

Using Critical Thinking to Assess the Ineffable

Peter Dlugos, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Philosophy
Bergen Community College
400 Paramus Road
Paramus, New Jersey 07652

Abstract

Many college professors want their students to grow personally as well as intellectually. They want their students to become more reflective and self-aware as a result of taking their courses. This goal is typically consistent with, and even serves to advance, the stated missions of the institutions in which they teach. But there is a problem: not only do these "ineffable" objectives seem difficult or impossible to assess within the context of a course, but it is also often unclear how the course itself will help students work toward these objectives. But critical thinking about one's experiences, attitudes, and values goes hand-in-hand with personal growth and development. This essay explores how conventional assignments can be modified and expanded to include such critical thinking and writing vis-à-vis the main concepts of the course. Also presented are grading rubrics that can serve as formative assessments of the student's abilities in these areas.

Many college professors, present author included, have expressed lofty goals for the students in their courses. They want their students to grow personally, to become more reflective and self-aware persons as a result of taking their courses. These lofty goals are typically consistent with, and even serve to advance, the stated missions of the institutions in which they teach, which normally include the personal growth and development of students as a key goal. But professors face what appear to be obvious difficulties when it comes to discerning their individual roles in the fulfillment of this particular aspect of the mission: not only do these "ineffable" objectives seem difficult or impossible to assess within the context of a course, but it is also often unclear how the course itself will help students reach these objectives, or at least come closer to reaching them. Furthermore, there would appear to be an equal or greater number of professors who regard these affective areas of student development as patently non-academic, and thus not even a possible area of professional concern. One way to tackle these difficulties, and to see the strong connections between the affective and the academic, is to explore how conventional student assignments can be expanded to include critical thinking and writing about one's experiences, attitudes, and values vis-à-vis the main concepts of the course. A central

assumption being made is that such thinking goes hand-in-hand with personal growth and development, and that a measure of the former can serve as a rough and indirect measurement of the latter. In what follows, several assignments are presented that involve critical thinking about values, meaning, and self-understanding, and the possibility of using these assignments in a wide variety of disciplines is explored. Also presented are grading rubrics designed to serve in part as formative assessments of the student's abilities in these areas. While both the assignments and the rubrics are still under development, it should be clear that such "ineffables" really can be approached, explored, and assessed within the traditional college classroom. Using critical thinking is the key.

The Affective and the Ineffable

First, a bit of groundwork. The word 'affective' is typically defined in ways that involve juxtaposition with the cognitive, e.g., "pertaining to or resulting from emotions or feelings rather than from thought." But the affective and cognitive seem inextricably intertwined: feelings are typically based on thoughts and judgments (e.g., "I'm excited about seeing the film, because I think it will be good"), and emotions often seem to give rise to further thoughts and judgments (e.g., "I decided to quit because I was so angry") The fact that most feelings seem to have "propositional content"—i.e., to be directed toward a sentence or proposition, e.g., "I'm worried *that we'll go to war with Iraq*"—underscores this point. Gable's (1986) identification of four categories of affective characteristics is consistent with this analysis: (1) *self-concept* or self-esteem involves feelings about oneself, (2) *attitudes* are feelings toward other people, sets of ideas, or social institutions, (3) *interests* reflect preferences for selected activities, and (4) *values* relate to beliefs about life goals, ways of life, and philosophies of life. (Erwin, 1991) Both thoughts and feelings, so construed, are directed towards sentences or propositions, and both make their way into the reasoning we engage in and the decisions we make. Critical thinking of any depth and breadth will (and should) involve both the cognitive and the affective domains, and this insight helps form the theoretical basis of the assignments to be described in Section III below.

All four types of affective states can and do make their way into traditional academic course work; (2) and (4) are the most common. Nonetheless, academics have been even more reluctant to assess the affective outcomes of the educational experiences they provide than the cognitive outcomes. Alexander Astin (1993) comments:

Educators are inclined to shy away from assessing affective outcomes because they think they are too value-laden. They feel much more comfortable limiting their assessments to cognitive outcomes. College, they argue, is supposed to develop the student's intellect, so how can we go wrong if we focus on cognitive variables? However, if you read through a few college catalogues, you begin to realize that this argument is really inconsistent with the stated aims and goals of most undergraduate institutions...Indeed, most descriptions of the liberally educated person sound at least as affective as they do cognitive. (p. 43-44)

Jeffrey Seybert (unpublished) echoes this point with respect to community colleges:

Many community colleges indicate in their mission statements that students should achieve a variety of outcomes in the affective/non-cognitive domain. Examples include citizenship skills, understanding and appreciation of multiculturalism and diversity, self-confidence, value and goal clarification, moral development, tolerance, and others. To date, however, there have been very few reports in the literature of assessment of these types of outcomes in community colleges. Given the frequency with which such outcomes appear and are emphasized in community college mission and value statements, it is clear that much work remains to be done to assess whether students are actually acquiring those skills and abilities. (p. 10-11)

Bergen Community College is no exception, either with respect its mission or its assessment of affective outcomes. BCC's Mission Statement lists affective development as one of three major purposes of its educational programs:

Bergen Community College provides high quality, relevant, and varied educational programs and opportunities for the intellectual, cultural, and *personal growth* of all members of its community. The College values its role as an educational leader, embracing change and responding to the complex needs of those it serves. [emphasis added]

And five of BCC's nine Core Competencies involve affective skills:

CRITICAL THINKING —Students will actively reflect on, reason about, and form independent judgments on a variety of ideas and information, and use these skills to guide their beliefs and actions.
CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY —Students will demonstrate an awareness of the responsibilities of intelligent citizenship in a diverse and pluralistic society, and will demonstrate cultural, global, and environmental awareness.
PERSONAL SKILLS —Students will demonstrate an awareness of personal values and responsibility, and an ability to understand and manage themselves and their commitments.
INTERPERSONAL SKILLS —Students will demonstrate an ability to maintain personal and professional relationships, engage in meaningful teamwork, and resolve conflicts.
CREATIVITY AND AESTHETIC APPRECIATION —Students will demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of the creative process, and an ability to think and express ideas creatively.

Of these five, critical thinking is the one area that is sometimes regarded as a purely cognitive endeavor, but as suggested above, that perspective is artificially narrow.

A standard comment from faculty is that such things cannot be assessed, because they are ineffable. By this, it seems that one of three things is typically meant: (1) those things are "immeasurable," (2) those things are subjective, or just a matter of opinion, or (3) those things are private—not appropriately inquired into. As far as (1) goes, one can acknowledge that affective objectives can only be measured indirectly, through behavior, linguistic or otherwise,

that is representative of an attitude or value, and that the terms or constructs in these areas are still somewhat vague and imprecise. (Erwin, 1991) But that is far from being immeasurable; it simply means that "perfect data" should not be expected or demanded. As far as (2) goes—the worry about subjectivity—one has to be careful to distinguish (a) what values students actually possess, from (b) what values are important, or true, etc. The potential subjectivity of (b) does not entail the subjectivity of (a). Furthermore, moral values are not being prescribed in the assignments to be described—i.e., students' holding a particular set of moral values is not being required—nor are such values being assessed; what is being assessed, however, is students' *level of awareness* of their own attitudes and values, and their awareness of their academic, civic, and professional responsibilities. As far as (3) goes, concerns about privacy are important and to be taken seriously. If a student objects to an assignment on these grounds, the student should be given an alternative critical thinking assignment. But concerns about privacy could put one on a slippery slope, and lead one to draw the faulty conclusion that professors should not be concerned *at all* with students' attitudes, interests, and values. In the end, what is called for is a balanced and respectful approach.

Are such affective outcomes really ineffable? The word 'ineffable' actually has two senses:

Ineffable (adj.) 1. beyond expression, indescribable or unspeakable. 2. Not to be uttered; taboo.

The first sense is a strong sense: the thing *cannot* be talked about. The second sense, by contrast, is a weaker sense: the thing *should* not be talked about. While those who make claims to the ineffability of the affective probably most often mean the former, strong sense of ineffability, it would appear on the basis of the foregoing that affective objectives are actually more ineffable in the second sense than the first. Indeed, the strong claim that such things cannot be talked about may be serving as a smokescreen for those who think that they should not be talked about, and yet have not fully explored their reasons for thinking so. Even in this second sense, though, the affective should not be deemed ineffable. It *is* currently harder to assess, and although its assessment is certainly less typical than that of straightforwardly cognitive outcomes, it is no less valuable or important given the standard missions of colleges and universities.

Approaching the Affective at the Course Level

There are many commercially available surveys that measure affective development, and can be administered to large numbers of students at various points in their college careers. One commonly expressed difficulty with these surveys, though, from both institutional researchers and administrators alike, is knowing what to do with the results once they are obtained; rarely are clear or specific changes at the course or program level indicated. On the other hand, course-embedded data on affective development—thus, in the hands and heads of those directly responsible for constructing curricula and programs—might offer more direction and motivation for change.

There is also wide agreement in the educational literature that course content becomes more meaningful when students can generate, from their own experiences, examples of what is

being discussed, or when they can otherwise make connections between course content and their own lives. Indeed, a recent study by the National Research Council, whose key findings are summarized in Donovan et. al. (1999), vindicates what many have learned through experience: if a student's pre-existing ideas about a subject are not engaged, new concepts may not be grasped at all, or may or only be acquired for the purposes of an exam, and then lost as the student reverts back to their previous, unchallenged views. An additional finding, also directly relevant to the exercises that follow, is that metacognitive exercises, in which students' own thinking becomes transparent to them, help students become more autonomous and successful learners.

George Hole (1991) has developed an exercise in what is essentially "experiential learning" in philosophy, something that is likely unknown to most philosophy instructors. The exercise, which Hole calls "The Experiment," ties together concept of meaningfulness, the student's own thoughts on the matter, and critical thinking about real life scenarios that the students themselves construct. Although apparently not intended as such, the exercise constitutes a promising measure of both cognitive and affective development. The exercise below called "Living the Examined Life" is a slightly modified version of The Experiment, and the exercise below called "Transforming Yourself Into an Enlightened Being" is an extension of the Hole's original idea to realm of Eastern thought. The "Compassion Exercise" below was shared by Hole in personal correspondence. He developed the exercise for the concepts of compassion and honesty, but it should be clear that the exercise can be easily modified to other concepts, contexts and needs.

Both kinds of exercise are based on a broad conception of the steps involved in any type of critical thinking or critical inquiry (Hole, 1991):

1. Identify basic questions and issues
2. Clarify meanings
3. Uncover assumptions and biases
4. Evaluate reasons, arguments, and evidence
5. Consider alternative points of view
6. Draw warranted or justified conclusions

When done well, these six steps can involve all six levels of Bloom's (1956) taxonomy of the cognitive domain: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. While many of us clearly follow these steps when engaging in scientific, historical, and many other domains of established inquiry, it is less common to see them explicitly and habitually applied to everyday circumstances and decisions. Nonetheless, this sort of thinking characterizes the advanced or master thinker (Paul & Elder, 2001)—someone who has reached a high level of personal development. The following exercises are designed to introduce these habits of mind, give students practice in them, and they can also serve as a formative assessment of a student's skills in this area. At the same time, the exercises also involve the five categories of affective

development described by Krathwohl et.al. (1964): receiving, responding, valuing, organizing, and characterizing.

"Living the Examined Life" and "Transforming Yourself Into an Enlightened Being"

"Living the Examined Life" should be assigned several weeks into the semester, after the class has had some discussion of human life, its meaning, and how it should be lived. (An examination of the views of Aristotle, the Stoic Epictetus, the existentialist Jean-Paul Sartre and similar thinkers is quite suitable for this purpose.) Part I of the exercise contains the following steps, to which students are required to respond fully:

1. Make a list of changes you would like to make in your life. Choose one behavior, attitude, action, situation, or feeling *of your own*, such that if you change it, you will more fully realize the meaning in your life. Note: You—not someone else—must be the primary subject of change. (You are not required to share the whole list with me, though you will have to describe—in the following question—the change you will actually attempt.)
2. Design a project or process (that you will be willing to do) to produce this desired change, and describe it. Be specific: With respect to whom, if anyone? Or with respect to what? Where? When? How? (The change should be something that requires more than a single, isolated action, like telling someone off and walking away. The change should also be implemented for at least two weeks.)
3. What obstacles or excuses do you foresee in carrying out the project?
4. What risks are involved?
5. What motivators do you have for succeeding in the project?
6. What results do you foresee?
7. What more essential, universal, philosophical question are you engaging with in your project? (Think about all of the many questions we have considered so far. Examples: Do I choose my role in life, in addition to how I play that role? Is, as Aristotle maintains, virtue necessary for happiness? Contrary to Epictetus, can we actually control "externals?" How does a person know what is right to do?)

Students are instructed not to begin the project described in (2) until Part I has been read, approved, and returned. In some cases, the project contemplated is not viable, or the student has not done enough thinking about the question in (7), or one of the other questions. After students have been doing their projects for two weeks, a second round of writing prompts is given:

8. Concisely describe how you carried out your project.

9. Evaluate your results. Were you successful in making the change? Were your actual results like your anticipated results?
10. Based on your project, what position do you now hold with respect to the question you focused on from Question Seven?
11. What insights, theories, or questions have you gained about yourself, the meaning of your life, or experimenting with change?

Students are told in the instructions that applying critical thinking in this way to a change in their life should make them confront some of their own deeply held opinions about life and some of their most basic values, and that challenging their own opinions and values in this way is the beginning of wisdom in philosophy.

"Transforming Yourself Into an Enlightened Being" can be assigned in any Eastern philosophy or religions course, preferably several weeks into the semester, after some discussion of possible paths of self-transformation and enlightenment. (Discussion of two major Chinese traditions, Confucianism and Taoism, that share the goal of self-transformation of the individual into a sage, is particularly suitable preparation.) The general layout of the exercise is the same as above, but students are given three to four weeks to engage in their project, and the initial prompt is:

Make a list of qualities or attributes (practices, routines, attitudes, etc.) that you associate with "being enlightened." Pick one that you do not currently possess or practice that you would be willing to actually implement in your life for a span of several weeks. The core idea is that making this change in your life *may* bring you closer to what you think of as an enlightened being. Design a process or set of routines that will allow you to implement this new quality or attribute in your day-to-day life.

In place of (7) above, students are asked the following:

Why, more precisely, does this quality or attribute contribute to an enlightened state?
What is it about the quality or attribute that helps make those who possess it enlightened?

The writing prompts for this exercise are divided into three sections rather than two; in the second section of the exercise students are asked whether the routine or process is being practiced, what results or insights have obtained, if any, and why the routine is *not* being practiced, if it isn't. The first two questions in Part III are the following:

What insights have you gained about yourself and/or about the *concept* of enlightenment?

What have you learned about the *path(s)* to enlightenment, i.e., what have you learned about the task of transforming your mind into an enlightened mind?

Most students report that the exercise itself is very difficult, that it requires a great deal of discipline that they do not currently have, and that the task of self-transformation is harder than

they thought. Some discover a desire to increase their discipline or otherwise stay on the path, while others discover they have no interest in becoming enlightened. Some have, for the first time, a humbling Socratic experience of their own *distance* from wisdom and enlightenment, an experience that ironically increases both: they at least now know that they don't know everything, which places them ahead of the deluded and sophomoric know-it-alls. Either way, their understanding of (and self-awareness relative to) the notion of enlightenment is raised. It should be stressed that this is not intended to be "Enlightenment in Three Short Weeks"—a preposterous notion. But students do get a taste, if they proceed conscientiously, of what conscious self-transformation feels like.

The following are examples of "Living the Examined Life" projects, all of which involved ethical questions, broadly speaking:

- Become more outgoing
- Be honest with my parents (and others)
- Apply myself better to my school work
- Stop swearing

As trivial as some of these sound (particularly the last), they provide remarkably fertile ground for philosophical *and* personal analysis. The following are examples of "Transforming Yourself Into An Enlightened Being" projects:

- Have more patience
- Have more peace of mind, calmness
- Be more compassionate
- Be more honest
- Be more forgiving
- Be more reflectively virtuous
- Communicate more openly and effectively
- Have a more optimistic outlook (seeing good along with the bad)
- Learn from good and bad situations
- Be more autonomous
- Distinguish wants from needs

Again, not all of these sound terribly profound, but they proved to be sufficiently challenging to make into a regular practice, and good material for self-examination *and* standard philosophical analysis. **Appendix I** contains the grading rubric for "Living the Examined Life" ([select "Appendix I" under Bookmark tab at left](#)).

The Compassion Exercise

This second type of assignment is probably the more general and the more easily adaptable to courses outside of philosophy. It also involves critical thinking, living, and writing, and is similarly focused on a particular concept in the course content. The purpose of this type of exercise is to encourage students to reflect and inquire into compassion (or reverence, or honesty, etc.) as the student currently practices and experiences it (or, of course, fails to practice and

experience it—one common and not unwelcome finding). Whether the focus of the exercise is compassion, reverence, or honesty, the exercises are essentially the same in structure; what vary are the critical reflection questions, which vary by the concept in question.

What follows are the steps of the Compassion Exercise:

1. Consider what you mean by compassion. List 5 types of action, yours or other persons', that you think are compassionate. Also, list 5 actions that you think are not compassionate. Or, you may list 3 people you believe are compassionate and identify the qualities that make them compassionate, and 3 you believe are not compassionate, and the qualities that make them such. The point is to formulate a rough idea or definition of what you mean by compassion and its opposite.
2. For two days, with respect to the people with whom you interact, including yourself, be willing to be wholly compassionate (as you understand it). While you are willing to be compassionate in all situations, you may at times decide not to be compassionate. Notice when you are compassionate and when you are not, and notice any reasons for your choices. Be aware of any distinctions you make. Be aware of the quality of your experience. In general, be mindful and notice whatever you are thinking-experiencing. Be aware too--which may be difficult--of any lack of compassion and any harm or cruelties you cause. And be aware of others' compassion, or lack of it, toward you.
3. After your two days of willing to be compassionate and mindful of your experiences, formulate questions, inquire, and reflect. The following questions may stimulate observations, questions, conjectures, and lines of inquiry, insights and conclusions:
 - The meaning of compassion: How is compassion different from pity?
 - How do you know if you or others are genuinely compassionate?
 - Reasons why compassion is good and its opposite bad: Is it wrong to sometimes enjoy the suffering of others?
 - Assumptions or beliefs which support or oppose compassion: Can there be too much compassion as well as too little?
 - Reasons which, in particular cases, justify lack of compassion.
 - How compassion relates to other ideals: With what other of your values does compassion conflict?
 - Your actual rule of compassion: What emotions or thoughts overpower your compassion?
 - Connections: Any differences between your compassion with yourself and with others? Or, are there significant differences in how you are compassionate with others and how they are compassionate toward you?
 - Elaboration of your ideal of compassion: If you pretend to be compassionate or hide it, perhaps to avoid conflicts, would you want others to act the same way toward you?
 - How to teach compassion: As you are compassionate with a victim, what feelings, thoughts, and actions follow?

- How compassion is related to mindfulness, enlightenment or other Eastern ideas: Is your compassion sharpened or dulled by TV dramas and movies and by print and TV news?
4. Based on your two days of compassion and your reflections, organize your thoughts, and in 2 to 3 pages demonstrate your critical thinking on some coherent aspect of your experiment with compassion.

Many students also find this type of exercise difficult; in particular, they find it difficult to be mindful of their experiences, either at all, or at least for any extended length of time. In response to this problem one can employ short daily writing exercises, prior to the giving of these assignments, to help increase students' ability to pay attention to their experiences. In the end, not every student will be entirely successful in being able to explore the thoughts and assumptions underlying their reactions, often ethical reactions, to their experiences and interactions, nor will they be fully successful in being able to generate interesting questions about the concepts being considered. But that much is to be expected, and the causes are probably complex. Nonetheless, in anticipation one can also incorporate early preparatory exercises to try to exercise students' abilities to ask good questions. **Appendix II** contains the grading rubric for the Compassion Exercise ([select "Appendix II" under Bookmark tab at left](#)).

One might think that this type of assignment, by allowing students to focus on their own understanding of a concept and their own experiences with it, encourages them to be self-absorbed, and enables them (happily from their perspective) to avoid abstract, theoretical thinking. But three points need to be made: first, many students actually seem to prefer a wholly "impersonal" treatment of a concept because they haven't done much of their own prior thinking about the concept, and as mentioned above, they find it difficult to pay attention to their daily experiences. So the assignments are typically found to be difficult, but in most cases, rewarding. Second, abstract, theoretical thinking *is required* by the exercise, but the thinking is not disconnected from, but rather grounded in, lived experience. The result is, when successful, a deeper, more grounded type of thinking. Third, we should not conflate self-absorption with self-awareness; these exercises promote the latter, not the former.

Another objection is that students will write whatever they think the professor wants to read, and thus the exercises will not be done the way they are intended. Some students are inclined to do this, and even mistakenly think that the exercises are straightforwardly designed to make them more reverent, compassionate persons. However, these inclinations can be preempted or reduced by making the purpose and expectations for the exercises amply clear. One can explicitly discourage these approaches to doing the assignment, and perhaps surprisingly, students will largely oblige. While one cannot rule out that some of the assignments are fictional, or partly fictional, it is not difficult to detect phony exercises, in part because the critical thinking steps are very hard to fake, or make realistic when they aren't.

A final, important objection is that students who may be comparatively less developed as persons but who are academically skilled may perform better in these exercises than those who are more personally developed, but who have weaker academic skills. Robert Coles' essay "The

Disparity Between Intellect and Character" (1995), which describes the case of an "A" ethics student who is morally bankrupt outside of the classroom, reinforces this kind of worry. Since the "deception" problem has already been addressed above, it will be best to focus on the real worry in this objection—the student with weak writing skills. One simple way to deal with this problem is to not include quality of writing, organization, and the like in the assessment criteria, or to de-emphasize them relative to the other criteria. Such things can easily be excluded from the learning objectives for the assignment, if so desired. The real question is whether poor verbal expression implies poor critical thinking skills. While in some cases they seem to be connected, there are also many ESL students whose work calls this connection into doubt. If a student does poorly at the critical thinking tasks, even once verbal expression is overlooked, then given the initial assumption about personal development, one would have to conclude that the student would need to sharpen such skills to realize significant personal growth. However, this is a large issue, and cannot be adequately treated here. One point that can be made is that these exercises are an attempt to *decrease* the disparity between intellect and character, but mostly by directing students' intellect towards areas not typically directed by instructors.

Similar exercises are imaginable in literature courses, art courses, or courses that contain a service learning component. For example, one can have students explore character traits discussed in a novel, or concepts expressed in works of art. In a leadership course, one could have students implement and explore a quality or principle of leadership. In many kinds of courses students can explore a quality of good democratic citizenship, or social problems like racism and homophobia.

As suggested above, this is largely *terra incognita* for most professors, and struggling together to develop and extend these sorts of exercises is probably necessary if significant progress and widespread adoption is to occur. The original exercises themselves were not designed with assessment in mind, and the rubrics below are still very much a "first pass"—they could easily be expanded and refined with some further attention to Bloom's taxonomies of both the cognitive and affective domains. In addition, an explicit set of learning objectives for the exercises, combining the cognitive and affective, will need to be fully articulated before the assignments themselves can be determined to be valid measures. The possibilities are great; what are needed are a little creativity, a spirit of experimentation, and some courage. Perhaps, in the end, having lofty goals for one's students requires having lofty goals for oneself.¹

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¹I would like to thank audiences at the 2001 AAHE Assessment Conference and Bergen Community College for their helpful questions and comments on earlier versions of this paper.

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Appendix I
Grading Rubric for “Living the Examined Life: A Critical Thinking & Writing Project”

[Select "Page 8" bookmark at left to return to text]

Project Choice and Development	Organization and Completeness	Critical Thinking	Writing
<p>3. Project chosen is very clear, can be done in (and for) two weeks, and the relevance to the issue of meaningfulness is readily apparent. The philosophical question(s) at play are thoroughly explored.</p>	<p>3. Each question is clearly and fully answered. Much effort has been made to follow the steps outlined in the instructions.</p>	<p>3. The project shows much careful thought and much insight gained about the issue(s) in question. The writer is able to pose original, interesting questions about his or her situation. Thoughts and conclusions are supported with good reasons.</p>	<p>3. Answers are lively, expressive, and engaging. Word choice is precise and rich. Sentences flow nicely. There are no errors in grammar, punctuation, or spelling.</p>
<p>2. Project chosen is clear, but may not be done in (or for) two weeks, or may have been initiated prior to the assignment. Relevance to meaningfulness is superficial or not fully explored, and the philosophical question(s) at play are only given a light treatment.</p>	<p>2. Some questions are only briefly answered, and some of the answers themselves are unclear and not given serious consideration.</p>	<p>2. Answers display a moderate amount of thinking about most of the questions asked, but not all issues are fully engaged, and insights could stand more development. Thoughts and conclusions could be better defended.</p>	<p>2. The writing is pleasant and acceptable, but it may contain some mechanical errors, and there may be some typos and spelling errors that interfere with reading.</p>
<p>1. The project itself is unclear, or sufficiently fuzzy that it is not clear how to accomplish it. There is little or no connection made to meaningfulness, or the philosophical relevance of the project is unapparent or unarticulated.</p>	<p>1. Some questions are not answered at all, and in general, not much effort has been made to follow the steps outlined in the instructions.</p>	<p>1. Not much thought went into the project; no interesting or original questions are raised, no significant insights are expressed, and conclusions, if any, are unsupported by reasons.</p>	<p>1. Sentences are choppy, incomplete, rambling, or awkward, or there may be many spelling typos or errors. Ideas are difficult to comprehend without rereading.</p>

Overall Grade: __ Excellent (A; 12-11) __ Good (B; 10-8) __ Satisfactory (C; 7-6) __ Unsatisfactory (F; 5-4)

Appendix II
Compassion Exercise: Grading Rubric

[Select "Page 10" bookmark at left to return to text]

Critical Thinking	Organization and Completeness	Writing
<p>3. The exercise shows much careful thought and much insight gained about compassion. The writer is able to reflect well on his or her experiences, and pose original, interesting questions about them. The writer shows a keen awareness of his or her own attitudes about compassion, is able to identify key assumptions, and establishes connections with other concepts and issues. Thoughts and conclusions are supported throughout with good reasons.</p>	<p>3. The internal organization of ideas is excellent—it moves the reader through the text. Much effort has been made to complete each element of the assignment.</p>	<p>3. The writing is lively, expressive, and engaging. Word choice is precise and rich. Sentences flow nicely. There are no errors in grammar, punctuation, or spelling.</p>
<p>2. The exercise displays a good amount of thinking about compassion, but reflections are sometimes cut short, and attitudes are at times not fully explored. Not all issues are fully engaged, some key assumptions are missed, and insights could stand more development. Thoughts and conclusions could often be better defended.</p>	<p>2. The reader can follow the train of thought, but the organization of ideas is sub optimal, and may be confusing. Some elements of the assignment are not given serious consideration.</p>	<p>2. The writing is pleasant and acceptable, but it may contain some mechanical errors, and there may be some typos and spelling errors that interfere with reading.</p>
<p>1. Not much thought went into the exercise; the writer shows little ability to reflect on his or her experiences, and shows little awareness of his or her own attitudes about compassion. Key assumptions and connections are missed. No interesting or original questions are raised, no significant insights are expressed, and conclusions, if any, are unsupported by reasons.</p>	<p>1. The organization is poorly planned or scattered—paragraphs are strung together without purpose. Significant aspects of the assignment are missing.</p>	<p>1. Sentences are choppy, incomplete, rambling, or awkward, or there may be many spelling typos or errors. Ideas are difficult to comprehend without rereading.</p>

Overall Grade: ___ Excellent (A; 9-8) ___ Good (B; 7-6) ___ Satisfactory (C; 5) ___ Unsatisfactory (F; 4-3)