Iowa Lyceum

Abstract
The Iowa Lyceum is a free academic summer camp that introduces philosophy to high school students. It is organized and run by the graduate students at the University of Iowa, and hosts its own professors and alumni for expert-led presentations throughout the week. Not only do the graduate students organize the Lyceum, but they also facilitate open-ended and thought-provoking philosophical discussions and activities with the students. The Iowa Lyceum is entering its tenth year and is shifting its priority to cater to its growing base of international students and focusing on bringing minorities to philosophy. The next Iowa Lyceum will be held entirely over Zoom and will be part of a collaboration with both the University of Iowa’s MAP (Minorities and Philosophy) chapter and International Universities, a platform for high school students in South America, which helps students prepare their academic profiles for their university applications in the United States.

Basic Information
Project Coordinator(s)
Emily Lemmon

Steering Committee
• Cassie Finley, Joe Glover, Chaeyeon Lee, Andy Williams, Mansour Golpour

Funding Amount Requested
$1,200

Expected Project Completion Date
July 2023

Project Description
The Iowa Lyceum is a pre-college philosophy summer program hosted by the University of Iowa’s philosophy graduate students. The graduate students plan introductory discussion sections to prepare participants for these discussions and philosophy more generally. Each year, professors at the University of Iowa present and facilitate discussions on topics connected to a set philosophical theme. An important aspect of our program is that it is entirely free for participants, removing the potential financial limitations which can prevent expansion of philosophy into different parts of the public sphere. The structure of the Lyceum is similar to that of a philosophy conference, but with greater emphasis on participant engagement. Each year the Lyceum has a theme, such as “Justice”, “Identity”, or “Female Philosophers”, which helps to encourage diverse presentation topics year to year and allows for repeat attendance of the Lyceum across multiple years. The theme is chosen with an eye towards the interests and competencies of the graduate student organizers. Our most recent theme was “Happiness and the Good Life”, and the next theme will be decided this upcoming fall.
The participants receive philosophical texts connected to the year’s theme, a combination of physical books and pdfs, to start building their philosophical libraries. The Lyceum encourages careful thinking and reasoning skills, introducing students to the methods of philosophy. At the end of the week, graduate students assist participants with preparing a presentation or collaborative dialogue on a philosophical topic of their choosing, which they present to each other and parents. The presentations provide an opportunity to explore challenging, interesting questions within a supportive community of inquiry. Participants get to choose a presentation and engage the group in a guided philosophical discussion which may draw from the material they have all learned over the course of the week. Regardless of whether participants ultimately pursue a degree in philosophy, the experience of the Iowa Lyceum is invaluable to the participants’ personal and educational development.

The Lyceum not only stands as an invaluable experience to the participants as an introduction to philosophical concepts, but it also provides graduate students with important opportunities to clarify their own thinking about philosophical problems, to become familiar with the institutional and administrative side of their burgeoning careers, and to practice the skills necessary for excellent pedagogy. The experience of teaching high school students requires reflection upon how one speaks and introduces concepts in order to make them accessible not just to pre-college audiences, but to the public at large. Learning how to identify and explain arguments, concepts, and inferences made in academic philosophy, graduate students learn to articulate their ideas in ways that are invaluable to their scholarly development. Beyond the value of learning to run the program, graduate students are often still exploring their interests in philosophy and are preparing for careers either within or beyond academia. The scarcity of opportunities to pursue public philosophy in graduate education means that the Lyceum is a unique opportunity to foster interest in pre-college philosophy. Involvement with the Iowa Lyceum can lead to further expansion of pre-college philosophy programs; past Lyceum organizers have gone on to start other pre-college philosophy programs across the country, such as the Utah Lyceum and the SoCal Philosophy Academy.

The past three years of the Lyceum have been held over Zoom, which has allowed the Lyceum to attract both a national and international audience. Recognizing this as its strength, next year the Lyceum will collaborate with International Universities, which is a platform for South American high school students to strengthen their academic profiles for their college applications in the United States. This collaboration will greatly diversify the backgrounds of the participants and will broaden the approaches to practicing philosophy at. To build on this, the Lyceum also plans to team up with the University of Iowa’s MAP (Minorities and Philosophy) chapter to work on a theme and reach an even broader audience. Our most recent Lyceum had 100% female applicants, all from various states and countries, so by partnering with these two organizations, the Lyceum aims explicitly to focus on continuing to cultivate a very diverse and pluralistic group and approach to practicing philosophy. Even the graduate students represent a diverse background, with people from three different states in the U.S. and four different countries across the globe.

The Iowa Lyceum aims to create an experience which introduces philosophy to individuals as a fundamentally transformational approach for engaging with the world. Our goal is to give students
from a variety of backgrounds the opportunity to engage in open, facilitated philosophy dialogue. By expanding the possibilities which participants consider, we encourage the students to entertain and explore ideas which they may not have otherwise considered. We meet the students where they are and allow them to pursue ideas to the furthest logical extent. We aim to emphasize the importance of doing philosophy—"that is, having students apply their newly developed skills not only to theoretical questions and problems, but to the ways they interact with the world. The nature of philosophy places importance on the critical examination of diverse positions and arguments, which we hope to encourage both within the context of the Lyceum and beyond. Our aims in the Lyceum emphasize the intrinsic value of philosophical exploration, from which various skills will follow. The Lyceum is structured to foster the participants’ intellectual development by facilitating discussions and encouraging the asking of questions. We aim to cultivate an intellectual environment conducive to the imaginative exploration of ideas and one’s place in the world—an experience through which participants begin to develop the skills and dispositions necessary for stepping back, identifying, and carefully evaluating the stream of information and problems with which they will have to engage throughout their lives.

Not only is there intrinsic value to studying and practicing philosophy, but there is instrumental value too. Students who have acquired reasoning skills by learning and practicing philosophical methods usually score better on college entrance exams such as the SAT and ACT. These skills are extremely valuable in almost any high school or college course, as well as any job which involves creative thinking, writing and analytical work. The Lyceum provides students with material and understanding that they can make use of in their college entrance exams and interviews, or in jobs that they may seek to obtain after their high school careers come to an end.

Pre-college students, ages 13 to 18, are eligible to apply to our program. The program is free to applicants, which means that participants are not limited by financial ability. By having the Lyceum free, we hope to serve a diverse group of students each year, as many paid summer programs disproportionately exclude minority and lower-income students. Accordingly, our hope is to introduce students from a variety of backgrounds to philosophy, which benefits both the students themselves as well as philosophy as a whole to have students with more perspectives on the world entering into philosophical discussions.

**Project Impact**

The Iowa Lyceum can benefit the field of philosophy in a number of ways. One way is that the Lyceum introduces philosophy to students at an earlier stage than they would otherwise have been introduced. Most students do not have access to philosophy classes in high school, and so they only learn to think philosophically once and if they get a higher education. The field of philosophy can grow stronger on the whole by people gaining philosophical experience earlier on and building on those skills from an earlier time in their intellectual development. This year’s Lyceum is also explicitly focused on working with minorities and underrepresented groups in philosophy. Because of this, people who might not have ever had the chance to practice and learn about philosophy will have the chance to do so, and will be able to bring fresh perspectives to old questions, help us form new relevant questions, and they will have fundamentally different ways of approaching solutions and exercising methods. We also have a priority to make philosophy very fun at our Lyceum. This
allows students to develop a positive attitude towards philosophy, even if they do not go on to work with it in the future. The more external-to-academic-philosophy people that have had positive experiences with philosophy there are out in the world, the better the field of philosophy can continue to thrive and have the space to continue growing.

**Project Goals**

- Our main goal for the Iowa Lyceum is to create a positive and memorable experience for the students who participate. We want them to be able to learn about new ideas, reevaluate their convictions and perspectives, and in general form a positive opinion of philosophy.
- We hope that this will be achieved by the way that we run the Lyceum, in that all organizers are sincerely excited to participate and they all love philosophy. The presentations, discussions, and activities are all meant to be fun, informative, and to make students think deeply.
- Our secondary goal is help minorities and underrepresented students in philosophy to learn about philosophy in the first place, but to also feel that their voices and perspectives are considered with it comes to working on philosophical problems and formulating new ones.
- By teaming up with International Universities and MAP, we are providing access and awareness to the Lyceum to underrepresented groups of students and working to formulate a theme that they will find both interesting and relevant to their own perspectives.

**Project Timeline**

Program organizers from the 2022 Lyceum will reach out to current University of Iowa graduate students in fall 2022 to see who is interested in organizing the 2023 Lyceum. Participation in organizing the Lyceum is volunteer-based and draws from the University of Iowa graduate philosophy department. We will then reach out to University of Iowa professors to secure speakers and coordinate the summer schedule in mid-April of 2023.

Organizers will check and update all organizing materials: contact lists, applications, website, and policy manuals during meetings in February. In April, organizers will send Iowa Lyceum flyers to the contact list of over 800 Iowa City and Cedar Rapids high school teachers. We will also share the flyer with our contacts in other pre-college philosophy programs, with Ethics Bowl coordinators, our contacts with International Universities, and with our contacts with University of Iowa’s MAP.

All professors and graduate students involved in the Lyceum must have a background check completed prior to the start of the Lyceum. Through the University of Iowa’s new Minors on Campus policy, this also requires program organizers and presenters to complete a “Minors on Campus” training tutorial, and these all must be submitted to the Minors on Campus committee before the start of the program. Graduate student organizers are expected to have completed this training by the end of May 2023.

Applications from participants are due May 20, 2023, at which time graduate student organizers will review applications, accept as many participants as we can support (we are aiming to accept all who apply, so we are budgeting for approximately 40 students), and send out our program waiver/participant agreement/emergency contact forms by the end of May. Depending on the
number of participants, we will finalize the reading list and order books and Lyceum t-shirts to mail to participants. In the past, books and t-shirts have often gotten to participants after the Lyceum has concluded, but we hope to mail them to students before the Lyceum begins this year so students can make use of the texts alongside the Lyceum.

During the spring semester of 2023, organizers will begin designing the curriculum for the 2023 Lyceum, meeting once in January to give an overview of the work to be done, introduce new organizers to the Lyceum, and share relevant P4C research and publications about the Iowa Lyceum with all the organizers so all the graduate students have a chance to familiarize themselves with the purpose and methods underpinning the Lyceum. We will have meetings in February and March, each to update on what has been accomplished thus far, then will begin meeting weekly in April and May as we approach the start of the Lyceum.

During our May meetings, we will finalize and practice graduate student presentations and the schedule for the Lyceum. The Lyceum begins with a graduate student presentation and discussion introducing participants to philosophy. This introduction to philosophy is followed by an introduction to logic. There are additional time slots for graduate students to present on topics related to their area of study. Iowa graduate students who are interested in presenting at the Lyceum propose (with an abstract of 500-750 words) a talk they would like to give by mid-May. Graduate student organizers will then review and accept proposals that best relate to the year's theme, with an eye towards the accessibility of the topic proposed. In early June, graduate students with accepted proposals are required to practice presenting their talk to the other organizers in an effort to ensure the highest quality presentation with the greatest accessibility to high school students.

The 2023 Lyceum will be held the third week of June from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm (CDT) daily. This includes a 30-minute lunch and a few short breaks between activities and discussions. Professor presentations are after the lunch break, with a 20- to 25-minute lecture followed by a facilitated discussion and question-period for the remaining 35-40 minutes. After this, the professor leaves and graduate students facilitate continued discussion among participants. The later part of the week allocates time for students to work individually or in small groups to develop their presentation or debate on a philosophical topic. Graduate student organizers aid in research, outlining, and supporting participants during these time slots.

Immediately following the conclusion of the Lyceum, we request feedback, comments, and testimonials from participants. Organizers will meet to go over the feedback to debrief and discuss suggestions for improvements to the Lyceum for the following year.

Timeline:

September 2022

Past graduate organizers recruit new graduate student organizers for the 2022 Lyceum.

January 2023
• Initial meeting to delegate responsibilities among organizers

• Update program manuals and policies

• Share research on pre-college philosophy pedagogy & Iowa Lyceum publications for graduate organizers to research and read in preparation for the Lyceum

March 2023

• Meet to begin scheduling dates and timeline for the 2023 Lyceum

• Collect reading list & book suggestions

• Contact professors about presentations

• Update website with 2023 information

April 2023 - (Weekly meetings)

• Design Lyceum poster & T-shirts

• Finalize schedule for 2023 Lyceum

• Confirm professor presentations

• Assign Minors on Campus training to new organizers

• Confirm reading list

• Update Iowa contact list

• Create application form for participants

• Send out flyers to contact list

• Post information to Daily Nous

• Share on social media

• Arrange visits to local high schools

May 2023 - (Weekly meetings)

• Visit local high schools to speak about the Lyceum & philosophy

• Background checks and Minors on Campus training completed for all professors and graduate students involved with the Lyceum

• Graduate presenters submit proposals for graduate student talks & presentations

• Organizers review proposals
• Notify graduate students of accepted proposals
• Participant applications due May 20th.
• Review applications
• Send notifications of acceptance by May 31st.

June 2023
30th-5th:
• Send accepted participants waiver/participant agreement/emergency contact forms
• Order T-shirts & books
• Collect participant documentation
• Finalize schedule and post to website with titles of presentations.

6th-12th:
• Graduate student practice presentations to other organizers for feedback
• Finalize remaining details.

13th-19th:
• Mail T-shirts & books to participants.

20th-24th:
• Lyceum, 10:00 am - 3:00 pm;
• Solicit participant feedback on Lyceum experience

July 2023
• Meeting among organizers to debrief
• Update Lyceum webpage for “past Lyceumsâ€ with 2023 Lyceum information.

**Project Outreach**
The 2023 Iowa Lyceum will be held over Zoom, so it will be accessible to a large and wide audience. We plan to share our flyer with the principals for all the local Iowa high schools, on Daily Nous, on our social media sites including Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook, with the contact from International Universities to disburse to the ten high schools abroad within his network, and with University of Iowa’s MAP chapter. We will also continue to seek out avenues by which we can share the information for our program with students who may be interested in participating.
Accessibility Plan
All presentations will be over Zoom, which enables us to use automatic closed captioning, allowing lectures to be more accessible to deaf, hard-of-hearing, and those with audio processing disorders. We also have access to the disability support systems that are already in place through the University of Iowa. We plan activities to be as interactive and discussion-based as possible, rather than being lecture-based, in order to make the Lyceum more accessible to those with ASD or ADHD.

Evaluation Plan
Our evaluation plan will consist mostly of written feedback from the student participants and from the graduate student organizers. In mid-May of 2023, we will know if we were able to recruit 40 students, and if they were from underrepresented backgrounds. Directly following the conclusion of the 2023 Lyceum, the student participants will be sent and encouraged to respond to a questionnaire regarding their experience with the Lyceum. We will ask them a variety of open-ended questions about their attitude towards philosophy before and after the Lyceum, what they liked best throughout the week, what they thought didn’t work or was boring or inaccessible, how well they felt represented and heard, and how likely they are to join again in the future or recommend others to join.

The graduate students will also be given a questionnaire to help them reflect on their experience organizing the Lyceum. They will be asked to evaluate how well they learned the relevant aspects of their administrative role, how they thought their teaching skills and techniques were impacted, if their research was advanced in any way, as well as general things that they thought went well and went poorly. These responses will anonymously be discussed as a group and will be factored into the plan for the following year.

Online Presence
Danielle Colburn (a past Iowa Lyceum director) created a website for the Iowa Lyceum, which is hosted by the University of Iowa’s servers. We would greatly appreciate if the APA would feature a link to our website.

https://philosophylyceum.org.uiowa.edu/

Budget Narrative
Because we plan to hold the Lyceum entirely over Zoom in 2023, our expected costs are lower than our usual predictions. We anticipate approximately 40 students signing up and want to prepare to fund the same amount. Our highest budgeting priority is to fund the mandatory federal background checks for the organizers and presenters who help with the Lyceum. These are $70 for each person. We expect to only need a maximum of three next year, since the current organizers and almost all the University of Iowa professors already have had their background checks completed. Our second priority is to supply the students with at least one but ideally two philosophical books that match our yearly theme. The anticipated cost per person for books is $30. The intent behind this is to have the students work with the texts alongside the Lyceum and to help them begin their philosophical libraries. Our next priority is to have a t-shirt shipped out for each student. The t-shirts cost approximately $15 for each student. The hope is that they can wear them throughout
the course of the Lyceum and that it will help build a sense of unity and community, and that they will have a great momentum for their time spent participating in the Lyceum. It also serves as a useful advertisement and conversation starter for others who might find out about the Lyceum through their friends or family. Shipping books and t-shirts itself will be a big cost, which is part of the budgetary equation. With international shipping, this can be as high as $500. Finally, in the past, we have raised funds for a dedicated honorarium of approximately $250 for each of the Lyceum organizers, since it is calculated that they each dedicate over 50 hours of their time over the course of the year. If there are seven organizers, that amounts to $1,750. The honorarium is something the Lyceum strives to provide to signal respect for the organizer’s time. However, there have been times in which the organizers have forgone their honorarium if more students sign up, so that the funding can be allocated to support more participation in the Lyceum. If we are able to raise more money, we would like to consider providing another book to each participant or to book a key-note speaker for the Lyceum.

**Other Funding Sources**

In addition to the APA Small Grant Fund, we will also be seeking funding from PLATO Philosophy Learning and Teaching Organization grant, the University of Iowa CLAS Excellence and Innovation Grant, the Iowa City Social Justice and Racial Equity Grant, and the Johnson County Community Grants Program. We have received funding from PLATO and the University of Iowa before and hope to enjoy continued support from them. In addition, we have identified two new sources of funding that match our new priorities and goals for the 2023 Lyceum. Our goal of expanding the Lyceum to include a permanent cross-country and international presence will enable us to grow our program beyond the limited funding we have received in past years.

- **1,750 PLATO**
  - $1,750 Honorarium

- **$1,000 University of Iowa CLAS Excellence & Innovation Fund**
  - $500 Shipping (International and Domestic)
  - $210 Background checks

- **Iowa City Social Justice and Racial Equity Grant**
  - $600 T-Shirts

- **$500 Johnson County Community Grants Program**
  - $500 for organization memberships and possible keynote speaker

- **$1,200 APA Small Grants**
  - $1,200 Books

**Mark intended funding requests**