

Ethics and Society at Rice 2017

Peter Zuk and Brandon Williams, Organizers/Coordinators

Anthony Gardner and Kayla Rainey, Organizers/Instructors

Adam Valenstein, Organizer/Student Outreach

Report to the Board of Officers of the American Philosophical Association

September 30th, 2017

Introduction

We wish to begin by expressing our profound gratitude for the American Philosophical Association's generous support of the Ethics and Society at Rice program through the Diversity and Inclusiveness Grant that we received. The program has proven deeply meaningful for our student cohorts, as well as for each of us in our various roles. We consider it a great honor to help facilitate this student experience, and the APA's support allowed the program to flourish in its second year--a particularly crucial time, we believe, in the program's progression toward long-term sustainability.

We now briefly restate our program overview and description of the motivations behind the program. We then list our program objectives and how they were met, followed by a description of our expenditure of APA funds.

Program Overview

Ethics and Society at Rice University is a three-week summer enrichment program for rising juniors and seniors who qualify for free or reduced-price meals at Houston-area public and charter high schools. The program both addresses a deep disparity in educational opportunities and has the potential to contribute to diversity within the field of philosophy. While most pre-college philosophy programs at U.S. universities are cost-prohibitive for students from mid- to low-income families, ours offers free tuition, meals, and supplies for participants. In addition, our student body has been constituted by demographic groups that are underrepresented in the field.

Motivation

For several years, the Philosophy Department at Rice University has sought to promote philosophical ethical reflection and civil discourse among young people, chiefly by hosting the Houston High School Ethics Bowl. In March 2015, members of the department felt a strong need to increase our mission-driven efforts for community engagement. Ethics and Society was both an extension and amplification of this important work. The program recruits promising local high school students who qualify for free or reduced-price meals. In addition, both our 2016 and 2017 cohorts have been composed of students whose race, ethnicity, or gender are underrepresented in the field. Ethics and Society thus weds our desire to promote pre-college philosophy with our tenacious commitments to equality of educational opportunity and to increasing diversity within the field.

Our grant proposal included the following program objectives. We now list these in order and describe what we have done to meet them.

Student Participant-Centered Program Objectives

1. We seek to recruit 15 talented rising juniors/seniors who qualify for free or reduced-price meals in Houston public/charter schools by working closely with school administrators and counselors during the selection process.

We successfully met our recruitment goals by working with high school counselors to identify high-performing students who met the above criteria. Our student application process included a statement of interest, writing sample, transcript, and recommendation from a school official. Recommenders were asked to describe the student's attendance and disciplinary records as well as to evaluate the students on each of the following dimensions: academic potential, academic achievement, intellectual curiosity, effort/determination, organization, willingness to take intellectual risks, ability to collaborate with others, maturity (relative to age), emotional stability, comfort speaking to large audiences, and ability to comprehend difficult tasks. Of the sixteen students in our 2017 cohort, eleven were Hispanic/Latina/o; two were Asian; two were African-American; one was Caucasian. Ten were female, and six were male.

2. We plan to deliver the content areas – normative ethical theory and philosophical conceptions of justice – through engaging lessons and activities.

The instructors provided high-quality instruction in normative theories (Virtue Ethics, Consequentialism, Deontology, Feminist Ethics) and theories of social justice through engaging instruction that included: lecture, group work, video components, games, and group outings to our three site visits. For instance, while every instructional day included some amount of lecture, much of the time was spent in small- and large-group discussion prompted by questions raised in the lessons and in short video clips with philosophically-relevant content. The three site visits (see below) were particularly engaging to the students and allowed them to reach a level of synthesis between what they had learned in class and the “real world”.

3. We will engage the wider Houston community by conducting three site visits: Anadarko Petroleum, Baylor Center for Medical Ethics and Health Policy, and Interfaith Ministries for Greater Houston - Refugee Services.

In 2017, we substituted a visit to the First Court of Appeals of Texas in place of the Anadarko visit. Our resulting site visits were:

1. The First Court of Appeals of Texas, where one of the Justices guided the students through the court discussing her background and career as it relates to principles of ethics and justice, especially understandings of the role of law in society.
2. Interfaith Ministries for Greater Houston, whose Refugee Services is one of the largest resettlement programs in the U.S. At IMGH, we met with staff to discuss the challenges faced by their clients and the duties we have, as individuals and as a nation, to refugees.
3. Baylor College of Medicine's Center for Medical Ethics and Health Policy, where one of the staff bioethicists introduced students to methodological norms for applying moral reflection in a clinical setting, including leading the students through case studies.

Student participants rated the overall quality of these site visits on a 7-point scale (7=excellent):

Court of Appeals site visit: 6.27

Interfaith site visit: 6.31

Baylor College of Medicine site visit: 6.5

In light of the very favorable student responses to these site visits and the organizers' collective judgment as to their high educational value, we plan to repeat each in future years.

4. Students will improve their presentation skills: demonstrating content-area expertise; using body language appropriately and effectively; and speaking with clarity, volume, and purpose.

The program concluded with an academic symposium the audience of which was composed of students' family members, friends, teachers from their schools, as well as members of the Rice University community. Students were divided into three presentation groups, and the groups presented on case studies in the areas of Medical Ethics, Legal Ethics, and International Justice.

- The Medical Ethics group presented the case of Henrietta Lacks, whose cancer cells were taken—without her consent or knowledge—and used to establish an “immortal” cell line. The group contrasted consequentialist arguments that claim to justify the taking and continued use of the HeLa cells with deontological arguments that frame those actions as an unjustified violation of Mrs. Lacks's autonomy.
- The Legal Ethics group presented the case of *Masterpiece Cakeshop v. Colorado Civil Rights Commission*, which concerns Jack Phillips's refusal to make a wedding cake for same-sex couple Charlie Craig and David Mullins. The group considered deontological and consequentialist arguments regarding the moral weight of Phillips's autonomy or religious freedom as well as the value of providing legal protections to the couple on the basis of their status as a social minority.
- The International Justice group considered arguments for and against making contact with (or otherwise intervening on) the Sentinelese, a hunter-gatherer people indigenous to the Andaman Islands of India. Among the group's concerns were outsiders' abilities to accurately predict and weigh the potential harms and benefits of intervention and the capabilities of the Sentinelese to make and to communicate informed decisions regarding their own interests.

Each presentation was about fifteen minutes in length and was followed by ten minutes of Q&A with the audience. Each presentation displayed the students' increased understanding of relevant ethical considerations as they figure in real-world situations. Furthermore, the presentations represented the collaborative work of the members of each group, arrived at through thoughtful dialectic about normatively-relevant aspects of their chosen case studies. While the presentations that each group gave were quite well thought-out and interesting, instructors noticed that additional training on how to respond to audience questions might be beneficial for future cohorts. In particular, it would be good to help students better anticipate the full range of potential questions that might be asked by audience members.

5. Students will cultivate a greater sense of personal initiative and responsibility in the pursuit of their own goals, the baseline for which will be each student's statement of interest in the program (received as part of their application) and a personal reflection writing assignment done in class on the first and penultimate days.

It was clear that students had an increased sense of the ethical implications of their own actions. They gained a greater understanding of their own place in the world and reflected about what is morally required of them as members of a larger society. Several students also demonstrated personal initiative to continue engaging in philosophical reflection. In fact, one student wrote to the organizers (after the program had ended) to ask whether there was a possibility that they might be able to return in future years of the program to serve as a mentor to future cohorts. We will in the future attempt to incorporate this idea as an additional component of the program, as it would provide members of previous student cohorts with an opportunity for further philosophical engagement that we had not previously considered.

6. Students will gain proficiency in the content areas.

Many students entered the program with little or no familiarity with most of the ethical theories that were taught (consequentialism, Kantian deontologies, Aristotelian virtue theory). Students did have some prior familiarity with basic feminist ideas as they figure in public discourse, but were largely unfamiliar with the various more particular strands of feminist theory incorporated in classroom instruction. Anticipating this, the program began with an introduction to these theories and demonstrations of their application to toy or test cases, often drawn from popular culture or media. Special attention was shown to how each theory could be used to articulate and defend various pre-theoretical intuitions or judgments about cases. Also of note were points of disagreement between theories and the (perceived) strengths and weaknesses of each.

After these introductory sessions, the program transitioned to presenting and engaging the students in applications of these theories to real-world issues. This transitional period comprised the bulk of the program: the remaining classroom sessions, the site visits, and the student-directed research, argument, and presentation for the academic symposium.

Our Tier-1 post-program survey showed a heightened average student self-perception of familiarity with course material (pre-program → post-program, 7-point scale):

Familiarity with philosophy: 2.94 → 5.0

This marked increase in understanding of course content was manifest in student's classroom interactions and final presentations.

7. Students will improve their critical reasoning skills (viz. evaluating arguments for assumptions, premises, and conclusions; generating challenges to arguments; and reconciling opposing views).

It was clear that many students had reflective normative commitments upon entering the program. Students demonstrated significant uptake of theoretical aspects of the instruction, in such a way as to be able to articulate in greater detail the sorts of reasons that favor these commitments, their basic logical structure, and ways in which they might be extended to various other cases. Students were able to engage charitably with opposing points of view both in classroom discussions and at the concluding academic symposium.

8. Students will gain familiarity with university library databases and conducting research efficiently.

Our student participants entered the program already displaying a significant level of comfort with independent research. Average student self-assessment in this regard rose slightly in post-program surveying, from an already quite high pre-program baseline (pre-program → post-program, 7-point scale):

Comfort conducting independent research: 5.31 → 5.75

Instructor-Centered Program Objectives

1. Instructors will gain awareness of their own leadership strengths through critical self-reflection and third-party evaluation in the form of an EQi assessment and leadership coaching.

The Ann and John Doerr Institute for New Leaders has continued its working relationship with the Ethics and Society program by offering leadership coaching to this year's instructors, as well as by providing additional financial support for the purpose of making their compensation commensurate with departmental norms for graduate teaching. The instructors have completed MHS's Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i 2.0) assessment and will continue to work with the Doerr Institute this fall. The leadership coaching process includes a series of reading and reflective writing assignments culminating in five one-on-one sessions with a leader development coach.

2. Instructors will develop programming skills and gain experience in setting a clear vision and actionable goals for group development.

The instructors worked independently and collaboratively over several weeks to define the curriculum and design lesson plans for the 2017 session. They divided the teaching sessions roughly in half, first presenting lessons on normative theories—consequentialism, Kantian deontologies, Aristotelian virtue theory, and feminist ethical theories—then presenting domains in which to apply those theories—medical ethics, social justice, international justice, and environmental and animal ethics. This year's instructors designed an innovative curriculum, building thematically upon the previous year's curriculum but creatively employed interactive classroom techniques (including the use of different teaching media).

3. Instructors will practice effective time-management in the settings of professional meetings, group discussion, and classroom facilitation.

In the interests of accessibility and engagement, the instructors chose to concentrate the students' work in the in-person class sessions, minimizing work assigned to be done at home. However, this exacerbated time constraints on some lessons (especially those with a non-trivial reading component), causing some material to be condensed or omitted. For future sessions, it will be recommended that more preparatory or background work be done outside of classroom times, when doing so will not sacrifice students' access to and successful engagement with material.

Expenditure of APA Funds

- Each of our two instructors, Kayla Rainey and Anthony Gardner, received \$1,500 of the total allotted \$3,000 for their compensation. As mentioned above, additional compensation was generously provided by the Doerr Institute.
- Our program coordinator duties were split by the previous year's two instructors, Peter Zuk and Brandon Williams, who each received \$750 of the total allotted \$1,500 for coordinator compensation. In keeping with a sustainability plan, Peter and Brandon also served as teaching mentors. Additional compensation was provided by Rice's Philosophy Department.
- Our cost for course packets and class materials was \$306.74 of a combined allotted \$325. This included course binders, notebooks, writing utensils, lanyards for student nametags, and materials for printing commemorative invitations for the academic symposium event.
- Our transportation cost for the three site visits was \$450 of an allotted \$720. This total was lower than expected primarily due to the much closer proximity to campus of our First Court of Appeals visit relative to the previous year's Anadarko visit.

- Our food cost was \$3,816.85 of an allotted \$4,300. This covered the cost of breakfast and lunch for students and instructor chaperones, as well as light refreshments for a reception following the academic symposium event. This total was slightly lower than expected due to some students electing to eat breakfast at home, as well as the lack of increase in Rice meal plan rates that we had anticipated.
- Our total expenditure of APA funds was thus \$9,073.59 of the estimated \$9,845 requested in our proposal, in response to which the APA allotted \$10,000.

Conclusion

The 2017 iteration of the program exceeded our expectations, especially on the crucial dimension of student-participant experience. We thank the APA once again for its support during this pivotal time in the program's development.



Financial Report

TO American Philosophical Association
 Regina Wyatt, APA Accounting Clerk
 University of Delaware
 31 Amstel Avenue
 Newark, DE 10003
 rmwyatt@udel.edu

Report Date: September 27, 2017
 Grant Reference No. APA Award Letter 11/22/16
 Principal Investigator: Peter D. Zuk
 RICE Fund/Orgn: R97040-328000
 Report thru: August 31, 2017
 Final Report: Yes

Available Funds	Cumulative
Award Received	\$ 10,000.00
Total Award Available	\$ 10,000.00

Cost Categories	Cumulative Expenses
Supplies and Expenses	8,623.59
Travel	450.00
Total Expenses	\$ 9,073.59

Available Balance as of 8/31/17	\$ 926.41
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I certify, to the best of my knowledge and belief, that the costs or disbursements are in accordance with the terms and conditions of the award.


 Claudia Murray
 Research Accountant III

9-27-17
 Date