

**Mathew J. Lu**  
**Teaching Evidence & Research and Teaching Statements**

Teaching Evidence:

I have designed and taught four classes thus far; two at Cornell as a senior graduate student and two, which I am presently teaching, at the University of Tennessee. At Cornell I designed and taught a Freshman seminar on the philosophy of love, as well as a summer term Existentialism course. At Tennessee, I am presently teaching Introduction to Philosophy and Bioethics. This Spring I will also design and teach a class in 19<sup>th</sup> century philosophy at Tennessee. Since the other classes are ongoing, I only have evaluations from the Cornell courses. In addition, I have most of the evaluations from the courses for which I have served as a teaching assistant at Cornell: Phil 245 – “The Ethics of Healthcare,” Phil 263 – “Reason and Religion,” and Phil 213 – “Existentialism.” The following are transcribed and tabulated from the standard Cornell philosophy department student evaluation forms, which are submitted anonymously at the end of term. Copies of the original forms are of course available upon request.

Student Evaluations as Sole Instructor

**Please comment on how helpful and interesting you found the required reading and how well it served its purpose in the course:**

Phil 100.7 – Introduction to the Philosophy of Love

- The reading material gave a good overview of different philosophies on love and were intellectually stimulating.
- They were all very interesting and related to the topic well. There were also a lot of overlaps, so correlations can be established.
- Very helpful and interesting. Tied into the course.
- Reading was good & helpful, especially Plato.
- For the most part the reading were good, sometimes difficult to understand.
- I liked the reading.
- The reading linked well, and I had great interest in them.
- I thought most of the reading was interesting and definitely served a purpose... except the Kierkegaard was horrible.
- The required readings were extremely interesting and served its purpose in the course. The readings stimulated ideas and made the read think about ideas presented.
- Appropriate, but challenging. Would be better to start with something easier than The Euthyphro.
- The readings were well organized and provided a strong foundation for the subject. I enjoyed Plato, and although all of the reading were relative [relevant?], I did not find them personally interesting.
- Some of it was rather long and at times tedious, but mostly it was very interesting and intellectually stimulating.
- I liked everything we read & I feel like they correlated very well in the series it was presented.

- Not always interesting... but usually helpful.
- The reading was very interesting, especially when applied to real life. It served the purpose of studying the philosophical aspect of love and Greek philosophy.
- The reading was interesting, but hard.

#### Phil 213 – Existentialism

- The required reading was all interesting and seemed essential to the class
- It was very interesting.
- There was a lot of reading – a greater concentration on fewer texts might have been good. The selections did show the derivative nature of Existentialism, but didn't seem to get into Existentialism itself much at all – I would have appreciated more of a concentration on the texts of Existentialism, rather than an assumption of its second-rate philosophical status.
- It was very interesting. I especially enjoyed Hegel.
- Very good. All really good books and writers.
- Very, it tied the course up very-well.
- I really enjoyed the readings although it was tough to keep up.

#### **What things about the course did you especially like?**

#### Phil 100.7 – Introduction to the Philosophy of Love

- The discussions were really interesting and made everyone [want] to participate.
- It changed the way I write for the better, made writing clearer.
- Required a lot of critical thinking.
- Readings & lectures.
- Readings, discussions.
- Lectures...
- The main focus of the course was very stimulating.
- The professor was pretty good.
- I really liked the topics covered in discussion.
- The class dynamic. Plato readings.
- The organization of the class, answers were always available when I had questions, discussions in class was extremely helpful in understanding the material. Cookies!
- All of it.
- The chosen readings.
- Class discussions were good.
- The modern readings on the philosophical literature such as [Roger] Scruton and Harry Frankfurt.
- Plato, Lewis, learning about how to live.

#### Phil 213 – Existentialism

- Good crash course in getting a basic understanding of the central tenets of important writers & texts

- The explanation of the texts
- The structure of starting @ the bottom and showing the history that lead up to existentialism
- The master slave dialectic.
- It was really interesting to see how existentialism became what it is, where it came from.
- The professor was very good at explaining difficult concepts.

**How do you rate the instructors preparation for class?** (1-poor 5-excellent)

<b>Overall</b>	<b>4.7</b>	Responses
Phil 100.7 – Introduction to the Philosophy of Love	4.7	16
Phil 213 – Existentialism	4.7	7

**How clear were the instructor’s presentations?** (1-very unclear; 5-very clear)

<b>Overall</b>	<b>4.4</b>	Responses
Phil 100.7 – Introduction to the Philosophy of Love	4.4	16
Phil 213 – Existentialism	4.4	7

**How interesting were the instructors presentations?**

(1-generally hard to pay attention to; 5-generally stimulating and held my interest)

<b>Overall</b>	<b>4.1</b>	Responses
Phil 100.7 – Introduction to the Philosophy of Love	4.2	16
Phil 213 – Existentialism	4	7

**Was the amount of material in the course?** (1-too little; 5-too much)

<b>Overall</b>	<b>3.3</b>	Responses
Phil 100.7 – Introduction to the Philosophy of Love	3.1	16
Phil 213 – Existentialism	3.6	7

**How well organized was the course as a whole?**

(1-poorly organized; 5-well organized)

<b>Overall</b>	<b>4.4</b>	Responses
Phil 100.7 – Introduction to the Philosophy of Love	4.3	16
Phil 213 – Existentialism	4.4	7

**Considering the level at which the course is offered and its stated prerequisites, how do you rate its difficulty?**

(1-too easy or not advanced enough; 5-too difficult or presupposes too much)

<b>Overall</b>	<b>3.5</b>	Responses
Phil 100.7 – Introduction to the Philosophy of Love	3.7	16
Phil 213 – Existentialism	3.2	7

**Taking into account the size of the class and the nature of the course, how would you rate the amount of student discussion that occurred (in exchanges with the instructor or with other students)?**

(1-far too little; 5-far too much)

<b>Overall</b>	<b>2.8</b>	Responses
Phil 100.7 – Introduction to the Philosophy of Love	3.3	16
Phil 213 – Existentialism	2.3	7

**How do you rate the value of student discussion that occurred?**

(1-generally unrewarding; 5-generally very worthwhile)

<b>Overall</b>	<b>3.1</b>	Responses
Phil 100.7 – Introduction to the Philosophy of Love	3.6	16
Phil 213 – Existentialism	2.6	7

**How do you rate the instructor's response to students seek to discuss course-related matters outside of class? (1-unhelpful; 5-very helpful)**

<b>Overall</b>	<b>4.2</b>	Responses
Phil 100.7 – Introduction to the Philosophy of Love	4.3	16
Phil 213 – Existentialism	4.2	7

**How do you rate the amount of reading required for the course?**

(1-far too little; 5-far too much)

<b>Overall</b>	<b>3.8</b>	Responses
Phil 100.7 – Introduction to the Philosophy of Love	3.5	16
Phil 213 – Existentialism	4	7

**How do you rate the amount of written work (papers, exams, etc) required for the course?** (1-far too little; 5-far too much)

<b>Overall</b>	<b>3.1</b>	Responses
Phil 100.7 – Introduction to the Philosophy of Love	3.3	16
Phil 213 – Existentialism	3	7

**If the instructor evaluated your written work, how do you rate his comments on it?** (1-inadequate and superficial; 5-thorough and instructive)

<b>Overall</b>	<b>4</b>	Responses
Phil 100.7 – Introduction to the Philosophy of Love	4	16
Phil 213 – Existentialism	4	7

**How interesting do you find the topics of the course (apart from how they were presented)?** (1-altogether uninteresting; 5-extremely interesting)

<b>Overall</b>	<b>4.4</b>	Responses
Phil 100.7 – Introduction to the Philosophy of Love	4.5	16
Phil 213 – Existentialism	4.4	7

**If this were your first philosophy course, would it make you want to study more philosophy?** (1-no, not at all; 5-yes, very much)

<b>Overall</b>	<b>3.8</b>	Responses
Phil 100.7 – Introduction to the Philosophy of Love	3.9	16
Phil 213 – Existentialism	3.7	7

**Overall, how do you rate this course in relation to what you think such a course should be?** (1-poor; 5-excellent)

<b>Overall</b>	<b>4</b>	Responses
Phil 100.7 – Introduction to the Philosophy of Love	4.3	16
Phil 213 – Existentialism	3.9	7

## Student Evaluations as a Teaching Assistant

These figures are the overall averages for all the classes from which I received evaluations as a teaching assistant at Cornell (“Existentialism”, “The Ethics of Healthcare”, “Reason and Religion.”)

**How do you rate your teaching assistant's comments on your written work?**  
(out of 5)

Comments Average: **4.25**

**How do you rate your teaching assistant's helpfulness out side of class?**  
(out of 5)

Helpfulness Average: **4.5**

**How do you rate your teaching assistant's preparation for section meetings?**  
(out of 5)

Preparation Average: **4.68**

**How clear were the teaching assistant's remarks?** (out of 5)

Clarity of Remarks Average: **4.42**

**How interesting were the teaching assistant's remarks?** (out of 5)

Interest of Remarks Average: **4.45**

**Considering that one purpose of discussion section is to give student an opportunity to discuss material of the course, how do you rate the amount of student discussion that occurred in your section?**

(1-far too little 5-far too much)

Average: **3.12**

**How do you rate the value of the student discussion that occurred?**

(1-generally unrewarding 5-generally very worthwhile)

Average: **4.1**

## Research Statement

My dissertation was the first application of a strategy that will inform a larger, longer-term research project which I hope to pursue over the course of the next few years. Accordingly, I developed there certain aspects of that overall approach only so far as was necessary to sustain my arguments for the moral legitimacy of the demands of loyalty. This forced me to prescind at many points from deeper underlying issues which I now hope to take up in the beginning of my career.

Thus, in many ways the continuation of my research project is already apparent in these larger, more general questions from the dissertation that I was forced for practical reasons to leave inadequately addressed. Specifically these are questions about the true nature of autonomy and how a developmental approach can shed light on the general conditions for the possibility of human autonomy.

In the dissertation I was eager to take up and use Frankfurt's account of the will, specifically because I felt that his notion of volitional necessity provided the best sort of theoretical example of the felt demands of love and loyalty. To utilize that part of his theory, however, required accepting his larger structural account of the will. I wanted to argue in the dissertation that there were real problems with the formalism of the structural account, insofar as Frankfurt appears to be relatively indifferent to the question of how an agent acquires the volitionally constitutive higher order commitments that he or she has. I wanted to show that adopting a substantive developmental account of moral psychology could give us a picture of how mature moral agents could freely acquire unchosen commitments that in turn constitute an important part of their wills.

However, difficulties with the Frankfurtian picture remain. Specifically, the question of how the process of "identification," whereby an agent makes some of his higher order commitments particularly his by making them "resound" through his will, remains quite unclear. What this "resounding" is, and how we ought to understand it, is still a problem for Frankfurt and those of us attracted to his overall picture of the will. My hope is that by thinking more clearly and deeply about how human moral development works, I may be able to shed some light on these sorts of questions.

Thus, the future focus of my research is on how the overall structural account of the will might be strengthened and defended, so as to produce a more robust account of mature moral agency. This will require considerable work on the issues I have already mentioned, but will also require us to think through and clearly articulate how cognate concepts such as respect and love are related to moral autonomy. I have already begun this project with a paper on that particular question, contrasting what can be said about love and respect with this sort of view of autonomy with what I think can, and more importantly cannot, be said from a Kantian viewpoint.

In the next year or so, I hope to continue in this line I have already begun, by focusing on producing a more complete account of respect from a Frankfurtian perspective. This will in turn require me to engage in clarifying the underlying structural view of the will. It is my hope that by focusing on more specific issue like love or respect—much like the dissertation focused on the specific question of loyalty—that I will in time end up developing the underlying view as well insofar as I adapt and expand the view with regards to those specific issues.

There also remains a literature in empirical psychology that I think I may yet draw insights from. Particularly, I want to engage more with the work of child developmental psychologists such as Klein and Piaget. This, however, always carries with

it the proviso that such empirical investigations will have to be integrated into a substantive, normative account of moral agency.

In addition to these specific points of departure, I have begun to become aware of how the classical philosophical tradition, in Aristotle particularly, touches on a similar set of developmental questions. My attention was brought to this by sitting in on a graduate seminar on the *Nicomachean Ethics* in my last semester at Cornell. In re-reading the *Ethics* I became much more sensitive to how the Aristotelian conception of a character of virtue requires the same sort of moral development that I see in my developmental approach to moral psychology. So in the longer term, I want to try to reconnect some of my research with this classical tradition, and see how I might be able to draw insights from the secondary literature on these issues in Aristotle (and indeed perhaps, in the even longer term, contribute something back to it).

Finally, I have a few side interests that I hope to be able to indulge as a sort of leavening to my larger research project in moral psychology. I think that some of the theoretical apparatus I have already developed can be applied in novel ways to certain practical questions in applied ethics. For example, I am now writing a paper trying to explain our intuitions about the moral wrongness of using performance enhancing drugs in athletic competition. I think that the question is cognate to questions in distributive justice, and I hope to provide an unusual perspective on this question coming out of my developmental model of moral development. I hope that little papers like this one might come up occasionally to provide a kind of applied spice to my more theoretical overall approach.

## Teaching Statement

From the beginning of my experience with philosophy as an undergraduate at the University of Chicago, I have felt called to engage with the history of philosophy in its own terms. A number of my present interests rise out of a concern that historical philosophical positions, particularly in Kant, have been misrepresented in some current debates. Thus, I retain an active research and teaching interest in the history of philosophy, particularly German thought from Kant into the 20th century. I do think that a philosopher trained in the broadly analytic tradition can sympathetically and usefully engage German philosophy in the twentieth century as well as before.

My teaching and research are symbiotic. I have always been committed to teaching, both because my teaching makes me a better philosopher, but also because I have found it extremely gratifying to open up a text to students, to help them to experience the almost spine-tingling excitement of reading Plato or Nietzsche for the first time, or even the stark beauty of the critical philosophy in Kant. In all of my teaching, I am eager to share with students my conviction that philosophy is not merely an academic discipline, but a key part of what it means to live a life worthy of a human being.