

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION
COLLEGE OF ARCHITECTURE, ARTS AND HUMANITIES
CLEMSON UNIVERSITY

THE PHILOSOPHY MAJOR PORTFOLIO

In the Philosophy Major a digital portfolio will be used to satisfy multiple general education requirements or competencies, in particular, the Academic and Professional Development requirement (2 credits) and the distributed competencies in (a) reasoning, critical thinking, and problem solving (hereafter RCTPS) and (b) ethical judgment. The approach includes

- Significant discussion of academic integrity issues (e.g., plagiarism and respect for intellectual property) throughout the curriculum with the aim of getting students to see that integrity is central in all aspects of life and work.
- A digital portfolio (on CD) that comprises a variety of exhibits from the student's career and organizes them in a way that demonstrates competence in (a) RCTPS and (b) ethical judgment (both conceptual and applied); the portfolio's contents will also exhibit concretely the student's academic and professional development (e.g., in the area of preparation for professional or graduate study or entry into a career).
- Sustained, ongoing assistance in putting together the portfolio and detailed assessment of the finished product that will enhance the integrative learning experience of portfolio construction.

All students will be assigned a portfolio advisor as soon as they declare a philosophy major. All regular department faculty will serve as portfolio advisors who will guide and supervise the students in the development of their portfolios.

A Portfolio Committee will conduct the final review of portfolios and determine whether the materials assembled demonstrate attainment of the competencies.

The primary means for students to develop the distributed competencies—RCTPS and ethical judgment—will be their departmental course work. However, the portfolio may include a variety of exhibits from different sources (for example, written work from courses taken outside of the department as well as courses within the major curriculum, papers submitted to student conferences and competitions, letters to the editor, journals, web pages, video taped presentations, et cetera.)

THE PORTFOLIO AND THE DISTRIBUTED COMPETENCIES

(a) RCTPS

(b) Ethical judgment

There are three key stages in the portfolio project: *collection, selection, reflection*.

Stage 1 Collection

As soon as students declare the major, their advisor will instruct them to begin collecting items they believe germane to the general education competencies. At this stage, students will be essentially unconstrained in their gathering of materials. They will be encouraged to be as inclusive as possible including materials created for any class, or even produced for purposes

other than classes, so long as they appear to be related to RCTPS or ethical judgment. Production of the portfolio should itself be an educational experience. The selection and reflection stages will serve this purpose.

Stage 2 Selection

Portfolio advisors will instruct students to devote time and energy to the task of selection periodically over the course of their academic career as philosophy majors. Advisors will explain that the task requires judgment in deciding which pieces to include. In particular, they will discuss with their advisees the need to examine and evaluate the work they have collected in order to select the items that best demonstrate the required competencies. They will stress the importance of selection and make clear that the portfolio will not serve its purpose if it is merely a repository, a mere collection of work. Students will choose to keep some things, eliminate some things, and, perhaps, edit or revise some things. Advisors may provide some guidance at this stage, but the student must make the selections themselves. Thus, the process of selecting things for inclusion in the portfolio will be a learning opportunity, if only in the sense that students will have the opportunity to see where they have been and where they are now.

Stage 3 Reflection

Students will be required to prepare a final reflective essay (or other exhibit) as the final step in the portfolio project. This reflective piece will identify the selections and explain how and to what extent they demonstrate the competence(s) in question (RCTPS, ethical judgment, or both). The object of their reflective musings will be their development as critical thinkers positioned to work through ethical problems in a systematic, reflective and responsible way.

ACADEMIC AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The materials comprised by the final portfolio will go some distance in revealing the student's academic development; they will complement the course work completed in the major curriculum. Under the rubric of professional development we will be looking for a demonstration of readiness to leave the world of undergraduate study and enter graduate or professional school or a career. From the outset, portfolio advising will be conducted with this in mind. On an individualized basis, portfolio advisors will provide assistance in line with their expertise (e.g., with preparation of materials for application to graduate or professional school) or seek assistance from a colleague better positioned to assist an individual student. In addition, as appropriate, they will encourage students to take advantage of the services provided by the Michelin Career Center, the Writing Center, and the Class of 1941 Studio for Student Communication.

ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT PORTFOLIOS

The department will review the portfolio during the spring semester of the junior year. Students must submit their portfolio no later than the midpoint of the spring term. Key features of this assessment program are:

- A departmental committee for this purpose will be formed each year.
- The committee will read over each student's portfolio and certify that it has met the standards. This will be done in writing. Committee members will sign a form (yet to be created), which will be included with the copy of the portfolio retained by the department.

- We will include a special category for exemplary work in the portfolio. More precisely, there will be three possible “grades”: unsatisfactory, satisfactory and exemplary. A grade of satisfactory or exemplary will be required to earn credit for the portfolio.

MECHANICS

PHIL 399 Philosophy Portfolio

This course will carry two credits (the two general education credits associated with the requirement in Academic and Professional Development). The Office of the Chair will administer the course; it will be administered in the same manner as PHIL 499 Independent Study. As with Independent Study a contract will be signed stipulating the expectations/requirements of the course. The parties to the contract will be the student and his or her portfolio advisor. (Contracts may be amended when, for example, student and advisor agree that a change in advisor is appropriate, a portfolio advisor is on sabbatical, or leaves Clemson University.) The contract will be signed when the student declares a major in philosophy. Although official enrollment in PHIL 399 will be in the first semester of the student’s junior year, as noted above, the tasks of portfolio construction will begin immediately after the student declares the major. The portfolio project in philosophy is an ongoing project that **cannot** be completed in a single semester. This crucial feature of the curriculum in philosophy will be explained and explicitly agreed to in the contract. The Chair will award grades on the basis of the written report he or she receives from the departmental Portfolio Review Committee.

OPTIONAL MEANS OF ASSESSMENT

With advance notice, the Portfolio Committee may require students to meet with the committee and engage in an ethical discussion on an assigned ethical topic. The most likely the topic will be the topic of the J.T. Barton Jr., Ethics Essay Scholarship Competition. Students will be encouraged to take advantage of the materials gathered at the Rutland Center for Ethics website for the competition as they prepare for the discussion.