metaphor is a characterization of the *discipline* of philosophy, not a *teaching* philosophy. The two are closely related in this case, though, since the pedagogy I prefer supports the teaching of an activity, rather than a body of knowledge. I'll illustrate this by explaining how I make use of both writing and discussion to keep the primary focus on practicing the activity of doing philosophy (while also delivering and discussing philosophical content, of course).

For the writing component, I assign frequent low-stakes essay assignments, usually one-page each week on the assigned reading. These essays follow rigid structures, targeted towards practicing particular skills like articulating philosophical puzzles, making nuanced distinctions between related concepts, and carefully explaining someone's arguments for their view. I include a few other kinds of writing assignments throughout the semester, also low-stakes, focusing on related skills like revision and external research. At the end of the semester, students make use of all of their skills in a final paper.

Through a variety of discussion formats, I can engage students, model skills to them, guide them into the activity, and then allow them space to practice it. I weave full-class discussions into lectures, but I also use frequent small-group discussions in class (including peer review of their weekly essays) to get them to collaborate and practice discussing philosophy with their peers. Outside of class time, I also schedule a few official meetings with each student every semester to discuss writing assignments. One-on-one meetings allow me to gauge their progress and direct our discussion towards wherever the student is struggling most, whether it's philosophy concepts, organizing essays, or basic study skills.

I consider my teaching philosophy to be heavily student-centered, since it is focused on engaging students in practicing a difficult, puzzling activity, and it is flexible enough to meet them individually where they are. This approach lends itself very well to teaching classes mixed with students from widely diverse backgrounds. If a student has poor writing skills in English, she will still benefit from the practice of low-stakes writing, and I will view her progress through several different kinds of discussion settings. And the group discussions invariably benefit from a variety of perspectives from different ages, cultures, economic backgrounds, etc. Also, since the content area of each course is the platform upon which to practice doing philosophy, my methods apply quite well to most philosophy courses (even online courses, using tools like low-stakes discussion forums). I've formed this teaching philosophy over eight years of teaching a wide range of courses, from introductory to grad-level (evidenced below), and I find the basic approach to be a success, while I improve the details of it with small tweaks every semester.

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**II. Chronological List of Courses Taught and TA'd**

Abbreviation	Institution	Abbreviation	Institution
Metro State	Metropolitan State University (St. Paul)	NCTC	Northland Community & Technical College
MCAD	Minneapolis College of Art & Design (Mpls)	U of M	University of Minnesota–Twin Cities
MSU-Mank.	Minnesota State University–Mankato (Mankato)	UND	University of North Dakota (Grand Forks)

Year	Semester	Institution	Course Title	Course #	Role
2016	Summer	NCTC	Intro to Ethics [Online]	1102	Instructor
2016	Spring	NCTC	Intro to Philosophy	1101	Instructor
		NCTC	Intro to Ethics (2)	1102	Instructor
		NCTC	Intro to Ethics [Online]	1102	Instructor
		NCTC	Logic	2000	Instructor
		NCTC	Human Relations	SSCI 1101	Instructor
2015	Fall	NCTC	Intro to Philosophy	1101	Instructor
		NCTC	Intro to Ethics (2)	1102	Instructor
		NCTC	Intro to Ethics [Online]	1102	Instructor
		NCTC	Logic	2000	Instructor
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2015	Summer	NCTC	Intro to Ethics [Online]	1102	Instructor
2015	Spring	NCTC	Intro to Philosophy	1101	Instructor
		NCTC	Intro to Ethics (2)	1102	Instructor
		NCTC	Intro to Ethics [Online]	1102	Instructor
		NCTC	Logic	2000	Instructor
2014	Fall	NCTC	Intro to Philosophy	1101	Instructor
		NCTC	Intro to Ethics (2)	1102	Instructor
		NCTC	Intro to Ethics [Online]	1102	Instructor
		NCTC	Logic	2000	Instructor
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2014	Summer	NCTC	Intro to Ethics [Online]	1102	Instructor
2014	Spring	NCTC	Intro to Ethics	1102	Instructor
		NCTC	Intro to Ethics [Online]	1102	Instructor
		NCTC	Logic	2000	Instructor
		NCTC	Morals & Medicine	2210	Instructor
		NCTC	Human Relations	SSCI 1101	Instructor
2013	Fall	NCTC	Intro to Philosophy	1101	Instructor
		NCTC	Intro to Ethics (2)	1102	Instructor
		NCTC	Intro to Ethics [Online]	1102	Instructor
		NCTC	Philosophy of Religion	1111	Instructor
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2013	Summer	NCTC	Intro to Ethics [Online]	1102	Instructor
2013	Spring	NCTC	Intro to Philosophy	1101	Instructor
		NCTC	Intro to Ethics (2)	1102	Instructor
		NCTC	Intro to Ethics [Online]	1102	Instructor
		NCTC	Morals & Medicine	2210	Instructor

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**II. Chronological List of Courses Taught and TA'd (cont.)**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Semester</b>	<b>Institution</b>	<b>Course Title</b>	<b>Course #</b>	<b>Role</b>
2012	Fall	NCTC	Intro to Philosophy	1101	Instructor
		NCTC	Intro to Ethics (2)	1102	Instructor
		NCTC	Intro to Ethics [Online]	1102	Instructor
		NCTC	Philosophy of Religion	1111	Instructor
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2012	Spring	U of M	Intro to Logic	1001	Instructor
		Metro State	Intro to Sym. Logic	204	Instructor
2011	Fall	U of M	Phil. & Cultural Diversity	1006W	Instructor
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2011	Summer	U of M	Intro to Logic	1001	Instructor
2011	Spring	U of M	Intro to Ethics	1003W	Instructor
		Metro State	Intro to Sym. Logic	204	Instructor
		MCAD	Phil. Aesthetics	CSLA 9909	Instructor
2010	Fall	U of M	Intro to Ethical Theory	3311	Instructor
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2010	Summer	U of M	Phil. & Cultural Diversity	1026W	Instructor
2010	Spring	U of M	Adv. Sym. Logic II	5202	Co-Instructor
		Metro State	Intro to Sym. Logic	204	Instructor
2009	Fall	U of M	Scientific Reasoning	1005	TA
		MSU-Mank.	Logic & Crit. Thinking	110	Instructor
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2009	Summer	U of M	Intro to Logic	1001	Instructor
2009	Spring	U of M	Adv. Sym. Logic II	5202	Co-Instructor
		MSU-Mank.	Intro to Philosophy (2)	100W	Instructor
2008	Fall	U of M	Adv. Sym. Logic I	5201	TA
		MSU-Mank.	Intro to Philosophy	100W	Instructor
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2008	Spring	U of M	Adv. Sym. Logic II	5202	Co-Instructor
2007	Fall	U of M	Moral Problems in Cont. Soc.	3302W	TA
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2007	Summer	U of M	Moral Problems in Cont. Soc.	3302W	TA
2007	Spring	NCTC	Intro to Philosophy	1101	Instructor
		NCTC	Intro to Ethics (2)	1102	Instructor
		NCTC	Morals & Medicine	2210	Instructor
		UND	Contemporary Moral Issues	215	Instructor
2006	Fall	NCTC	Intro to Philosophy	1101	Instructor
		NCTC	Intro to Ethics (2)	1102	Instructor
		NCTC	Issues in Business Ethics	2240	Instructor
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2006	Spring	U of M	Intro to Logic	1001	TA
2005	Fall	U of M	Intro to Logic	1001	TA

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### III. Syllabus Summaries for Courses Taught

This section includes syllabus summaries of each course I have instructed at least once. These include information about the texts used, the material covered, the evaluation criteria, and a brief narrative overview on my approach to the course. In cases where I've taught the course more than once, I provide information from the most recent occurrence. (I do also include one full syllabus from a recent course, in the next section of this packet.)

#### INTRODUCTORY COURSES

##### Introduction to Ethics

- Taught:** With current position at NCTC, since Fall 2012, each semester includes 2 on-campus sections and 1 online section, with an additional online section in Summer 2013 and Summer 2014. Prior: Spring 2011 (U of M, with two TA's), Spring 2007 (NCTC—2 sections), Fall 2006 (NCTC—2 sections), Summer 2006 (NCTC)
- Texts:** *A 21<sup>st</sup> Century Ethical Toolbox* by Anthony Weston; *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* by Kwame Anthony Appiah
- Overview:** I begin this course by introducing ethical theory through Weston's book, since it has a nice blend of selections from primary readings and engaging secondary discussion of them. Then I blend Appiah's book with Weston's for the rest of the semester. Appiah gives an extended discussion on what it means to be a citizen of the world in the internet age, while Weston provides tools for critical thinking and moral discourse. These two books support each other quite well, and I've used them together several times. In the online sections, we use only the Weston textbook, supplemented with student-driven research into a variety of topics to which the theories and tools from Weston are applied.
- Coursework:** Weekly essays engaging with the texts (35%), two exams (30%), two checkpoint meetings with instructor (10%), final paper with rough draft meeting (25%)

##### Introduction to Philosophy

- Taught:** With current position at NCTC, since Fall 2012, each semester includes one section, with the exception of Spring 2014. Prior: Spring 2009 (MSU-Mankato—2 sections), Fall 2008 (MSU-Mankato), Spring 2007 (NCTC), Fall 2006 (NCTC)
- Text:** *Knowledge, Nature, and Norms* (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed), ed. by Mark Timmons & David Shoemaker
- Overview:** In this class I aim for a balance between setting philosophical problems in their historical contexts and showing the ways in which the problems are still alive and thriving now. I've experimented with different textbook combinations, and my current choice works pretty well. The topic sections have useful introductions, and each set of readings begins with a sci-fi short story that illustrates and motivates the philosophical puzzles grappled with in the section. Standard topics I include are Skepticism, Philosophy of Mind, Personal Identity, and Free Will.
- Coursework:** Weekly essays engaging with the texts (35%), two exams (30%), two checkpoint meetings with instructor (10%), final paper with rough draft meeting (25%)

##### Philosophy & Cultural Diversity

- Taught:** Fall 2011 (U of M), Summer 2010 (U of M)
- Texts:** *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* by Kwame Anthony Appiah; *Introduction to World Philosophy*, ed. Daniel Bonevac & Stephen Phillips
- Overview:** This course is an Intro to Philosophy through culturally diverse texts, with a focus also on the philosophical issues surrounding cultural diversity and globalization. I taught the entire Appiah book, coordinating it with a variety of readings from the *World Philosophy* book.
- Coursework:** Weekly reading responses (20%), one 12-page paper in three stages (60%), class presentation (10%), class participation (10%)

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### III. Syllabus Summaries for Courses Taught (cont.)

#### Introduction to Logic (aka Logic & Critical Reasoning)

- Taught:** With current position at NCTC, since Spring 2014, each semester includes one section. Prior: Spring 2012 (U of M, with two TA's; Metro State), Summer 2011 (U of M, with a TA), Spring 2011 (Metro State), Spring 2010 (Metro State), Fall 2009 (MSU Mankato), Summer 2009 (U of M, with a TA)
- Text:** *A Modern Formal Logic Primer* by Paul Teller
- Overview:** Since this course fulfills the MNTC Goal Area 4 (Mathematical and Logical Reasoning), I teach it as a symbolic logic course, developing formal languages and proof methods. We first learn the roles that logical concepts play in human reasoning. Next we learn a sentential logic system, then a predicate logic extension of that system. In each, we do translation and proofs with truth trees (which I prefer over derivations for Intro courses).
- Coursework:** Homework assignments (35%), five exams (55% total), class participation (10%)

#### Human Relations

- Taught:** Spring 2016 (NCTC), Spring 2014 (NCTC)
- Texts:** *Human Relations* (open text by Saylor Academy)
- Overview:** This course is an Intro to Social Sciences course, geared towards several trade and tech programs that require this course as their one and only Humanities course. We read about and discussed a sampling of Ethics, Sociology, and Psychology, including topics such as cultural diversity and gender/sexism issues.
- Coursework:** Weekly homework (30%), class activities (35%), podcast reviews (15%), two papers (20%)

### UPPER-LEVEL OR NON-INTRODUCTORY COURSES

#### Morals & Medicine

- Taught:** Spring 2014 (NCTC), Spring 2013 (NCTC), Spring 2007 (NCTC)
- Texts:** *Contemporary Debates in Bioethics*, edited by Arthur L. Caplan and Robert Arp; *A 21<sup>st</sup> Century Ethical Toolbox* by Anthony Weston
- Overview:** I begin the course by introducing ethical theory through Weston's book, since it has a nice blend of selections from primary readings and engaging secondary discussion of them. Then I focus on debates from the *Bioethics* book for the rest of the semester, while also bringing in a variety of critical thinking tools from Weston's book. I generally cover about half of the topics from the *Bioethics* book, including readings on topics such as abortion, euthanasia, patient rights, informed consent, and genetic research.
- Coursework:** Weekly essays engaging with the texts (35%), two exams (30%), two checkpoint meetings with instructor (10%), final paper with rough draft meeting (25%)

#### Philosophy of Religion

- Taught:** Fall 2013 (NCTC), Fall 2012 (NCTC)
- Texts:** *Exploring the Philosophy of Religion*, 7<sup>th</sup> Ed., edited by David Stewart
- Overview:** This course is primarily focused on issues such as the problem of evil, arguments for the existence of God, and the nature of religious belief. We also view and discuss a video series called *The Wisdom of Faith* (Bill Moyers interviewing Huston Smith about world religions). Students do individual projects, giving presentations to the class about its connections to class topics, and writing a paper discussing those connections.
- Coursework:** Weekly essays engaging with the texts (35%), two presentations (30%), two meetings with instructor (10%), final paper with rough draft meeting (25%)

### III. Syllabus Summaries for Courses Taught (cont.)

#### **In the Eye of the Beholder: Topics in Philosophical Aesthetics**

- Taught: Spring 2011 (MCAD)  
Text: *Aesthetics*, ed. Susan Feagin & Patrick Maynard  
Overview: This course was in the Continuing Studies program, geared towards students who had no philosophy background. We discussed a couple readings from the text each week on topics such as the definition of 'art', the impact of art on humans, and the importance of the artist's intentions. We also held class at the Minneapolis Institute of the Arts a couple times so we could view art together and discuss it along with the week's readings.  
Coursework: Class participation and class presentation were required for completion certificate.

#### **Introduction to Ethical Theory**

- Taught: Fall 2010 (U of M)  
Text: *Ethical Theory: An Anthology*, ed. Russ Shafer-Landau  
Overview: This course is an upper-level advanced introduction, intended for philosophy majors. I focused heavily on issues in Metaethics (moral status, moral knowledge, value, moral responsibility), with some advanced articles in Normative Ethical Theory as well.  
Coursework: Weekly essays (20%), short papers (45%), long paper (30%), class participation (5%)

#### **Contemporary Moral Issues**

- Taught: Spring 2007 (UND)  
Texts: *Practical Ethics* by Peter Singer; *Being Good* by Simon Blackburn; various articles on applied topics that contrast Singer's views  
Overview: This was an upper-level course with no pre-requisites, so I treated it roughly as an Intro to Ethics course, with a stronger demand on the students to be good discussion participants and competent writers. I used the Blackburn book primarily for ethical theory, and then covered applied issues such as animal rights, abortion, and the environment.  
Coursework: Weekly reading responses (1/3 of grade), four essay exams (2/3 of grade)

#### **Issues in Business Ethics**

- Taught: Fall 2006 (NCTC)  
Text: *Ethical Theory and Business*, ed. Tom L. Beauchamp & Norman E. Bowie  
Overview: This course focused heavily on the discussion of case studies, introducing a base of ethical theories and then spending the rest of the semester focusing on a variety moral issues that come up in the business world, such as the purpose of the corporation, consumer risk, ethical treatment of employees, privacy, diversity and discrimination in the workplace, affirmative action and reverse discrimination, marketing and the disclosure of information, advertising, bluffing, and tech challenges to intellectual property  
Coursework: Weekly reading responses (1/3 of grade), four essay exams (2/3 of grade)

#### **Advanced Symbolic Logic II**

- Co-Taught: Spring 2010 (U of M), Spring 2009 (U of M), Spring 2008 (U of M)  
Text: *Computability and Logic*, 5<sup>th</sup> Ed., by George Boolos, John Burgess, & Richard Jeffrey  
Overview: This course is the second part of the logic series for philosophy grad students at the U of M. As a TA for this course, I was listed as Co-Instructor, since I taught sections twice a week, introducing new material, going beyond just review. This course familiarizes students with mathematical logic, up to and including Gödel's Incompleteness theorems.  
Coursework: Four take-home exams and weekly homework assignments.



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**IV. Selected Student Evaluation Comments**

<b>Course</b>	<b>Answers to: "What suggestions can you give to improve this course?" (NCTC)</b>
<b>Intro to Ethics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good course, I really liked how you were open to differences of opinions. Also were very flexible with time. Thanks! (Spring 2013)</li> <li>• Maybe free candy...? But honestly, I'm not too sure how the course could be improved. The subject matter discussed in class is exactly what would be expected from an ethics class, and that is ethics. I really like the two-book approach used in this class; the Weston book explains plain as day what ethics is and how to apply different ethical approaches to different situations while the Appiah book gives real-world examples of different ethical issues from many different cultures and explains how those cultures tackle ethical issues. This class is thoroughly enjoyable. (Spring 2013)</li> <li>• No suggestions on how to improve! Excellent class. Excellent professor. I could take this course over and over again and not be bored of it! Keep up the great work! (Fall 2013)</li> <li>• In certain circumstances the topics talked about in class seemed to drag on and allow other students to easily become distracted or stop paying attention. Possibly change something up every now and then because your voice gets a little monotonous, and the students don't always get involved the best they don't read the whole chapter. (Fall 2013)</li> </ul>
<b>Intro to Philosophy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nothing really, I find the class interesting and pretty much what I thought what a philosophy class would be like. (Fall 2013)</li> <li>• Not that I can think of. However, I do like the way you do weekly assignments over the way you did last year for ethics (first semester). (Fall 2013)</li> <li>• This was my first course (ever) that has anything to do with Philosophy so everything is completely new to me. Having only one written assignment a week is a good amount, it gives us enough time to actually read and understand the material somewhat, and re-read or gather information from other sources if we have to. (Fall 2013)</li> </ul>
<b>Logic</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I would suggest still even more power points, they're almost incomparably superior to the book. When we have a power point, I know some place I can start from will be elucidated. The class would be a disaster if the instructor didn't have the grasp necessary to bring these concepts out of the book and down to earth. He is very generous with his time, and seems sincerely invested in helping us understand the subject. More time to work through problems during class would be nice, I think that interactiveness is crucial. When I look at the book alone, I often want to give up. This type of class is not one of my strengths, I find it is frustrating but worthwhile. The book is boring, the class is not. (Spring 2014)</li> </ul>
<b>Morals &amp; Medicine</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mr. Nelson is a great teacher he break down puzzles very well and explains them step by step... I highly agree that students should take his class. (Spring 2013)</li> <li>• Stephen Nelson is an excellent instructor and is almost too intelligent for a two year school. With that being said, I found it very discouraging and disrespectful how the students in the class would NEVER talk. He also keeps an open forum for us to have great class discussions and debates on all of these ethical issues. However, I don't know if students weren't doing the readings or if they didn't understand that he wants us engaging in the topics. I loved this class and I love his open ways of thinking and addressing different issues and having a great sense of humor. He is an amazing teacher and a huge asset to NCTC. (Spring 2014)</li> <li>• Nothing...Mr. Nelson makes this class!!! He gives you space to share your opinions without feeling like you can't, helps you prep for exam with his study guide (which is AWESOME) and is just an all around understanding good person :) (Spring 2014)</li> </ul>

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**IV. Selected Student Evaluation Comments (cont.)**

<b>Course/Role</b>	<b>Answers to: "What did the instructor do that most helped your learning?" (U of M)</b>
<b>Adv. Symbolic Logic I</b> <i>TA</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helped build an intuition for subject material. (Fall 2008)</li> <li>• Explained the book in relation to what we were expected to be able to do. (Fall 2008)</li> <li>• Gave some context to the material by explaining the types of things that will be covered next semester. (Fall 2008)</li> <li>• Was concise, competent, and available when help was needed. (Fall 2008)</li> </ul>
<b>Adv. Symbolic Logic II</b> <i>Co-Instructor</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Steve was good at seeing where we were having difficulty understanding the material and took time to focus on those areas. (Spring 2010)</li> <li>• Office hours were really helpful and Steve was patient and knew the material super well. (Spring 2010)</li> <li>• Was extremely well-prepared, very rigorous, concise, well-versed with the material. (Spring 2009)</li> <li>• Recitations were excellent. (Spring 2009)</li> </ul>
<b>Introduction to Ethical Theory</b> <i>Instructor</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• He assigned readings and responses consistently, so it was easy to stay on track. His system of having a response due each Monday was helpful. (Fall 2010)</li> <li>• Steve gave good, critical feedback on our short and long papers. Anytime I stayed after class for clarification on the lecture, he took the time to hear me out and have a discussion. (Fall 2010)</li> </ul>
<b>Introduction to Ethics</b> <i>Instructor</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Made us read the chapter beforehand so that when we came to class and went over the chapter, material was easier to understand/make sense of. (Spring 2011)</li> <li>• Explained things very clearly, writing out ethical theories and arguments step by step on the board. Answered my emailed questions quickly and thoroughly. (Spring 2011)</li> </ul>
<b>Introduction to Logic</b> <i>Instructor</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• He was patient, clear, knowledgeable, and funny. Steve Nelson was the perfect teacher for a course like this. (Summer 2011)</li> <li>• He gave multiple explanations of the same concept to make sure everyone had a chance to find a method of reasoning that "clicked" for them. (Summer 2011)</li> <li>• Very kind and respectful, approachable and enthusiastic. (Summer 2009)</li> <li>• Was open to answering questions and helping students out when they needed it—makes it a more comfortable for learning because doesn't make anyone feel silly or stupid for having questions or not understanding the material. (Summer 2009)</li> </ul>
<b>Philosophy &amp; Cultural Diversity</b> <i>Instructor</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• He did a really good job of restating the material we read in our books in a more understandable way. He also did a good job of relating the material to things in this day and age and to things relevant to our lives. (Fall 2011)</li> <li>• Asked stimulating questions, encouraged discussion. (Summer 2010)</li> <li>• Had students lead discussion. (Summer 2010)</li> <li>• He explained everything really well. If there was anything the slightest bit confusing, he'd explain it in terms that I could understand. (Summer 2010)</li> </ul>
<b>Scientific Reasoning</b> <i>TA</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good feedback on assignments. (Fall 2009)</li> <li>• He was patient and explained the material clearly. (Fall 2009)</li> <li>• Provided a very comfortable and healthy environment for learning (Fall 2009)</li> </ul>

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**IV. Selected Student Evaluation Comments (cont.)**

<b>Course/Role</b>	<b>Responses to: "Additional Comments" (U of M)</b>
<b>Adv. Symbolic Logic I</b> <i>TA</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Steve was awesome! (Fall 2008)</li> <li>• Steve is pretty cool and helpful. (Fall 2008)</li> </ul>
<b>Adv. Symbolic Logic II</b> <i>Co-Instructor</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Steve was easy to understand and personable. Also, he presented the material in the clearest way he could which was a big help. (Spring 2010)</li> <li>• Steve seemed to have a strong grasp of the material. (Spring 2010)</li> <li>• Steve is a nice and a competent TA! (Spring 2009)</li> <li>• I thought Bill and Steve did an excellent job teaching the course and I learned an incredible amount for having very little background in logic. Thank you for doing such a good job, we all appreciated your effort. (Spring 2008)</li> </ul>
<b>Intro to Ethical Theory</b> <i>Instructor</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overall, I really enjoyed and appreciated the style of instruction. It was not particularly one-sided which helped quite a lot. (Fall 2010)</li> </ul>
<b>Intro to Ethics</b> <i>Instructor</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I didn't know what to expect when I registered for this class, but it ended up being one of my favorites. I found the abortion and animal rights topics to be particularly interesting. It got me to think about things in a different way. (Spring 2011)</li> <li>• Very eloquent and articulate lecturer. (Spring 2011)</li> </ul>
<b>Intro to Logic</b> <i>Instructor</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Great teacher! I hate anything math related but he made it as interesting as possible. (Summer 2011)</li> <li>• I enjoyed the course! Thanks :) (And I didn't think I would, mind you) (Summer 2009)</li> <li>• Stephen is an excellent instructor with not only a thorough understanding of the material, but a desire to impart understanding. (Summer 2009)</li> <li>• I appreciate the care the instructor took in teaching this course. Very accessible but not too slow for the fast learners. (Summer 2009)</li> </ul>
<b>Moral Problems in Cont. Society</b> <i>TA</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Steve was awesome. He was helpful and friendly. (Fall 2007)</li> <li>• Very good at explaining topics during office hours. Also very helpful and respectful of students. (Fall 2007)</li> </ul>
<b>Philosophy &amp; Cultural Diversity</b> <i>Instructor</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It was a good class taught in a very tough time. The paper assignments every week was the most effective part of the class in my opinion. (Fall 2011)</li> <li>• Steve has done a good job presenting the content and we have very good, active class environment. (Summer 2010)</li> <li>• Steve made the class really interesting, always providing good materials. He also gave feedback and asked questions that really pertained to what we were learning that day. I learned a lot in 3 weeks. His grading is very fair, too. (Summer 2010)</li> <li>• Steve was a great teacher, made class fun to come to. Students were able to relate to him and his examples he used. (Summer 2010)</li> </ul>
<b>Scientific Reasoning</b> <i>TA</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• He was a great TA! :) (Fall 2009)</li> <li>• The discussion sections were helpful! (Fall 2009)</li> </ul>

## V. Research on Teaching Philosophical Writing

In 2011-2012, I worked as a Research Assistant on the University of Minnesota's Writing-Enriched Curriculum (WEC) Project. WEC is a university-wide project, based out of the Center for Writing, charged with researching and implementing programs for developing discipline-specific writing guidelines. The University of Minnesota's Department of Philosophy joined on in 2010 as one of several pilot departments working on the WEC project. The Philosophy Liaison is Roy T. Cook, Associate Professor in the Department of Philosophy, and the project includes on Research Assistant each year to aid in the project.

Before I joined the project, Prof. Cook and the previous RA did a series of studies that resulted in a detailed list of desired discipline-specific writing characteristics and abilities. The idea of this part of the project was to identify what sorts of writing characteristics the Department of Philosophy feels are the primary characteristics of good philosophical writing. Included in this idea is the goal of determining what sorts of writing abilities the Department would like a student who graduates with a BA in Philosophy from the U of M to possess.

The next year, when I joined the project, the focus of my RA position was to develop and run a workshop series for other graduate students on a variety of topics relating to teaching philosophical writing. This workshop series was a trial run for similar ones that would also include faculty. The goal of the workshops was to increase communication within the department and initiate a conversation about the desired philosophical writing characteristics and abilities, drawing on and advancing the research from the previous year.

I spent the Fall of 2011 developing the workshop series by researching the teaching of philosophical writing. In addition to regular research methods, I also interviewed several members of the U of M's Philosophy faculty. These interviews were quite fruitful, uncovering and documenting the wide variety of techniques used to teach philosophical writing in the department. I also discussed with them the workshop I was developing, and these discussions helped shape the workshop topics.

During the Spring of 2012, I held the workshop as a series of four meetings, spaced three weeks apart. The topics of the meetings were: Alternatives to the Term Paper, Revision/Response, Working With a Rubric, and Using Students as a Resource. The attendees at these sessions ranged from first-year graduate students to advanced graduate students and post-docs, so in designing them, I included materials that would be useful to both teaching assistants and instructors. In each of the sessions, I incorporated the desired philosophical writing characteristics and abilities mentioned above, including discussions of how we might focus some of our writing assignments and writing coaching towards developing specific abilities in students.

Through my work on the WEC project, I acquired quite a few ideas about improving my own teaching of philosophical writing. In addition to making better use of some of my normal techniques, I've found some of the different methods for handling paper projects to be quite useful. Since I did that research, I've experimented with having students use in-class writing assignments to develop small parts of a larger paper, using peer-review to improve student writing and confidence, and developing better and clearer rubrics to aid my own communication with students about my expectations and perceptions of their writing. My work on this project also vastly improved my baseline grasp of pedagogy options, which has been quite useful in my development as an educator over the past few years.