Phil 106: Ethics SLO assessment

4. Understand some of the diverse assumptions and values that shape our experience and/or attitude of the world.
SLO assessment

- SLO#4 can be assessed through case study group discussion and reports produced in group. Students, in class, are given a variety of case studies that represent a wide range of ethical dilemmas. For example, in one case study students are given a scenario where two women murder a child of the tribe that they are a part of, so that they can make a ritualistic potion that will ensure a plentiful harvest during a time of drought. They are brought to the British colonial authority for trial. Is this something that should be tolerated as a case of difference of culture, or have they committed some moral wrong? Another case study features a deaf couple, who are attempting to purposely conceive a deaf child by soliciting for sperm donors who are deaf. The case study raises questions about the nature of disability and parental obligations.
SLO analysis

• SLO#4 Using the two case studies mentioned above, students were scored out of 10 points each for a combined 20 points. The scores reflect their ability to use good moral reasoning in the cases, not specifically for understanding the diversity of values and assumptions. But in order to make good moral arguments about the case, they couldn’t ignore the values that were raised by these two cases. So I believe the overall score is reflective of how well students are understanding the values involved in these particular cases. Of the two classes, a total of 41 students completed both case studies 11 students scored perfect scores, 11 students scored 19/20 6 students scored 18/20 13 students scored 17/20
Case Study assignments

• Applying theoretical knowledge to concrete real life cases.
• Cases should be interesting / engaging / shocking / unusual
• Cases should include a focus on important ethical concepts
• Priming questions to help guide student discussion and thought.
Example of a Case Study: Bushmeat

- 1 human per square km = sustainable
- Wildlife being killed 6x this rate.
- Crop cultivation unsuccessful
- 50% of people are malnourished
- 40,000 year history of hunting bushmeat
- Valuable protein source
- Illegal export worth $300 billion
Questions to consider:

• Which is more morally valuable: Human lives or ecosystems? Why?

• Would the collapse of this ecosystem likely have significant effects around the world?

• Does survival morally justify anything? Everything?

• Apply Utilitarian reasoning to this case. What would be the right thing to do and why?

• Apply Kantian reasoning to this case. What would be the right thing to do and why?
Actual student responses:

• If using utilitarianism this case would be the right to do because it is saving a life for a life. Looking at the given circumstances, I would support the cause that would result in the saving of the maximum lives. Whether that be the people of Africa, or the lives of the animals.

• Based on what is more beneficial to everyone, the right thing to do would be to continue hunting bushmeat because it contributes to their well-being since many of the ones who are doing the hunting are malnourished. The hunting of wild animal seems like a better alternative than to have a whole civilization die from starvation.

• In Kantianism, it is morally wrong to tell them that they can’t hunt. Kantianism is applied to those who have the ability to be rational. So while it can be said that they are treating the land as a means to an end.
Student responses continued:

• Applying Utilitarianism to this case, people must stop or reduce hunting bushmeat to keep the balance of ecosystem. Indiscriminate hunting of wild animals will lead to depletion of natural resources. It can just solve the temporary hunger.

• Under Kantianism, the moral thing to do is for more people in richer nations to give to charity. The behavior of giving generously to the poor is easily rationalized as a universal law (there are no paradoxes, and one would want it done to them). If everyone who had the ability to do so followed this law, the amount of money generated would be enormous. This huge pool of money could probably stop starvation in central Africa.
Results:

• Students are, in general, meeting the SLO.

• Students seem to do better individually than in groups.