Engagement Self-Reflections (10%)

What is this assessment? What is it for? One valuable part of engaging in a course, beyond engaging the materials, is learning with and from other people, and building a learning community together. Rather than grading for 'verbal participation' as in other courses—which can be exclusionary and imprecise to grade—we will use self-reflections to explore and communicate the ways we have tried to engage in the ways best suited to us. Self-reflections are intended to give us opportunities to critically reflect on the ways we are attempting to engage in the course in general, how we try to support others, how we are supported by others, and how this can or should change over time. These self-reflections will be worth 10% of the final grade.

- No minimum or maximum length
- You will have at least three chances to submit, but only the top two scores will count towards your grade (2 x 5% = 10%)
- Due before 6.10pm for each deadline
- Questions will remain the same each time, and should reflect on any changes since the previous reflections where possible:
    1. How have you tried to engage with this course?
    2. How have you tried to support other people in or through this course? Give at least one example.
    3. What are some ways you could improve your support of other people? Outline at least one actionable plan.
    4. What barriers have you experienced in your own attempts to engage with this course, and is there anything that other course members can do to help make this course more accessible to you (and especially C, as our course facilitator)?
- Graded for degree of completion and support (see below)
- Extensions are available – feel encouraged to reach out!

How much is the reflection worth? Each reflection is worth 5%, for up to 10% of the final grade.

How many do I need to submit? There will be at least three deadlines (see the syllabus), but only two responses will count toward the final grade. If you submit more than two, we will count your top scores. So, there is space for recognizing and rewarding improvement, and for accommodating bad days.

How and when do I need to submit? There will be at least three main opportunities to submit: May 22, May 31, and June 12. You only need to submit two. Extensions may be arranged with the instructor. You will be able to submit online through a dedicated folder on Quercus, through hard-copy in class or in the course dropbox, through an in-person discussion with the instructor, and may submit answers typed, handwritten, in an audio or video file, or other formats as needed.

When will they be returned? In most cases, grades will be posted to Quercus within one week of submission, and students will be notified if for any reason they take longer to return.

Will they receive feedback? Due to the volume of submissions, they will not be given feedback except at discretion of the instructor, or if you explicitly ask for feedback. You are, however, entitled to feedback on all your work, and you are welcome and encouraged to discuss them in our office hours if there are any questions.

How long do they need to be? There is no minimum or maximum length on self-reflections. We are encouraged to write as much as we feel we need to answer the questions and demonstrate engagement with others. Sample answers will be posted through Quercus to give you some examples, but you are encouraged to respond as you need.

But really, how long do they need to be? If you really want a guideline, you might consider offering at least four full sentences per answer (two for an answer and two for support). But this is only a *guideline*. You can definitely be briefer or longer and still obtain full marks.

What do I have to write about? Each reflection will answer the four numbered questions on the first page of this handout, though we may change these questions later in the course if they aren't fitting our needs or helping us to express what we want to.

How will they be scored? We would like to see some evidence (i) that we are trying to discover the best ways of participating for ourselves, and (ii) that we are reflecting on what it means to try and engage in a dynamic environment made up of different people and needs. Rather than grading the *content* of your answers (which may be exclusionary or insensitive to different styles and needs around learning and communicating, or which may privilege some styles of participation over others), we will grade answers for *degree of completion and support* as follows: If it answers some but not all questions it receives up to 2.5/5. If it explicitly answers all questions, it automatically receives 3.5/5. If it explicitly answers all questions and offers support for those answers, it receives 4/5 to 5/5 depending on degree of support. (These numbers are based on the Faculty of Arts and Sciences statement on what grades mean). Examples of different types of answers or kinds of support will be shared in class. Possible score adjustments may be made for things including but not limited to (i) unexcused disruptive or disrespectful behaviours affecting others, including but not limited to those outlined in the *Code of Student Conduct,* (ii) evidence of engagement or improvement we've noticed that weren't reflected in our answers.

What counts as engaging, and engaging with others? Different people will learn and engage with others in different ways, and this course will try to be sensitive of and accountable to those differences. We'll keep the definition of "engagement" or "participation" very broad to allow for this diversity, and will continue to explore and challenge what these words mean for us over the term. When thinking about how we support *others*, we can be similarly broad and critical (should 'others' just be limited to members of our course community?)

Can you provide some more concrete examples? Definitely! We'll share sample answers in class, but ways of engaging could include:

- contributing to class discussions in person or online;
- engaging with and signal-boosting the contributions of others in a compassionate or charitable manner;
- talking about course material with family or friends outside the class, and others who may be interested;
- keeping a blog or journal about the course materials or your thoughts (you could create one with other people!);
- learning from other articles, podcasts, lectures, blogs, people, etc that aren't assigned, and sharing findings with others where appropriate (such as in class or on Quercus);
- updating Wikipedia entries or other resources / databases;
- sharing your learning and research strategies, skills, and habits with other people in or through the course;
- creating and sharing zines, comics, poems, videos, paintings, podcasts, or other artistic engagements;
- organizing or attending workshops, seminar series, reading groups, online discussions, events, etc related to the themes of this course;
- asking, answering, and reflecting on questions on the course discussion boards, or other spaces;
- raising conversations on social media like twitter or facebook (maybe we can come up with a hashtag to use?)
- sharing relevant news or examples with classmates;
- translating or simplifying course materials so they can be more accessible to non-academics or people in other disciplines who can't always access the materials we can;
- suggesting and discussing ways to improve the course with the instructor or TA at any point in the term;
- organizing or joining shared note-taking or study groups;
- and other ways as well! This is not an exhaustive list.

How can I provide 'support' for my claims? We will be dedicating some time in lectures to talk about different styles of support, both for this assignment and for our papers or alternative research projects, and C will share some sample reflection answers for us to discuss. In general, you might ask "how could I make someone more likely to believe what I've said?" The answer to this will depend on what it is you've said or tried to show (it might be an argument, a photograph, a story, an example, a screenshot, a comparison, or many other things!). An in some cases, it will be impossible to provide support of any kind; in which case, you might tell us why it is impossible! If you're having difficulty thinking about what might count as support, feel encouraged to reach out and we can talk about it together.

Why not the 'usual' participation and attendance? Many studies and reported experiences tell us that certain identity groups tend to speak over others, or be given more opportunities to speak and be heard, and that not everyone is equally listened to when they do speak (and we will study some of this in our time together!). Moreover, many people experience barriers to communication (due to things like multilingualism, disability, anxiety, access to preparation), or can't always get to class (due to jobs, disability, families, weather, cost). It is also often difficult, exclusionary, and preferential for instructors and TAs to try to grade based on the perceived frequency or content of people's speech. So 'verbal' participation and attendance aren't always going to be fair ways to evaluate our efforts to engage.

I also think that while many people think we are good at noticing things like "active listening", that it is actually very hard to identify on our own (I sometimes look "spaced out" or fidget when I'm listening because it helps me focus! And there are many different culturally learned behaviours we might have). I have also had students tell me that they feel much more comfortable sharing thoughts and ideas in class when it doesn't feel like every word they say might affect their grade or standing in the class. We should feel encouraged to

Taking these things and others into account, I propose we use these reflections to evaluate engagement. You can still reflect on your class attendance and verbal contributions as evidence of collaborative engagement if that's what you're used to, and so you don't need to radically change what you've done in other courses if that works for you, but we will not take that to be the only way or style of engaging in this course. The reflections should include the 'usual' ways of engaging that you've likely had in other philosophy courses, but are intended to encourage and reward other styles of engagement too.

What if I don't feel this kind of assessment reflects my styles of learning or engaging? Generally, these engagement reflections are designed to give us low-stakes chances to practice writing, and to communicate our own self-reflections on our engagement in the course, but they may not be well suited to your interests or needs, and you might think they aren't the best way to communicate how you've been engaging. If that's the case, do let C know and we will come up with an alternative arrangement together! (If possible, try to let me know by session four, since the summer moves quickly, but we know things can change over time). While this exercise has worked for some students in the past, that doesn't mean it will work well for everyone.

Anything else? This is a long handout, just so you have something to read on your own in case you can't make class discussions, but if anything in it is unclear, if we have missed something important, if anything we've said is wrong or inappropriate, or if there is a question we haven't answered, please let us know and we can have a conversation!