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Many Lenses With One Focus: Making Philosophy Learning Meaningful Through Collaborative Design

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Abstract

Utilizing the Understanding by Design (UbD) framework, a lead philosophy instructor and an instructional designer collaborated with seven other faculty members to create *Great Ideas in Philosophy* for online asynchronous delivery. We presented a broad array of topics in philosophy and provided substantial practices in "doing" philosophy, aiming to create a welcoming space for a diverse student body, to help students see philosophy as a diverse field, and to provide an engaging and meaningful learning experience for students. Student feedback and final project presentations demonstrated significant learning growth in students taking this newly designed *Great Ideas in Philosophy*. This collaborative development method can be applied to many undergraduate- and graduate-level survey courses.

Keywords: *collaborative course design, online, introductory philosophy, motivation, Understanding by Design, backward design, Universal Design for Learning, philosophy as relevant and engaging, Open Educational Resources*

Introduction

Philosophy in the English-speaking world has a well-earned reputation for being overwhelmingly White and male. Indeed, some 82% of professional academic philosophers in the United States are White and about 75% are male (Schwitzgebel, 2020; Schwitzgebel et al., 2021). Professional philosophy has historically been unwelcoming to women and people of color (Silva, 2013) and aspects of the field itself have a problematic history of racism and racist work (Alpert, 2020). Philosophy also has a reputation as a playground for "rich

people"—people who are financially well **off enough to study a field often derided as "useless." Consider Marco Rubio's claim that**, "We need more welders and less [sic] philosophers" (Ratcliffe & Shaw, 2015)[1].

In designing one of our popular introductory philosophy courses, *Great Ideas in Philosophy*, for online delivery we consciously worked against those perceptions, striving to create a class that presented philosophy as broad, inclusive, and of use outside of the academy. While we were of course limited by the demographics of our program, four of the eight faculty collaborators for the course development identify as women, and two **of the eight faculty members identify as people of color. Reflecting our program's focus on engaged** philosophy, many of the modules developed tie the philosophical analyses to contemporary issues in ways that made clear the relevance of the kinds of arguments being made.

During the 2020–2021 academic year, two thirds of students attending our institution registered for at least one online course, and one third of all students were exclusively distance students. The average age of our online students is 31, which is somewhat older than the campus-only students whose average age is about 25.

The biggest differences between online students and on-campus students are where they live and the time available to them for learning. Online students live across 50 states and 60 international countries while on-campus students, naturally, live on campus or nearby. Many online students have full-time jobs, family responsibilities, or other conditions that do not allow them to attend classes on campus (Oregon State University Ecampus, n.d.; Oregon State University, 2019).

The *Great Ideas in Philosophy* class had been taught on campus in a variety of ways for many years; some faculty members had focused on a few philosophical problems, and others had pursued more of a survey. In designing the class for online delivery, we opted to use the latter approach—in part so that students from this diverse population would be exposed to a variety of different problems and approaches and in the hope that at least some topics would resonate with each student. This suggested that, for our 10-week class (Oregon State University is on the quarter system, with three 10-week terms during the regular academic year and a variety of summer sessions), if we had students cover one topic every week, we could present perhaps eight or nine different topics, with Week 1 covering an overview. (For the complete list of completed modules and topics, see the Appendix.)

Theoretical Framework With Understanding by Design

At Oregon State University (OSU), classes designed for online asynchronous delivery through the Ecampus program are developed by a team, which generally consists of a lead faculty developer and a lead instructional designer. Other experts (e.g., animators and videographers) are brought in, as necessary. For this class, a lead faculty developer and an instructional designer formed a team to design, develop, and implement an entry level, survey-style undergraduate philosophy course.

The two principal developers for this project adopted the Understanding by Design (UbD) framework (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005) to help learners critically engage with philosophy through a series of connected active and meaningful learning experiences. The UbD framework can be used for curriculum design at the individual course level, the program level, or the institutional level. In this project, the focus was on course-level design in applying the UbD framework to the development of the *Great Ideas in Philosophy* introductory course. UbD aims to achieve these goals through collaboration with other instructors, the utilization of a

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[1]It is worth noting in this context that despite its popular reputation as a "useless" major, philosophy majors have the highest starting and mid-career salaries of any field in the humanities, and one of the highest mid-career salaries of any field (Weinberg, 2019).

backward design model, a focus on student understanding through authentic learning opportunities, and regular review and continuous curriculum improvement (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005).

Collaborative Design

The UbD framework suggests that teachers benefit by working smarter through collaborative design, sharing ideas and resources, and peer review of units of study. During the initial meeting, the lead faculty member proposed a more extensive collaborative model of development for this course. He would develop one module (1 week's worth of material), and his colleagues in the philosophy program would contribute week-length modules of their own. Since the project is dependent upon the timely completion of many collaborator contributions, the obvious downside to this approach is the unreliability of project element delivery. The upside to this approach is the obvious richer perspectives, range of interests, and variety of teaching styles that emerge from a large group of collaborators when compared to content developed by a single faculty member. For this project, the principal developers decided that the pros outweighed the cons and started inviting colleagues to collaborate on this project.

It is worth noting that there were also more pragmatic reasons for the decision to develop the class collaboratively. Course development is time-consuming, and we were not happy with waiting until a single faculty member was able to take the required time (two complete terms, or roughly 6 months) to complete the course development. By having a lead faculty member coordinate the course design—but also relying on many faculty members to contribute content—the individual workload on each faculty member was reduced.[1] The lead faculty member offered to take on the coordination task when the discussion shifted to the possibility of a collaborative approach; the argument that, as a senior member of the program, one has a responsibility to "step up" to complete the service necessary for one's program to thrive, was compelling.

The lead faculty member for the course development project asked the faculty in our program if they would be willing to contribute a week-long module to the project. While 14 faculty members initially agreed (which would have provided us with five "extra" modules that could be used to "mix and match" and thereby customize the class), in the end, only eight faculty members were able to complete their modules on time. (Note that this was not entirely unexpected, even notwithstanding the additional stresses and workload associated with the pandemic!). But even with just eight faculty members contributing, we were able to show students a variety of different ways of doing philosophy and a variety of different philosophers doing the content presentation. (See the Appendix for a complete list of the topics by week.)

Ownership in Collaborative Design

One consistent issue with online education has surrounded ownership of course material, and the distinction between the person (or people) who developed the class and the instructor responsible for teaching the course (Deubel, 2003; Hoyt & Oviatt, 2013). At Oregon State University, copyright ownership of course material resides with the faculty member who created it (except under certain circumstances), but the university has a "royalty-free, perpetual, non-transferrable, and nonexclusive worldwide license to Course Materials … with the non-exclusive right to revise and update the Course Materials as desired" (OSU Collective Bargaining Agreement, 2023). While some faculty have expressed concern that a course (or course materials) that they develop could then be used in perpetuity—even after they left the university, for example—in practice the

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[1] Funding for faculty work on the course was split between the main faculty coordinator, and everyone who contributed content for a module. Most faculty donated the (relatively small) amount of money they would have received for working on a single module to the philosophy program's discretionary budget.

short "shelf life" of classes designed and built for asynchronous online delivery makes this worry somewhat unrealistic. However, there are some realistic concerns about the distinction between the instructor-of-record and the people who developed the course for asynchronous online delivery. For example, students are sometimes confused about who the instructor-of-record is when the person appearing in a course's online lectures is not the same person teaching the class (Deubel, 2003).

In creating this course, we had hoped that by having many faculty provide content, it might make it more obvious that the person appearing in the introductory video for a particular week was not the same person interacting with them online, scoring, providing feedback on their work, etc.—and we, indeed, made this clear in several places. Our hope proved to be somewhat unrealistic, as some students were still confused about who was teaching the course.

One possible solution to the instructor confusion we are still exploring is to have the instructor-of-record make additional short introductory videos for each week. That way students can "see" the person teaching the class on an ongoing basis. We would then move the content contributors' video "montage" to later in Week 1, for example, so that more of the initial Week 1 material is focused only on the instructor teaching the course that term.

Project Management

The two principal developers adopted the following strategies to help ensure the success of this collaborative project:

- We created collaboration tactics. Collaborators received access to (and were asked to use) Google Docs to transparently document the project development process, including work remaining to be done.

- Milestones and checkpoints for the project were established. For example, the lead faculty member would complete his example module before the end of May 2021. Then, faculty commitment to project participation would need to be established before June 2021. Finally, collaborative faculty members would then need to submit content before mid-August 2021. This process would allow the Ecampus team enough time to prepare all content in an accessible format, such as adding closed captioning to all video content, video editing, making documents accessible, etc.

- Backup plans were created. While the milestones and checkpoints were designed to keep the project on track, we also created backup plans to ensure that we could deliver a completed class if some elements failed. For example, if all 14 collaborators completed their modules, several modules could be offered to students as choices ("Choose one topic from the following three topics" with Canvas[1] "groups" formed around the topics chosen). If fewer collaborators completed their modules than was required, the lead faculty member would then be responsible for creating extra modules. That way, there would still be enough content for a 10-week course in our quarter system (with Week 11 serving as finals week).

- Communication channels remained open. During later discussions, the principal developers realized that there was a need for an introductory module, and a module that would give a very brief overview of some of the non-Western philosophical traditions that the class had not explicitly addressed, with the final's week dedicated to student presentations and peer review and reflection. This suggested that

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[1] Most readers are likely familiar with the Learning Management System (LMS) "Canvas," which is used at our university both for online asynchronous courses and for in-person (and, during the pandemic, synchronous remote) courses.

only eight content-driven modules were needed. Amazingly, exactly eight modules were completed for this collaborative development.

- Periodic reminders/communications were created. Reminders were created to be sent to collaborators periodically to ensure timely project completion, allowing time to develop and deploy backup plans if collaborators were unable to complete their modules in a timely fashion.

Quality Control in Collaborative Project

To ensure quality control of course design in this collaborative project, the two lead developers applied backward design, a Canvas module template that allowed for flexibility, and a Quality Matters (QM) rubric.

Backward Design

Effective curriculum development reflects a three-**stage design process called "backward design**," which includes (1) establishing learning outcomes; (2) designing corresponding assessments; and (3) developing the corresponding learning activities. The two principal developers followed the backward design model in developing this project.

During the course of the curriculum development, the lead faculty member met with the instructional designer several times as he worked to complete his module using a backward design model that was focused on the Prisoner's Dilemma. The instructional designer built this module in a Canvas course space as an example for other collaborators to see (a) what kinds of material faculty members were expected to deliver to the instructional designer, and (b) what a finished completed module would look like. This example gave faculty collaborators a better sense of how their content and learning materials would be "translated" into a functional Canvas module.

Part of the content and learning materials "translation" process involves making clear to the students how the **learning outcomes for each module are important to the course's disciplinary (program**-level) learning outcomes, its university-**level learning outcomes, and to the program's and u**niversity's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion in both content and teaching. Faculty were given significant guidance in articulating these relationships in a way that, we hoped, students would find intelligible (and perhaps even compelling!). In addition, since Ecampus is committed to ensuring that all course materials for remote asynchronous classes meet best-practice guidelines for accessibility, the lead instructional designer worked closely with faculty to deliver materials that either met these standards prior to submission or could be altered by Ecampus staff to meet its standards (e.g., adding captioning, etc.).

While not all faculty members were familiar with backward design or designing course material for online asynchronous delivery, faculty worked with the instructional designer as part of the process of developing **their module's course content and assessment tools,** which allowed them to effectively manage this lack of familiarity. Faculty worked with the instructional designer (as well as with the lead faculty coordinator) to think about how their material would "speak to" the course's formal learning outcomes, as well as to the EDIA (Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility) goals that our department aims to build into our program's course offerings. This process helped ensure that the workload for each module was roughly similar and that the planned assessments adequately addressed the course learning outcomes and the module-level learning outcomes and would not be overly burdensome for the faculty member teaching the class to evaluate and provide feedback.

After collaborators submitted their draft content, the instructional designer reviewed the content and communicated with the faculty if any revisions were needed. Full instructional design support was provided to any faculty member who needed help. Due to the ongoing pandemic, individual meetings with faculty

collaborators occurred mostly via Zoom meetings, but some face-to-face meetings were arranged to provide support and technical resolutions when the instructional designer sensed that a faculty collaborator was, for example, experiencing great difficulty understanding some key elements of the Canvas learning management system, and/or the collaborator was having technical challenges, such as getting readings scanned, videos recorded at home, etc.

Canvas Module Template With Flexibility for Each Module

Each module included an introduction to the topic, written by the faculty member who developed that module; **"learning materials" for that module**, including links to readings, videos, PowerPoint lectures, online resources, etc.; **"practice" quizzes**, or other practice activities to help the students judge for themselves how well they understood the learning materials for the week; and the formal assessments.

Unpublished assessment instructions, for faculty use only, were provided as a tool for faculty who were not familiar with the module content. Where assessments were not intuitive, these unpublished instructions were available to help understand how the faculty member (who created the module) intended for the assessment tool to be used. Providing these instructions also improved consistency in the student experience, from term to term and instructor to instructor, and made the class easier to teach for faculty teaching it for the first time.

Quality Matters Rubric for Collaborative Course Design

With effective collaboration among content contributors through multicultural perspectives; backward design as overarching guidelines; focus on student understanding through authentic learning experiences; and regular reviews and reflection, we were able to create a course that excels at meeting every standard of the Quality Matters (QM) Rubric, which is based on research and published best practices (Quality Matters, 2023).

Course Design

Students who completed this newly designed course provided overwhelmingly positive feedback. Elements of course design that contributed to the success of this course include: (a) clearly stated course-level learning outcomes and module-level learning outcomes; (b) alignment of learning outcomes, assessments, and learning activities; (c) design of meaningful learning activities to present philosophy as relevant and meaningful; (d) engaged design of deep learning through learning materials, assessments, and learning activities; (e) inclusive and broad topics covered; and (f) open educational resources and equitable access.

Start With Learning Outcomes

A primary goal of education in general—and philosophy more particularly—should be the development and deepening of student understanding and critical engagement with the topics. The course-level learning outcomes, identified by the program, and institutional-level Western Culture Baccalaureate Core[1] are meant to direct student learning towards those goals.

In *Great Ideas in Philosophy*, these three learning outcomes were identified by the Philosophy program at Oregon State University:
   At the end of the term, students will:

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[1] The "Western Culture" category is widely acknowledged to be deeply problematic (Appiah, 2016) and is unlikely to continue in its current form at OSU; if, as expected, it is discontinued, we intend to use the opportunity to recenter the class away from its focus on the Western philosophical tradition.

- Be able to recognize and critically discuss several philosophical problems, concepts, and issues from different time periods across the Western philosophical traditions.
- Be able to recognize and critically assess the role(s) that philosophy has had in the development of Western culture, including the rise of the Western scientific tradition.
- Analyze specific philosophical positions or problems in writing, taking a critical/analytical stance and defending a position. (Oregon State University Undergraduate Philosophy Program Learning Outcomes, 2023)

This course is also part of Oregon State University's Baccalaureate Core in the Category of Western Culture. (While it is not a formally stated outcome for the class, obviously faculty hope that this class, which is often the first philosophy class a student at Oregon State University takes, will not be the last philosophy class that they take, and will encourage students to think about what they enjoyed and consider taking more philosophy courses.) Therefore, this course also aims to achieve the following learning outcomes defined by Western Culture Baccalaureate Core Courses:

At the end of the term, students will be able to:

- Identify significant events, developments, and/or ideas in the Western cultural experience and context.
- Interpret the influence of philosophical, historical, and/or artistic phenomena in relation to contemporary Western culture.
- Analyze aspects of Western culture in relation to broader cultural, scientific, or social processes. (Oregon State University Catalog, 2022)

Along with these official disciplinary learning outcomes and university-level learning outcomes, we strive to create classes that respect the goals of diversity, equity, and inclusion (both in content and in the practice of teaching) as part of our university and program mission. A focus on accessibility best practices is considered an essential part of developing courses for online asynchronous delivery. Focusing on these elements as part of the design process, along with the official student learning outcomes, helps make the integration of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), as well as accessibility, to be a more seamless and a more natural part of the course.

Alignment of Learning Outcomes With Assessments and Learning Activities

Students reveal their mastery of the material most effectively when they are provided with complex, authentic opportunities to explain, interpret, apply, shift perspectives, empathize, and self-assess. This key idea is achieved in the weekly activities, such as independent initial work; discussion forum collaborations; peer-to-peer assignments; other assignments where the students engaged with—and provided feedback on—each other's work (VoiceThread slides and audio presentations, an exercise where the students made maps, labeled them, and discussed the issues the map-making exercise highlighted for them, etc.); and the final project to share what their understanding of a chosen topic was, why they found that topic interesting, and how that topic related to their lives.

The range of topics we were able to present in the class was, we think, substantial—especially given the short length of terms in the quarter system. Students are introduced to traditional philosophical problems (e.g., the questions about the relationship between the mind and the brain), as well as more contemporary areas (the philosophy of disability, for example). While some weeks provided overviews of large areas of philosophy, such as the week on the role played by goodness (ren) and ritual (li) in the Confucian virtues or on the philosophy of human rights, other weeks focused on smaller problems, such as the "prisoner's dilemma" or the epistemic status of conspiracy theories. This does, though, highlight one place where the class still falls

short of our goals because of the limited amount of non-Western philosophy that we were able to include (essentially, only one week on Confucian virtues and another brief survey of some non-Western philosophical traditions). Given the overwhelmingly Western focus of most philosophy programs in the English-speaking world (Baggini, 2018; Van Norden, 2017; Smith, 2012), ours included, it is not surprising, but (as noted in the **footnote on the problematic nature of "Western Culture" as a concept) moving forward, we hope to** incorporate more non-Western philosophy into the course.

For many (if not most) of the students taking this course, it is their first experience with academic philosophy. We therefore began the course with an introductory module, introducing students to the field of philosophy. This included an overview of the different branches of philosophy, the kinds of questions philosophers ask, and some of the uses to which philosophical reasoning can be put. As a motivational strategy, faculty from our program made 2- to 3-minute videos of themselves talking about what philosophy means to them—what each of us gets out of doing philosophy, and how each of us conceives of the field. In addition to approximately 12 **short videos, the Ecampus video production team produced a "montage" of wh**at we felt were some of the most compelling lines from those short videos, to be used as either part of the course introduction or distributed more broadly as part of advertising for our online program, for example.

While short (under 10 minutes) voice-over PowerPoint lectures were the most common, faculty also recorded themselves just talking about some of the key ideas, or provided written notes to help students better understand key readings. Students also developed their own materials. For example, in the VoiceThread exercise, students created a slide and voice-over that described one concept from the philosophy of religion readings that they found compelling. The students then explained why they found it interesting and commented on peer work, using the different modalities for commenting available on the VoiceThread platform. We were pleased with the level of engagement the students demonstrated; their comments on peer work were often surprisingly thoughtful for students in a lower-division class.

A wide variety of different assessment modalities were used in the course (the only restriction was that each week had to have the same number of "points" in it—10% of the overall course grade). We were somewhat concerned that students might be frustrated by the different kinds of assignments and having to learn how to use different online tools. However, anonymous surveys revealed that even those who found this frustrating also found the variety to be fun and valuable. Assessment modalities included traditional short-answer essay quizzes, discussion board exercises, peer-to-peer short research projects, Voice Thread-type assignments (slides, mini-lectures, and video/audio responses), a mapping project (thinking through the various rights enumerated in the United Nations *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, and where in their own neighborhoods those rights were most relevant, and where they thought there were likely violations of those rights), etc. Every module had at least some element that involved peer learning; the educational benefits of peer learning are well established (Nagalingam, 2010; Tullis & Goldstone, 2020), and it can play an important role in helping students in online asynchronous classes remain engaged with the material, as well as help them feel less isolated and more a part of an intellectual community (Raymond et al., 2016).

As part of the Understanding by Design (UbD) process, student performance gains are achieved through regular reviews of results followed by adjustments to curriculum and instruction. The lead faculty member and instructional designer included several opportunities in this course design to allow students to reflect on their learning progress, and to provide the instructor feedback and suggestions about the course so far, as recommended by the UbD framework.

Engaged Design of Deep Learning: Philosophy as Relevant and Meaningful

Research from Eodice et al. (2016) demonstrated that students value writing projects that are meaningful and relevant to their lives and interests beyond school, as well as writing projects that help them learn or explore course content more deeply. In this class, we tried to ensure that students were engaged in writing projects (as

well as other modalities) that served both purposes. So, for example, in the Week 1 Discussion activity, students were asked to introduce themselves so they could get to know each other and build relationships for a trusting online learning community. In addition to self-introduction, students were also asked to select two questions from a list of 102 philosophical questions and briefly explain: (a) what broad area of philosophy they thought that the question belonged to (e.g., ethics, metaphysics, etc.); and (b) their reasoning for why they found it interesting or provocative. This added component pushes students to start to think more deeply and critically about the philosophical questions in which they are interested and why they are interested in those questions. The Week 1 learning materials and associated exercises were especially geared towards helping students learn to "recognize and critically discuss several philosophical problems, concepts, and issues, from different time periods across the Western philosophical traditions," the first of the disciplinary student learning outcomes.

One advantage to asynchronous online classes is the ease with which regular repeating "motifs" can be integrated into the course. Each week ended with a page asking students to reflect on what they had just learned. One goal of these reflection pages was to encourage students to take more philosophy classes ("If you liked this material, here are some classes that cover these same issues in more detail!")—in part because we of course think students would benefit from taking more philosophy courses, but also because our university's budget model incentivizes student credit hour production. But the more important goal of these reflection pages was to get the students to think about how the material that they had just learned was reflected in—or was relevant to—elements of their own lives. For example, after the section on the philosophy of disability reading from Pfeiffer (2002), for the academic sense, and from Rapp (2015) for a popular/secular account, students were asked to reflect on the claim that everyone—if they are lucky enough to live long enough—will experience a serious disability at some point in their lives. Does this change the way that they think about the material they just worked through? If so, how? What does this information suggest about the "social model" of disability and the ways in which society can either work to create the conditions under which full participation is possible for a greater range of capabilities, or can fail to do so?

The final project for the course was for each student to produce a short video lecture on the material they found most interesting and to share it in a discussion forum. Watching these mini-lectures provided an opportunity to see both what students found most interesting and to learn a little about why they found the topics interesting. Many students remarked on the ways in which the material changed how they saw issues or aspects of their lives. For example, one of the more popular topics was the section on "conspiracy theories." That module presented philosophical analyses of the epistemic status of unjustified conspiracy theories (What makes a bad conspiracy theory bad?), as well as examples of how unjustified conspiracy theories historically have been used and the purposes they have served.

In their final presentations, several students commented that this material provided them with a new lens through which to view contemporary conspiracy theories (e.g., "pizzagate," and the "big lie," etc.), and helped them better understand why people were attracted to those theories despite the obvious weaknesses of the evidence purportedly supporting them. This opportunity to pause and reflect on material from earlier in the term, and to use that material to "teach" other students about it, is one way to encourage a deeper understanding and engagement with the material.

Rather than focusing on presenting new material, the final week provides an opportunity for students to work with one another on the parts of the class that most interest them. This exercise helps "solidify" the disciplinary learning outcomes, as well as encourages a deeper engagement with the material.

Inclusive Design

Many "traditional" introductory philosophy courses in the English-speaking world do not include any substantial material on non-Western philosophical ideas. For this class, despite its position as a "Western

Culture" course (see footnote regarding the problematic nature of **"Western Culture" as a concept), we** designed one module where the focus was on Confucian virtues and another that very briefly introduced some of the non-Western philosophical traditions (including an all-too-brief exploration of what counts as philosophy)**, and how particular ideas about what counts as philosophy have privileged "W**estern" philosophical traditions at the expense of other traditions. By doing so, while the class does not engage with issues of race or racism in any great depth, we were able to introduce some of the ideas behind an anti-racist pedagogy and prepare students to challenge the Western focus of the philosophical tradition in U.S. classrooms.

Open Educational Resources and Equitable Access

One element that faculty contributors in this project agreed upon was to work to ensure that all materials used in the class would be available without additional cost to the student. (See Jenkins et al., 2020 and Nusbaum, 2020 for discussions of the importance of affordable course materials.) Different faculty members made use of short YouTube videos, longer radio interviews, and works of fiction (including movies) that are available freely online; journal and magazine articles (both academic and more popular-oriented); chapters from eBooks available at the Oregon State University Library at no additional cost to students; entries from the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*; as well as many other resources. In addition, faculty members provided their own content, again using several different modalities. Along with online articles, blogposts, and other materials to which the students had access, there were also several interviews with professional philosophers available online, and many lectures from relatively famous philosophy professors focused on topics.

Research shows that student engagement with instructional videos drops off significantly after 6–10 minutes, depending on the nature of the video (Guo et al., 2014), so we embed videos that automatically start videos part way through and suggest endpoints for students. One advantage of requiring only part of a longer video is that students who are particularly interested in the topic are more likely to continue watching a video they are currently watching than to open a link to a new video.

Conclusion: A Good Model for Designing Introductory Survey-Style Courses

In the end, developing *Great Ideas in Philosophy* for online delivery was a collaborative effort in several different senses, and our success owed as much to our ability to work together successfully as it did to our individual efforts. Quality course design was ensured through the UbD framework, backward design model, a variety of topics, and activities and assessments with one single focus—making philosophy learning as relevant, meaningful, and engaging as possible. This collaborative process and frequent updating help ensure that courses are developed using contemporary best practices for student learning and engagement. This is most effective when the instructional designer and faculty member can work closely together on building the course.

As noted above, in the case of *Great Ideas in Philosophy*, this collaborative process was complicated by the fact that there were multiple philosophy faculty members developing material for the course. What could have turned into an exercise in herding cats went relatively smoothly, in large part because of the extra time we spent at the beginning thinking through what we hoped to achieve and how we hoped to achieve it. Every collaborator on this project understood their individual responsibilities, the final due dates, and the important checkpoints of milestones—thanks to collaborative Google Docs and the Canvas Preparation Course to which **everyone had access. The final product is a course rich with content from different experts on each week's** topic, which as we learned from reflective surveys in the course, many students appreciated. We hope this can serve as a model, or at least as inspiration, for others who would like to develop engaging lower-division college-level survey courses.

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Appendix: Outline of Weekly Content Topics and Learning Activities

Week 1: Introduction to Philosophy. In this module, students are briefly introduced to what philosophy is, as well as some of the major areas of philosophy, and become acquainted with some philosophical questions. Learning materials include short readings on the nature of philosophy and philosophical progress, as well as a video montage of the OSU Philosophy Program Faculty talking about what philosophy means to them—and why they find it interesting. Students complete a discussion board post and provide responses to peers; they introduce themselves; and then they focus on which philosophical questions they found most interesting, as well as in which branches of philosophy those questions would most likely be considered.

Week 2: De-Extinction. In this module, students are briefly introduced to some aspects of ethical issues in scientific research, and then they are asked to reflect on the ethics of *de-extinction*. Learning materials include short articles (both popular and academic) and short segments of video (mostly PBS and material found on YouTube). Students complete a peer-to-peer assignment in which they pick out a major ethical scandal from the history of science. They then describe the scandal to another student, who will then comment on it. Students will also write a short discussion board post and a response on a *de-extinction* attempt case study. Finally, students will complete a short-answer quiz.

Week 3: Philosophy of Mind. In this module, students are given a brief overview of classic positions regarding the relationship between the mind and brain. Learning materials include introductory readings on the mind–body problem and the relationship between mind and brain. Lecture notes on that reading are provided for the students to read, as well as interviews with three "classic" philosophers-of-mind on their positions. Students complete discussion board posts and offer peer responses.

Week 4: The Prisoners' Dilemma. In this module, students take a short—but deep—dive into the most famous problem from game theory—the p**risoner's** dilemma (PD). Iterated PDs are introduced, with both known and unknown endpoints, and the possible relevance of the problem to the evolution of trust is briefly considered. Learning materials include selections from the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* entry on **"Prisoner's Dilemma**;" short voice-over PowerPoint-style lectures; and online games and activities related to the p**risoner's** dilemma. Students complete a discussion board post and offer responses in which they are asked to analyze a scene from a popular movie and then describe the ways in which it is—and is not—similar **to a canonical prisoners' dilemma**. Students complete a short-answer quiz.

Week 5: Conspiracy Theories. In this module, students explore various positions on the epistemic failures of unjustified conspiracy theories (what, exactly, makes them *bad*?), and they consider the role(s) that conspiracy theories have played over time. Learning materials include short readings (both academic and popular), short video lectures by the instructor, and at least the first 30 minutes of a movie. Students complete a discussion board post and offer peer responses. Students also complete a short-answer quiz.

Week 6: Philosophy of Religion. In this module, students confront two basic questions through readings on some classic positions on the philosophy of religion. These include: (1) What is religion? and (2) What is the philosophy of religion? Learning materials include short reading excerpts from classic books on these issues, interviews with philosophers of religion, short video lectures by the instructor, and a voice-over PowerPoint-style lecture. The main assignment is a VoiceThread project, where students find an image they can relate to regarding one of the positions on religion or where it comes from. They then describe their image and comment on **other students'** images.

Week 7: Confucian Virtues. In this module, students are introduced to Confucian philosophical thought through the lens of two critical Confucian virtues: goodness (ren) and ritual (li). Learning materials include selections from the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* entry on **"Confucius**;" selections from a translation of the *Analects: With Selections From Traditional Commentaries*, an account of the philosopher Mengzi and

the relationship between Mengzi's accounts of virtues and those in the "Western" philosophical tradition; and short video lectures by the instructor. A discussion board post and responses are required for each of the two sections.

Week 8: Philosophy of Disability. In this module, students are introduced to the medical and social models of disability, as well as to the arguments around the concept of *disability*. Learning materials include short readings, podcasts, and video interviews with leading philosophers of disability. Students complete a discussion board post and respond to their peers based on McBryde Johnson's famous account of her debate with Singer.

Week 9: Human Rights. In this module, students are asked to consider: What are human rights? And What, if anything, are grounds for—or justifies—these human rights? Students read the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) from the United Nations and the accompanying "History of the Declaration," along with readings on potential groundings. Students also watch several short videos, including a TED Talk and a United Nations video on the UDHR. Students complete a discussion board post and "human rights mapping" project in which they draw a map of their hometown (or any place that they have lived). Students then consider where rights enumerated in the United Nations *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* are most relevant, and where (and how) the students think those rights might be violated.

Week 10: Overview & Final Exam. In this module, students are introduced to a short overview of areas of philosophy that were *not* covered in the class. Students also give a short presentation as assignment and discussion participation, which serves as their final exam.