Teaching Dossier

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§1 Teaching Philosophy Statement

While the purpose of the university is a contested topic, there is a general consensus that students ought to emerge from their educational cocoon with a certain set of abstract skills. Amongst the list of skills to be acquired whilst in university, a commonality across disciplines is an affirmation of so-called "critical thinking." To me, philosophy as a discipline is, fundamentally, meta insofar as while a specific canon is certainly required knowledge, the main benefit one gets from an education in philosophy is a methodology for reading texts, making sense of the world, and engaging with others. This view of philosophy, one as a discipline of disciplines, is ultimately what guides my teaching philosophy as a whole.

Indeed, I see the role of a philosophy instructor to be twofold. First, and more specifically and narrowly, an instructor ought to educate students in a specific philosophical canon. Second, and more importantly and generally, an instructor ought to model a *way of engaging* not only with philosophical texts, but also the world one finds oneself thrown into. While knowing Aristotle's four causes, for example, is important in its own right, knowing how to read difficult texts written by those whom a student may not agree with and, in turn, making sense of them both charitably and critically is far more important. Vitally, the way that a student learns philosophy is by *doing philosophy*. For me, this means that there must be a trifold mix between abstract and applied philosophizing, with the latter category further bifurcated.

In the former category, students ought to be able to read a philosophical text and grapple with it both on the author's own terms, and with recourse to their own conceptual understanding of the world. To read and synthesize a work of philosophy is ultimately to act as a butcher, carving up the work into digestible and usable segments that one can make sense of via one's own lived experience. Furthermore, and in the latter category, students ought to be able to take the abstract synthesizing which is part of reading philosophy and express their own understandings and ideas about a given work. Ultimately, any act of butchering a text must place the text in conversation with the reader such that the student as reader is forced into a dialogue with the author. This creates a level of intersubjectivity as students ought further be able to engage with other students' ideas to thrash out the nuances and details of a given text.

To this end, I place a great emphasis on written work insofar as it seems to be the best "measure" (and I use that word very tentatively) of a student's ability to engage with philosophical ideas. Indeed, to write and to think are concomitant, and as one puts pen to paper or fingers to keyboard, one necessarily engages in a dialogue with countless others. Writing is a *séance*. It is with that in mind that I look for critical engagement with texts via not merely a recapitulation or exegesis of a given author's work, but by an importation of one's own novel ideas, a necessary part of thought. To aid in this, I strongly believe that an instructor must take a synthetic approach to engaging with student work: one must apply *both* a hermeneutic of suspicion and a reparative reading, working with the student on an equal playing field. Specifically, while an instructor is nominally an 'authority' on a given topic, such 'authority' ought not come with delusions of grandeur. The way I read written works by students takes their ideas as seriously as I would any other written work by a peer, looking both for flaws in the argument while also granting it a

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charitable reading. When reading student papers, I go in with an existent pool of knowledge while simultaneously recognizing that *I too* am a student with a desire to learn. Given that, I read student papers not to see whether they've said X, Y, or Z things, but rather to look at *how* they're engaging with the material and, in turn, how we can learn together. I thus give extensive feedback (as I would when reviewing a paper for any other peer) and encourage workshopping ideas in office hours or via email so, ideally, both the students and I can come to a better understanding of the often-opaque texts which we read. This has proven to be quite effective with several students noting that they've never before had their work taken so seriously and/or they've come to a richer understanding of a given text through our peer-to-peer engagement.

As noted above, while I am nominally an 'authority,' I don't think there is a specific value-set that I ought to make sure students leave the classroom with; rather, I think that the overall process of reading and writing that students get out of my courses will help produce a critical methodology. The above is not to say that I wouldn't want to model fairness, equity, respect, etc., rather it is to say that I view my role as an educator as one who facilities and promotes a methodology of engagement. Specifically, I want my students to be able to engage with ideas that they may not understand, like, or agree with by approaching them in an intellectually honest and attentive way. This means approaching a text with charity and giving the author the strongest version of their argument while, at least at first, bracketing one's own preconceptions. This process of reading openly and honestly allows students not only to engage with abstract philosophical ideas, but also—and of arguably more importance—provides students the tools they will need to engage with other living human beings who have different views than they do. In a political climate that desperately needs more listeners, my hope is that through a philosophical education, students feel empowered not merely to advocate for themselves, but to listen to others and understand why others may feel the way they do. Indeed, it is this methodology of engagement and critique that, in my opinion, necessarily underpins all other disciplines.

Ultimately, a student taking a course from me should expect to read dense philosophical works that may not make sense on first (or second) reading, but should nonetheless show up to our class, a class that will blend a lecture wherein I give my own account of the reading, attempting to extract the main points and relate them to students' existing bodies of knowledge, with a discussion. Indeed, I view discussion amongst peers to be the most successful and rewarding way to make sense of difficult texts. To that end—and similar to my method for reading student papers—I view all as peers in a co-constitutive learning environment where students may—and indeed often do—have novel understandings of a text that will help not only other students, but myself in making sense of necessarily difficult ideas. Ultimately, we are all—students and instructors alike—learners, neither one having a monopoly on knowledge. While one group may have more experience in a given field, that ought not be equated with uncritical expertise and to me, the best learning environment for all involved is one where hierarchy is minimal, and students and instructors work together as peers to make sense of the single most complicated thing there is: the world around us. Thus, if the goal of philosophy as such has traditionally been to live a good/examined life, my goal as a philosophy instructor is to facilitate such an examination.

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§2 Teaching Responsibilities

Invited Guest Lecturer

Year	Course Title	Course Code	Institution	Description
Fall Term 2023	Continental Philosophy	PHIL 3555F	The University of Western Ontario	Guest lecture on an article I assigned and its relation to antecedent course readings
Winter Term 2023	Philosophy and Videogames	PHILOS/2455	The Ohio State University	Guest lecture on an assigned article I'd written and other, antecedent course readings

TA/Tutorial Leader

Year	Course Title	Course Code	Description	# of Students
Fall Term 2023	Continental Philosophy	PHIL 3555F	Grading, Formal Office Hours, Workshopping Papers with Students	26
Winter Term 2023	Continental Philosophy	PHIL 3555G	Grading, Formal Office Hours, Workshopping Papers with Students	33
Fall Term 2022	Existentialism	PHIL 2557F	Grading and Workshopping Papers with Students	52
Winter Term 2022	Science Fiction Cinema	FILM 3357G	Grading and Workshopping Papers with Students	33
Fall Term 2021	Sex, How To	GSWS 2163A	Grading and Formal Office Hours	64 (out of 537)
Fall and Winter Term 2020/2021	Introduction to Film	FILM 1022	Tutorial Leader	30 (out of 191)

PHIL 3555F: Identical as PHIL 3555G below with the addition of the following: I was invited to guest lecture on an article I assigned that fit within the course theme and followed from previous readings. Following Franz Fanon, Alia Al-Saji, and Sylvia Wynter, I assigned a text by Kodwo Eshun discussing Afrofuturism. The lecture consisted of a discussion of the text—which involved student interpretations—as well as a broader conversation of how Eshun's Afrofuturism related to the slightly pessimistic views of the aforementioned thinkers.

PHILOS/2455: William Jones-Kline invited me to give a guest lecture in front of the course he's teaching at The Ohio State University on philosophy and videogames. The students had been reading work adjacent to my areas of study and ended the semester by reading an article I had written that tried to tie some of themes they had been discussing together. William invited me to speak about my article, as well as other readings from class (*e.g.*, Baudrillard and Debord) and I presented a lecture and fielded questions related not only to my work, but also to how I saw Baudrillard and Debord functioning within the context of their class and ideal, revolutionary social movements.

PHIL 3555G: Working with Professor Helen Fielding, I attended lectures, held formal office hours where I met with students to discuss the course readings (as well as relevant philosophical issues), workshopped papers with written and verbal feedback, *liaised* with students via email and forum posts to discuss course content and their work in general, and helped encourage small group discussions weekly. I also graded student's forum posts and half the class's papers, providing written and verbal feedback to students.

PHIL 2557F: Working with Professor Dean Proessel, I attended lectures and talked with students about course material, *liaised* with students via email about course content, paper writing techniques, and general philosophical questions, and I graded all papers and exams, providing written and verbal feedback to students.

FILM 3357G: Working with Professor Tobias Nagl, I attended lectures and talked with students about course material, worked on paper writing techniques with individual students and met to discuss problems that arose, and graded all papers, providing written and verbal feedback to students.

GSWS 2163A: Working with Professor Nicole Edwards, I completed online lesson material, held formal office hours where I worked with students to understand course content and make sense of confusing language in the texts (while also working with several English-as-second-language students to ensure they got the most out of the course), and graded all quizzes and exams, providing written feedback to students.

FILM 1022: Working with Professor Tobias Nagl, I watched pre-recorded lectures and held a small, seminar style 1hour tutorial session weekly where I worked with students to discuss the relevant readings and films for that week, clarify material discussed in the lecture, and provide supplementary examples. I also offered extra credit assignments to students and *liaised* with students via email and Zoom to work on writing techniques. I graded all exams and papers, providing written and verbal feedback to students.

§3 Evidence of Teaching Effectiveness

Working in Professor Helen Fielding's "Continental Philosophy" courses gave me the opportunity to work directly with students to formulate paper ideas, read through drafts, and help students advance their writing skills going forward. Below is an unsolicited email sent from a student to Dr. Fielding during her "Continental Philosophy" course (3555F — Fall 2023) which was, following consent from the student, shared with me (name redacted). Two further notes from students in the same course can be found in (Appendix B).

On Oct 19, 2023, at 7:39 PM, ███████████████████ wrote:

Good Evening Professor,

I hope this email find you well,

I just wanted to say that Peter is one of the best TA's I've ever had. He has helped me so much with this essay and I just wanted to communicate my appreciation. He and I have been emailing back and forth for the past couple of days, he has sent me secondary sources, shown me examples of his own material, met with me in person for over an hour, and pretty much has done everything he can to put my mind at ease. I experience a lot of anxiety when handing in assignments because I often tend to second-guess myself, Peter has been nothing but understanding and compassionate towards me. I send him chaotic emails where my ideas are all over the map and he even takes the time to deconstruct what I mean. I am just very grateful for all the time, effort, and consideration he contributes. It just shows me that he really cares about the material and the students. I am not sure if this email will impact anyone at all, but I just felt wrong keeping it to myself. Anyway, I just thought you should know that my experience with him on this first essay was really amazing.

I hope you have a great evening and I look forward to seeing you in class next week.

Kind Regards,

████████████

Working in Professor Dean Proessel's "Existentialism" course with over 50 students, I graded plenty of papers and talked with several students about how to write a philosophical essay. I provided students with a "quick and dirty guide" to writing a philosophy paper (see Appendix C) and workshopped paper ideas with several extremely promising students. Below are two unsolicited emails from students (names redacted) commenting on my feedback and devotion to helping them succeed.

From: ▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓
Sent: Wednesday, December 7, 2022 2:14 PM
To: Peter Heft
Subject: RE: Some thoughts on writing

Hi Peter,

Thank you so much for this. I think your feedback is on another level. I do not understand how you re able to help us, work on your PHD, and do the TA grading at the same time. I don't know if its healthy for you to keep that up, but if you can, know that the person on the other side really appreciates it. Hopefully you become a professor.

I have been thinking about starting a blog or something, I just really need to write things with less stakes than Philo essays a week before the deadline. Not sure how Ill find someone to criticize my work but I'll see if I can do something with reddit. I listen to eloquent people, a lot, but I find that their talks are always written in a very personal and "op-edie" sort of way, and I have a hard time turning that into academic language.

Again, I really appreciate your help. I'll take your advice and hopefully learn to write stuff above an undergraduate level.

Also, I'll likely send you content questions closer to the exam if that's ok.

Best,
▓▓▓▓

From: ▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓
Sent: Tuesday, November 1, 2022 2:55 PM
To: Peter Heft
Subject: Essay Feedback

Hi Peter,

I hope you're having a great reading week, and I hope I'm not bothering you on your break!

I just wanted to send you a quick email and say that I just read your feedback on my essay, and it is simply the best and most comprehensive feedback I've ever gotten. I'm not sure what the standards on these things are, but I can tell you in my experience at the philosophy department no TA has actually engaged with something I've written on such serious philosophical terms (it's usually just a nod in the direction of "you understood the reading correctly" and "your style is clear").

So I just wanted to say I really appreciate the feedback, and I'd love to come see you in office hours once we get back to pick your brain about it and try to refine my thinking on this. If you'd like that, we can set something up next week.

Enjoy the rest of your break!

Best,
▓▓▓

Additionally, during the year I led a tutorial section for Professor Tobias Nagl's FILM 1022: Introduction to Film course, I set up an anonymous Google Form at the mid-point and end-point of the class to receive feedback. Out of 30 students, I received 11 unique responses at the half-way mark and 6 at the end. My primary objective in the tutorial (especially since it was my first time leading one) was to encourage students to talk and make the space feel welcoming while also being someone the students could come to if they needed help. All responses can be found in Appendix B, but below are four different responses.

> "I liked everything about the tutorials. They were organized and helpful with regards to the course material, but also fun and insightful with the discussions. You were always prepared with questions that prompted discussions but also let conversations flow freely

without getting too off track. You were very helpful and relatable which made these tutorials a highlight of my week. I cannot think of a single complaint. Keep doing what you are doing! Thanks for the awesome year."

"I personally enjoyed near the end of the year, I wasn't sure if you were purposely asking questions like this but the last 4 classes you would ask questions that really opened up to anyone talking about the movie and it helped me not really care what I was gonna say. It would just be general thoughts about the movie it was just a good way for anyone to talk."

"I thought you were great at facilitating and encouraging a natural discussion amongst the class even when no one was talking. I think one thing that could have been helpful is doing a very brief recap about the weeks content and almost giving like a couple minutes summary or just pointing out the main topics covered so that we would have a clear idea about the main take away from classes. other than that I thought you did great"

"You're a great TA, you allow for us to ask questions and help us through the course, while being very informative and relatable. You allow for a lot of valuable discussions and ideas to come about, while also guiding the discussion in a meaningful way. I like the tutorials the way they are, especially showing and discussing clips. Personally, I'm not a big fan of 'picking on'[1] people, but it is very rare and I completely understand why it is sometimes necessary. However, I don't see it as a problem that needs to be changed. You're doing an awesome job!"

Other students gave suggestions about how I could increase participation—indeed, one student suggested I make use of a forum and allow forum posts to count towards participation—and I took those into consideration and changed how I viewed the second half of the course by encouraging online engagement as well. Overall, this course was one of the best experiences of my life.

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[1] My term for so-called "cold-calling" on people.

§4 Teaching Strategies and Innovations

As noted in section 3, when working as a teaching assistant in Professor Dean Proessel's existentialism course, I wrote a "quick and dirty guide" to writing undergraduate philosophy papers which I published on the course site (full document in Appendix C). The document, in a word, looked at a given paper topic that students were asked to write on and examined several different ways one could go about producing a paper. Within the document, I provided a way to break down the prompt, noting the different types of questions being asked (*e.g.*, questions requiring exegesis vs. questions requiring argumentation). Further, I provide a brief account of how to write an exegetical paper, noting that such a project ought to be augmented with argumentation of one's own while also noting one ought to be careful in what one takes on so as not to try to do too much in a short paper. I ended up providing two templates for papers that addressed different aspects of the prompt.

In addition, as I move forward in my career, I've been planning out potential courses to teach. Appendix A provides a prospective syllabus for a course that is in my area of expertise. The proposed course, a 'special topics in philosophy' course, looks at so-called "speculative realism" and emphasizes not only reading primary source texts from philosophers within the movement, but producing two written papers tackling, ideally, different elements we discuss in class. In line with what is noted in my teaching philosophy statement in section 1, I aim to hold one-on-one student meetings to discuss how students found the course, what problems they came across and worked through, and how they would evaluate their engagement. This method of direct student interaction—something I've experienced in the past—seems beneficial as it allows us to work through difficulties and ideas together.

As noted in my teaching philosophy statement in section 1 and evidenced from the two emails above in section 3, I think written feedback and working with students to understand the material and work on writing better papers is fundamental to a good philosophy education. Indeed, what is necessary for those is taking students' ideas and work seriously and engaging them on a peer-level, something I pride myself in trying to do. As such, I engaged in numerous, several hundred-word emails with students about their projects, questions they were having, etc. Within Appendix D, one will find an especially long email (excerpted from a longer chain) that I sent to a student (name redacted) regarding questions they posed for a paper topic.

§5 Professional Development

During my tenure as a graduate student, I've taken two for-credit pedagogy courses and a TA training course. In reverse chronological order:

Winter 2023 I took **SGPS 9500, "The Theory and Practice of University Teaching"** with Drs. Lisa Aikman and Ken Meadows. This was a semester-long for-credit course where proficiency in various areas was required. Within that course we went over what inclusive course design looks like, how to write and use case studies in classroom settings, what professional development means in an academic sense, and engaged in three peer-reviewed microteaching sessions. From that course, I gained a better perspective on best-practices for active learning and increasing engagement within small class settings—indeed, working with Asad Choudhary for our microteaching sessions was extremely helpful insofar as he (as well as the other students I worked with) provided constructive criticism on my style of teaching dense, philosophical concepts. From SGPS 9500, I emerged with this document as well as a prospective syllabus for a course I'd like to teach (see Appendix A).

Summer 2020 I took Western University's **Teaching Assistant Training Program** (TATP). This was a three-day program where we went over the roles of a TA, how to effectively engage with students and grade assignments, and we practiced microteaching in small groups.

Fall 2019, as a master's student, I took Duquesne's **"Graduate Teaching Seminar"** with Dr. Kelly Arenson. An optional course for master's students but a required course for doctoral students, this semester-long for-credit course required that I learn best practices for teaching philosophy to undergraduates, including how to effectively utilize technology in classes and solicit student engagement when there is silence. To pass the course, I was required to produce a mock paper assignment, teach a mini-lecture to my peers, and devise a syllabus for my own, ideal "Basic Philosophical Questions" course. The feedback I received in this course went on to inform my teaching philosophy and how I construct syllabi today.

Appendix A: Prospective Syllabus

WESTERN UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
Undergraduate Course Outline 2023–2024

PHIL 3500
Special Topics in Philosophy: Speculative Realism

Fall Term
Wednesday 3:30–6:30
Classroom: SH-2137
Instructor: Peter Heft
Office Number: STvH 3154
pheft@uwo.ca
Office Hours: TBA

Land Acknowledgement:
I acknowledge that Western University is located on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabek, Haudenosaunee, Lūnaapéewak, and Neutral peoples, on lands connected to several Treaties including Treaty 6 London Township, Treaty 7 Sombra Township, Treaty 21 Longwoods and the Dish with One Spoon Covenant Wampum. This place continues to be home to diverse Indigenous peoples who are recognized as contemporary stewards of the land and vital contributors to society.

Description:
In 2007 at Goldsmiths, University of London, a one-day workshop was held that aimed to reinvigorate materialist and realist thought. The panelists—Ray Brassier, Iain Hamilton Grant, Graham Harman, and Quentin Meillassoux—came from different areas of philosophy yet all, ostensibly, responded to Meillassoux's critique of so-called "correlationism" as the dominant trend in post-Kantian continental philosophy. The banner under which they were united: Speculative Realism. A decade and a half later, however, the term has fallen into disrepute with Ray Brassier, one of the initial organizers of the original conference, viciously attacking it claiming that it led to an "online orgy of stupidity." While questions about the 'existence' of speculative realism—an admittedly odd hill that Brassier seems to want to die upon—are perhaps important, this course will serve as a time-capsule of sorts, taking us back to 2007 to attempt to make sense of what was going on in contemporary continental philosophy. In reaction to Kant's co-relation between Thinking and Being in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, we will look at the works of the four thinkers mentioned above, attempting to tease out the nuances and differences between their views. My aim with this course is, ultimately, to return to the/a source of a movement that is increasingly widespread in contemporary philosophy.

Objectives:
In this course, students will:

- Be able to produce an undergraduate philosophy paper (or hone existent skills).
- Understand and be able to articulate the Kantian 'critical turn' as well as several responses to it.
- Be able to critically examine several different positions from the so-called "speculative realist" camp and write informed essays examining their own interpretations of the strengths and weaknesses of the various positions.
- Engage with difficult texts, muddling through arguments that may not at first make sense but ultimately, through engagement with fellow students in discussions, be able to evaluate nuanced philosophical positions related to the so-called "speculative turn."

Texts:
We will be reading from a myriad of different sources, but all the excerpts and articles will be compiled in the course handbook purchasable from the bookstore. All the readings will also be made available online, but I do encourage you to purchase the handbook and thoroughly mark it up. [At this provisional stage, the page numbers below are from the primary texts; page numbers matching up with the handbook would be inserted once the handbook is made.]

Methods of Evaluation:
In this course, you will be asked to write two papers, participate in class discussions, and schedule a meeting at the end of the semester to discuss your thoughts on the course.

The two papers will be explained more when they are announced, but broadly speaking you will develop a critical stance on one or more of the readings we've done and produce a short (5–8 page) paper where you provided and exegetical account of the theorist(s)/theory(ies) you're talking about and an argumentative section where you put forth you own ideas or interpretations.

- Paper 1: 35%
- Paper 2: 45%
- Participation: 10%
- Meeting and Self-Evaluation: 10%

[Departmental and University Policies Excluded]

Schedule:
It should be noted, save for weeks 1 and 2, all readings will be discussed over a two-week span. I've written out the readings in terms of priority. Ideally one ought to get all done for the first week of discussion, but so long as you finish the readings before the second week of discussion, we should remain on track.

Weeks	Readings	Important Dates/Notes
Week 1:	***Introduction*** Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy* 7–45.	-Review of syllabus -Overview of Course -Review of pre-Kantian idealist/realist debates

Week 2:	***Kant and the Critical Turn*** Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 99–192 [Avii–B73]	This may seem like a lot, but since we're reading both A and B versions, a good chunk of the material is repeated.
Week 3:	***Reactions to Kant*** Bryant, Srnicek, and Harman, "Towards a Speculative Philosophy," 1–8. Morelle, "Speculative Realism," 241–250. Young, "On Correlationism and the Philosophy of Human Access," 42–52. Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, 1–49.	-Essay #1 Assigned
Week 4:	Meillassoux, cont…	
Week 5:	***Graham Harman – Object-Oriented Ontology*** Morelle, "Speculative Realism," 250–257. Harman, *Object-Oriented Ontology*, 1–58.	
Week 6:	Harman, cont…	
Reading Week		-Essay #1 Due Start of Reading Week
Week 8:	***Ray Brassier – Transcendental Nihilism*** Morelle, "Speculative Realism," 257–264. Brassier, "Concepts and Objects," 47–65. Brassier, *Nihil Unbound*, 118–149.	
Week 9:	Brassier, cont…	
Week 10:	***Iain Hamilton Grant – *Naturphilosophie****	-Essay #2 Assigned -Sign up for meetings

	Morelle, "Speculative Realism," 264–268. Grant, *Philosophies of Nature after Schelling*, 1–58, 199–206.	
Week 11:	Grant, cont…	
Week 12:	***Quentin Meillassoux – Speculative Materialism*** Harman, *Quentin Meillassoux*, 14–23. Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, 50–128.	-Meetings Begin
Week 13:	Meillassoux, cont…	-Meetings continue
Week 14:	***Lingering Problems***	-Essay #2 Due -Meetings continue

Appendix B: Full Student Feedback

The following are student responses to requests for feedback during my time leading a tutorial for Film 1022 (see section 2).

Asked at the end of the first semester: What (if anything) do you like or dislike about the tutorials? Is there anything you want to see more (or less) of?

1. I really like the scene interpretations of the films that our class has come up with and the questions are thought provoking and touch on lecture topics. In terms of feedback I have none that i can think of off the top of my head. The tutorial format is great! I wish more people would participate but we can't do much about that without making people uncomfortable unfortunately.
2. I like how we can get together and discuss things in an open setting, although for some films, I could not say much (I couldn't recall much). But, overall I think it's just fine as it is.
3. I like how open ended it is and the discussions as it just flows rather than being bored in a organized structure. I don't feel like it needs a change
4. While I genuinely enjoy the more freeform discussions that we've had in tutorial, I feel that we could benefit from a bit more structure. I especially enjoyed the tutorial where examples were pulled from both the film assigned for the week, but other movies that exemplified that film phenomena (I think it touched on how colour was used in the Wizard of Oz and Bladerunner). I realize having multiple examples for every week may be time-consuming, but perhaps that is something where the OWL discussion forums could be utilized (i.e. posting examples of the phenomena and encouraging others to post films that demonstrate it as well). It may also help to post guiding or thought-provoking questions we did (or didn't) cover during the zoom in the forums so people can comment if they have an idea later on.

   Also, a suggestion for getting more diverse participation within tutorial would be to outline specifically what the grading scheme looks like. By giving concrete examples, (e.g. attendance to tutorial with no input/ participation would be 1.5% of the possible 5% per term; forum participation as an alternative to speaking during zoom meetings; coming with questions or statements prepared), I think it gives actionable steps for someone hoping to achieve a certain grade, as well as remind others how to adjust their effort in turn with their desired grade. I really admire your will to create a welcoming and comfortable environment for the tutorial session, yet I feel you could stand to be a bit more "firm" (don't worry about coming off as mean, I think everyone knows that you have only good intentions and wouldn't want to cause undue harm lol).

   All in all, I find tutorials in their current form to be pleasant and interesting. If things were to continue as they were, I'd feel satisfied. Although, if you'd like to implement any of the above suggestions, I think it might make for a more engaging session. Thank you

for your ongoing kindness and openness to feedback. I hope you have a great, safe, and relaxing reading week! All the best :))

5. You're a great TA, you allow for us to ask questions and help us through the course, while being very informative and relatable. You allow for a lot of valuable discussions and ideas to come about, while also guiding the discussion in a meaningful way. I like the tutorials the way they are, especially showing and discussing clips. Personally, I'm not a big fan of 'picking on' people, but it is very rare and I completely understand why it is sometimes necessary. However, I don't see it as a problem that needs to be changed. You're doing an awesome job!

6. I like how you are capable of showing us certain clips of the films to help interpret/make notice of different aspects used. As of right now there is nothing that I dislike nor want to see more or less of.

7. I would say the tutorials are very consistent and good. I enjoy what certain people have to say since there's a lot of interesting things I don't pick up on the movies if we don't talk about the movie and something that I dislike I would say is I'm not sure if it's just me but I personally feel discouraged to talk sometimes since I think people got really good things to say and I don't. I think a good way of making everyone participate is use some sort of website to create polls. This will show people contributing and then you can ask why you chose that answer since there has to be a reason. This would allow a less formal way of participating yet shows why someone chose an answer. I'm not sure if that's a good recommendation but I think it will allow people to participate more and show clear contribution. Overall though your doing a good job!

8. You're a great tutorial leader and teaching assistant! I've very much enjoyed the lessons and discussions so far:)

9. I enjoy your tutorials. I find them engaging and helpful. The only criticism I would have is that sometimes it is difficult to hear your voice due to technical difficulties or just the film playing while you are talking (and the film overpowers your voice). Honestly covid just kinda really sucks. I would much rather class be in person instead of online...hits just hard to be looking at a screen all the time.. but that's not your fault at all. You are doing great :)

10. No criticism from me! I really enjoy your tutorial, you always make it feel much more like a discussion among students rather than a "class". It always feels super comfortable to participate in this tutorial group.

11. I really like how the tutorials are straight to the point and helpful. I think it would also be really helpful if we could expand on specific things in the clips, like mise-en-scene and acting. I think that would help us be more prepared for the essay and final:)

Asked at the end of the academic year: Are there specific things you liked about the tutorials? Anything you didn't like? Anything I could improve upon? Complaints? Issues? Etc.

1. I liked the format of the tutorials as well as the conversations! I think it was also nice how participation could have been through the chat or by talking:) Only thing I would have

changed were the movies, some more modern/contemporary ones would have been interesting to see

2. Loved how you kept the tutorials going and engaged and thank you for being an amazing TA - ■
3. I thought it was really well done, I honestly have no complaints.
4. I liked everything about the tutorials. They were organized and helpful with regards to the course material, but also fun and insightful with the discussions. You were always prepared with questions that prompted discussions but also let conversations flow freely without getting too off track. You were very helpful and relatable which made these tutorials a highlight of my week. I cannot think of a single complaint. Keep doing what you are doing! Thanks for the awesome year.
5. I thought you were great at facilitating and encouraging a natural discussion amongst the class even when no one was talking. I think one thing that could have been helpful is doing a very brief recap about the weeks content and almost giving like a couple minutes summary or just pointing out the main topics covered so that we would have a clear idea about the main take away from classes. other than that I thought you did great
6. I personally enjoyed near the end of the year, I wasn't sure if you were purposely asking questions like this but the last 4 classes you would ask questions that really opened up to anyone talking about the movie and it helped me not really care what I was gonna say. It would just be general thoughts about the movie it was just a good way for anyone to talk.

   Even though I never used the forums/commented, I found it helpful before class to read it so I could have a better understanding of what will be talking about in class. This helped me know what I could say to contribute and I believe using that again would help in a tutorial.

The following are two excerpts from emails with two different students during Dr. Helen Fielding's "Continental Philosophy" course (3555F — Fall 2023) as the students and I worked on their papers:

1. Thanks so much for your talk today [the Guest Lecture I delivered on Kodwo Eshun's "Further Considerations on Afrofuturism"—see §2] -- your delivery and breadth of passion, awe, and knowledge on this topic is brilliant, and your approach/explication of futurism(s) made me reconsider certain attitudes I had towards furturist approaches/ analysis prior (not outright critique, but perhaps apprehension).
2. Thanks again for this incredibly detailed and useful reply - I can genuinely say I'm a bit blown away by your work ethic and your ability to present trains of thought and difficult ideas systematically and with nuance. Your passion for philosophy is infectious!

Appendix C: "A Quick and Dirty Guide to Writing Undergraduate Philosophy Papers"

§0: Introduction

Most of you might not read this, and those of you that do perhaps do not even need it, but it is nevertheless my hope that some of the 'wisdom'—and I say that word wholly ironically—imparted here may be of some help. As an undergraduate, I majored in philosophy and didn't have a minor. Practically speaking, that means I took *a lot* of philosophy courses and wrote *a lot* of different papers in different styles for different professors. That also means I was critiqued and graded very harshly by some of the people to whom I look up to most. Indeed, once you get an email from a professor that reads, "Peter, I know you can do better than this. Rewrite it." your outlook changes. Writing is a lifelong process, and my style is certainly off-putting to some—perhaps many. As such, I make no claims that this is *the way* to write a philosophy paper, but when thinking about the barebones of a paper, I will make the claim that this is a good first step. I'll keep this short and sweet, cutting out my verbosity and trying to provide a 'template' of sorts.

§1: Initial Analysis

I'll take prompt four from our last paper as an example. It reads:

> Problem 1 of *Fear and Trembling* takes the form of a question: "Is There Such a Thing as a Teleological Suspension of the Ethical?" How does Johannes de Silentio answer this question, or does he? And, if making yourself an exception is wrong ethically speaking, then how can Abraham be great? Is Abraham an immoralist? Is Kierkegaard advancing a form of divine command theory? What is at stake here?

Immediately after reading this prompt, one can see five different questions within it. Some of these questions are more significant than others, but not all need to be addressed. For example, addressing the question, "[h]ow does Johannes de Silentio answer" the issue of a teleological suspension of the ethical is a prerequisite for answering any of the other questions. As such, it ought to be taken up first.

From there, one can notice that there are two types of questions: questions that require purely exegetical answers, and questions that require argumentation. On the one hand, the question, "if making yourself an exception is wrong ethically speaking, then how can Abraham be great?" is an exegetical question since Kierkegaard, arguably, already answers this in *Fear and Trembling*. Thus, addressing this question effectively amounts to a recapitulation of Kierkegaard's arguments—*e.g.*, Abraham has faith and dread, thus positioning him in the religious sphere. Given the exegetical nature of this question, augmenting it with another question—namely,

"[w]hat is at stake here?"—provides fertile ground for you to develop your own ideas and not only show what you know, but give your own, individual perspective on the topic.[2]

On the other hand, the questions regarding immoralism or divine command theory are argumentative questions—Kierkegaard *does not* provide an answer within the text and thus you must analyze what he's saying and provide an argument in favor of your interpretation. While the prerequisite question—"how does Kierkegaard account for Abraham?"—is still necessary, you needn't worry about the question of greatness. Indeed, to include that along with an answer to one or both of the above questions will, assuming you're writing enough, bog you down.

Thus, the way I see it, we have the following:

   a) How does Johannes de Silentio answer [the question of a teleological suspension of the ethical], or does he?
   b) [I]f making yourself an exception is wrong ethically speaking, then how can Abraham be great?
   c) Is Abraham an immoralist?
   d) Is Kierkegaard advancing a form of divine command theory?
   e) What is at stake here?

A) is a standalone question that is necessary for all the others. B) is an exegetical question that requires augmentation via E). C) and D) are argumentative questions that follow from A) and don't necessarily require E). Given that, let's look at how one might go about answering these.

§2: Answering the Questions

Here, I will look at two papers: first, a paper that addresses A), B), and E); and second, a paper that addressed A) and D). Let's call the first, X, the second, Y. Since I'm not actually going to write the paper, this will be more of a template.

X

In *Fear and Trembling*, Kierkegaard—under the pseudonym Johannes de Silentio—poses (and indeed, attempts to answer) the following question: "Is There Such a Thing as a Teleological Suspension of the Ethical?" In this paper, I will attempt to do three things. First, I will recapitulate Kierkegaard's answer to the question; second, I will look at whether, as per Kierkegaard, if Abraham is able to make himself an exception to ethical norms and thus act immorally, he can still be great; and third, I will bring the threads together to try to note what is at stake in Kierkegaard's reading.

To begin, Kierkegaard—expanding upon and critiquing Hegel—posits three spheres of existence [*explain the three spheres*]. Within his account, however, he looks at the

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[2] If you were writing on the question of greatness, it would be unwise to try to write on the question of immoralism or divine command theory as you'll end up spreading yourself too thin.

Biblical story of Abraham [*explain the story of Abraham*]. This thus brings him to the question of whether Abraham can suspend or act above the ethical and enter the religious. For Kierkegaard, Abraham *is* able to suspend the ethical because [*explain Kierkegaard's arguments about Abraham's dread, his resignation and faith, etc.*].

A question arises, however. If Abraham is able to suspend the ethical and act in ways that, for all intents and purposes, are immoral, how can he be great? For Kierkegaard, the answer is convoluted and involves a reading of the three spheres noted above. Specifically, [*explain why Abraham can still be great*].

At the end of the day, however, a crucial question remains: what is at stake in all of this? What ought we learn from Kierkegaard's account of Abraham? He's clearly not just telling us a story to tell us a story, rather he must be saying something about the nature of faith and/or our relationship to it. Thus, it is necessary to think through *our relationship* to Abraham and his suspension of the ethical. As such, [*explain what you think is at stake—*e.g.*, the story of Abraham provides others with justification to do immoral acts in the name of God, etc.*]. This is highly relevant to today's society because [*insert your thoughts*].

[*Write a concluding paragraph recapitulating your above points*].

Y

In *Fear and Trembling*, Kierkegaard—under the pseudonym Johannes de Silentio—poses (and indeed, attempts to answer) the following question: "Is There Such a Thing as a Teleological Suspension of the Ethical?" In this paper, I will attempt to do two things. First, I will recapitulate Kierkegaard's answer to the question; and second, I will look at whether there is, implicit in Kierkegaard's account of Abraham, a form of divine command theory.

To begin, Kierkegaard—expanding upon and critiquing Hegel—posits three spheres of existence [*explain the three spheres*]. Within his account, however, he looks at the Biblical story of Abraham [*explain the story of Abraham*]. This thus brings him to the question of whether Abraham can suspend or act above the ethical and enter the religious. For Kierkegaard, Abraham *is* able to suspend the ethical because [*explain Kierkegaard's arguments about Abraham's dread, his resignation and faith, etc.*].

Within Kierkegaard's account, one may read an implicit justification of Abraham's actions—he did what he did because God told him so. The obvious question thus arises: is Kierkegaard advancing a form of divine command theory—that is to say, the idea that things are right/good because God commands them? I argue that Kierkegaard *is* advancing such a view, and we can see that by looking closely at his writings. Indeed, [*explain why you think Kierkegaard's writings show an implicit—or perhaps explicit—form of divine command theory*]. // **ALTERNTIVELY**, I argue that Kierkegaard *is not* advancing such a view, and we can see that by looking closely at his writings. Indeed,

[19]

[*explain why you think Kierkegaard's writings do not extend a form of divine command theory*].

Such a situation of Kierkegaard as a divine command theorist (or not) is significant because [*explain why you think it's significant—this is related to "what is at stake?" in the above question*].

[*Write a concluding paragraph recapitulating your above points*].

§3: Conclusion

It should be noted that the above are *not* cookie-cutter templates to applied willy-nilly; instead, they are scaffolds with which to build your own thought upon and then burn afterwards. Or, since Professor Proessel is a Wittgensteinian, it might better be put as follows:

> My [templates] serve as elucidations in the following way: anyone who understands [them] eventually recognizes them as nonsensical, when he has used them—as steps—to climb beyond them. (He must, so to speak, throw away the ladder after he has climbed up it.)
>
> He must transcend these [templates], and then he will [write a good philosophy paper].[3]

Hopefully this was of some, if only small, help. This was written at 2am on an empty stomach, so please forgive any errors; it's time to make dinner. Feel free to email me (pheft@uwo.ca) if you have any questions.

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[3] My interpolation of §6.54 of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*.

Appendix D: Email on Paper Ideas with a Student

From: Peter Heft <pheft@uwo.ca>
Sent: Wednesday, November 23, 2022 12:51 AM
To: ███ Albeheshti <█████████@uwo.ca>
Subject: Extra Thoughts -- RE: Essay Feedback

Hey ████,

It was good to talk earlier, and your topics got me thinking—indeed, I was preoccupied with them for the first two hours of class. Maybe this is unnecessary, but below are a smattering of thoughts on the first three (I can't remember the nuances of the fourth apart from it involving the "they-self" and conformity in modernity, a topic that might be too large). Obviously no need at all to reply to this (you could delete it too, I don't know).

1: I'm not sure that the Nietzsche-Schopenhauer links are as trivial or moot as you made them out to be. Yes, we all know that Nietzsche was influenced by Schopenhauer, but that doesn't necessarily mean that he took over Schopenhauer's metaphysics. Nietzsche was most certainly influenced by Spinoza and yet I can't think of a single interpretation of Nietzsche that positions him as a substance monist. From a purely scholarly point, even though X is influenced by Y, it's not self-evident that two are analogous—*e.g.*, Sartre is highly indebted to Heidegger and yet, if consensus is to be believed, differs dramatically from him. All that is to say that drawing out the parallels between the two is not necessarily a trivial project. Indeed, if we take the Derridean reading of Nietzsche as a critic of metaphysics—a plausible reading—then asserting that Nietzsche nevertheless reifies a metaphysics is an interesting way to make the Derridean point that one can never escape metaphysics *without* actually relying on Derrida. In other words, a perfectly valid paper would be thus: *'for all his attempts at overcoming traditional metaphysics—or even metaphysics qua metaphysics—Nietzsche, in* The Birth of Tragedy, *nevertheless reifies an appearance-reality distinction—a distinction made dominant by Kant—by dragging the aforementioned through Schopenhauer.*

Or, regarding the second idea: I think you do need to answer the question, "why apply a Schopenhauerian metaphysics to an analysis of Greek tragedy?" What benefit does that give us? Simmel, Lukács, and even Lacan give compelling accounts of tragedy in the fields of sociology, Marxist literary theory, and psychoanalysis, respectively. Why privilege Nietzsche's metaphysical account, an account that is, ostensibly, Schopenhauerian? Does Nietzsche's account give us a better insight into tragedy? (That may be too difficult a question as it *might* (or might not) require placing Nietzsche's reading in conversation with other readings of tragedy.) Does his account give us a better insight into the human condition?

2: I don't have much to say on the Being vs. existence topic, but I've been ruminating on the copula vs. predicate debate. My thinking—unstructured as it is—is as follows: "I am a student." "A student" is the predicate of the substantial subject, "I," where being is implicit in the "am"—being-as-copula; this seems to fundamentally be an ontic claim. "A student is _____." "A student" is simultaneously a subject and a predicate of some yet unknown thing, "is" is the copula, but the blank is the real ontological predicate. The statement only remains ontological, however, insofar as one *does not* fill in the blank. This leads me to think that "I am a Being," is an ontic claim where Being serves both as a copula *and* a predicate. Thus, my question is whether the distinction between the two dissolves. It seems that what really matters is *how* "Being" is used—*e.g.*, is it being used univocally (the Being in "God is good" is the same Being as in "This cheeseburger is good"), analogically, or some other way? Deleuze's account of Duns Scotus in *Difference and Repetition* (I think it's in chapter 2?) might prove helpful here. I could also dig out my old notes on this topic.

3: I've been trying to figure out how to re-articulate your critique of Heidegger and I've come up with a few ways. The criticism seems to be that Heidegger objectifies the ready-to-hand, thereby making it present-at-hand; phenomenology as such is a present-at-hand analysis of the ready-to-hand nature of Dasein; the objectification of ready-to-handedness is an instrumentalization of philosophy via phenomenology; phenomenology reifies the disinterestedness one finds Kant's aesthetics, for example. I'm not sure if these are good criticisms. I can see a response being, "sure, but any objectification is to a minor degree. Indeed, following Husserl and bracketing certain things out, we necessarily bring some things into focus. Nevertheless, that merely helps us elucidate the primordial nature of Dasein. We're not reducing the primordiality of Dasein down to present-at-hand simply by explicating its nature." (This rejoinder would be if one reads present-at-handedness as purely calculative thought and ready-to-handedness as an acceptance of thrownness/flux/becoming.) Alternatively, ready-to-handedness might not be a purely unreflective thing that as soon as we think about, it becomes present-at-handedness; rather, it's a relation of ourselves to the world. I can think about how I use objects without reducing my usage of them down to a contemplative mode of Being. I think that I'm using my keyboard and I recognize it as an extension of my body, but then I forget about it and it becomes re-enmeshed within me. Or perhaps none of that is right.

My thoughts are that you might need to argue that Heidegger's entire philosophy is an attempt to *be* ready-at-hand— phrased differently, the tool analysis is applicable to very act of reading Heidegger—and yet somehow *doing* ontology undermines the above attempt. I still think you'd need to grapple with various rejoinders, not least of which is simply, "okay, and? I'm a philosopher writing about the world; emic-etic distinctions!"

Apologies for the rambles. Not sure if they make sense. I'm trying to reconstruct my scribbles from hours ago.

Best,
Peter

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Peter Heft
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@ [University of Western Ontario]