

UNIVERSITY *of* MISSOURI

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

12/20/14

Dear Robert,

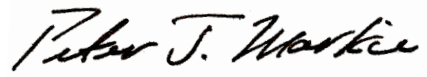
This is my report as Kenny Shields' teaching advisor for Introduction to Philosophy for this past semester.

I have never worked with a more dedicated and conscientious teacher. Our initial discussions began last spring and concerned the choice of a text. As Kenny worked his way through a host of options, I was pleased to see that he was concerned less with what he wanted to teach and much more with what his students would be capable of learning and profit from knowing. When we moved on to the design of the course requirements, Kenny displayed a similar unprompted concern for his students' learning, as he sought a mix of assignments that would not only evaluate their progress but also encourage their engagement with the material and the development of their analytical skills. He successfully drew on his experiences at an APA sponsored summer seminar on teaching and his past success with teaching on-line, to design an excellent course that made effective use of Blackboard as a support tool for providing students with course materials and assignments. His student-centered and technology savvy approach to teaching remained evident in our regular discussions of issues from the appropriate length for an exam to how best to structure class discussions.

My impressions of Kenny as a teacher were confirmed when I observed one of his classes. The topic was Searle's attack on the Strong AI Thesis and replies to his Chinese room argument, in particular. Kenny had the class of thirty-some students (attendance was at the max) seated in a roughly circular arrangement to facilitate discussion. He used a combination of slides and questions to review the previous class and lay the groundwork for a discussion of the replies to Searle. The students, all of whom he seemed to know by name, were actively engaged from start to finish. Their comments and questions generally revealed a solid understanding of the material, and, on the very few occasions where that wasn't the case, Kenny effectively turned a student's error into a general lesson on the material. Simply put, the performance was superb and at the level I'd expect from a much more seasoned instructor.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peter J. Markie". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent initial "P".

Peter J. Markie

cc Kenny Shields

Peer Evaluation Form

Evaluator: Jonathan Evans Date/Time: November 29, 2018

Instructor: Kenny Shields Course: PHIL 201

Approximate Attendance: 25

After you complete this evaluation, please give one copy to the front office staff and give a copy to the instructor.

- Good use of alarm for time-management. When appropriate it was ignored so that a key learning opportunity wasn't missed and in others it served as a good transition to keep the session on track.
- Good presentation of standard pro and anti-choice arguments.
- Good use of Biden YouTube clip to encourage focus on arguments and not motives.
- Powerful personal testimony. This could be risky, especially if an instructor does not know students well. However, its use was appropriate for the session and instructor appeared to have a strong rapport with students.

Space for additional comments:

Please use the following scoring scale in response to the statements below. Comments are encouraged.

(5) Strongly Agree (4) Slightly Agree (3) Neutral (2) Slightly Disagree (1) Strongly Disagree

If you are unable to effectively evaluate a category, rate as (UE) Unable to Evaluate

1. _5_ The instructor was well prepared and organized in class

(comments)

2. _4.9_ The instructor demonstrated command of the subject matter

(comments) Consistently strong. Only two very minor suggestions: for Divine Command Theory, note that there are more sophisticated versions that can meet the Euthyphro objection (though most DCTs I am aware of suffer from a decision-procedure challenge, i.e. what does God command and how would I know it?), and emphasize Marquis' "Future Like Ours" concept to help fill out the Valuable Future claim.

3. _5_ The instructor was enthusiastic about the material

(comments) Undoubtedly invested and passionate about the material and student learning.

4. _4.8_ The instructor used instructional methods that engaged students in the class

(comments) Several methods used including a quick quiz, small-group discussions, large-group discussions (with use of 'passing the stuffed hippo' to encourage listening), video and lecture. Only recommendation is to try to meet with more groups as some groups appeared to get off-track or stop discussion -- though in one case discussion started back up thanks to instructor's intervention.

5. 5 Students were able to ask questions in class and the instructor responded appropriately

(comments) Good diversity of participation and instructor's responses were appropriate balanced between affirming the person and engaging critically with student responses. The result was consistent productive discussion.

6. 5 The classroom environment was not distracting

(comments) Orienting seating so that students could see each other, the instructor and the television screen was an intelligent use to the classroom.

7. 5 The instructor communicated clearly, both verbally and visually

(comments) Powepoint aided presentation coupled with good voice projection and pauses for student questions ensured clear communication.

8. 5 The pacing of the lecture was appropriate

(comments) Great pacing. One of the challenges with Marquis' article is the "simplicity" of the argument, at least comparative to most arguments in applied ethics. However, the instructor structured the session so that it began with an important broad moral issue (i.e., what makes killing wrong) and transitioned to Marquis' own answer and how it would handle a variety of cases including the specific issue under examination (i.e. abortion).

9. 5 The instructor emphasized key points and clearly summarized information as needed

(comments)

10. 5 The material was presented at an appropriate level for the course

(comments) No special knowledge was required other than knowledge from previous sessions or basic points from reading.

 4.9+ Average of scored items (out of 5)