

WID Teaching Portfolio - Susan-Judith Hoffmann, Humanities – Winter 2010

B. Exploratory Writing Assignments

Class: Introduction to Philosophy

I. First Assignment

You may refer to your class notes on the five branches of philosophy and the sorts of questions each branch raises for this assignment. The purpose of this assignment is to give you an opportunity to “think out loud” in writing on the most pressing philosophical questions in your life, and to think about how they map onto the five branches of philosophy we have just defined in class.

This is an individual in class writing assignment. You have 10 minutes to write about a philosophical problem/question you have thought about in your life and to describe the circumstances in which your wondering arose. Have you addressed this question to your satisfaction? If so, what answer did you come up with and why? If the question or problem remains unresolved, why do you think you haven’t been able to answer it to your satisfaction?

II. Second Assignment

You may not use any notes or books for this assignment. The purpose of this assignment is to give you an opportunity to “freewrite” about what you think science and religion are. Come up with the best definitions possible. You will then identify and critically assess the assumptions you have about these areas of thought by discussing your assumptions with your class mates. Next, you will refine (revise and deepen) your initial views after having benefited from an exchange with your class mates.

Part One: Carefully define religion and science. Explain in what ways religion, philosophy and science are different. Explain in what ways, if any, they are similar. Is there any overlap in the subject matter each discipline studies? Is there any overlap in their methods of investigation? You have 15 minutes to complete this assignment on your own.

Part Two: Form groups of three or four and read your findings aloud in your group. Discuss your answers with one another. Make note of useful comments from your classmates. You have 15 minutes.

Part Three: Write up a group position on the questions. You should represent opposing views, if there are differences in your group. You have 15 minutes to do this. Hand in your papers at the end of class and make sure the name of each member of your group is on the paper.

Part Four: At the beginning of the next class, I will hand back your assignments and you will have 15 minutes to read and revise your papers. Then each group will present their findings to the whole class.