

PHL1010: God, Freedom and Evil (Philosophy of Religion), Semester 1, 2006.

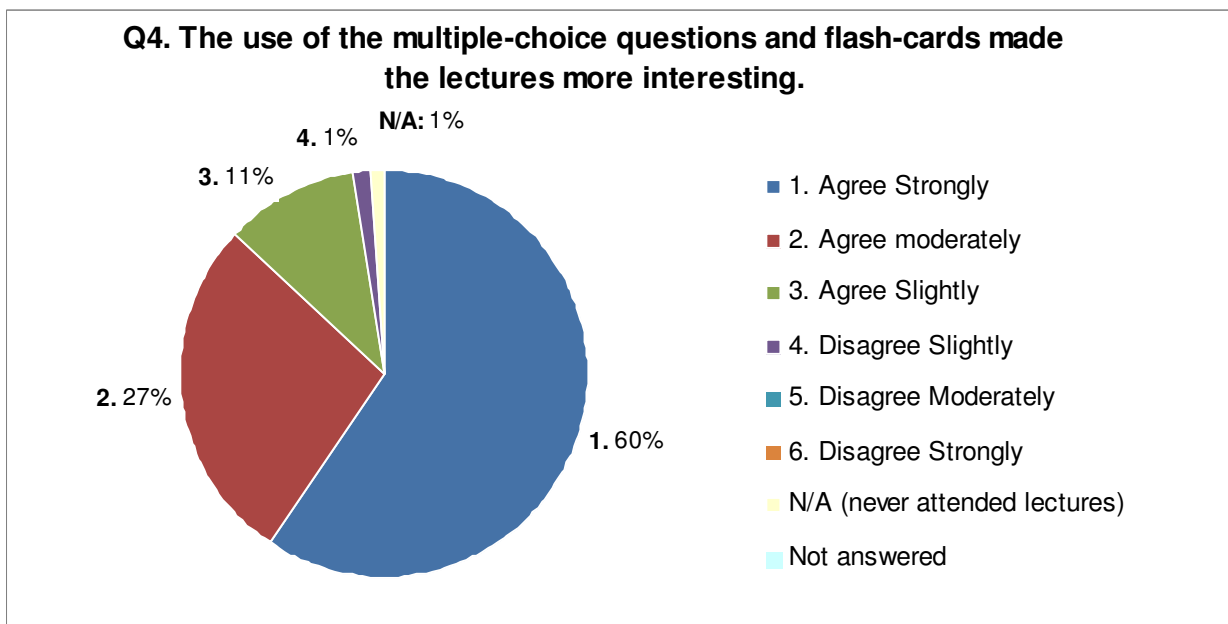
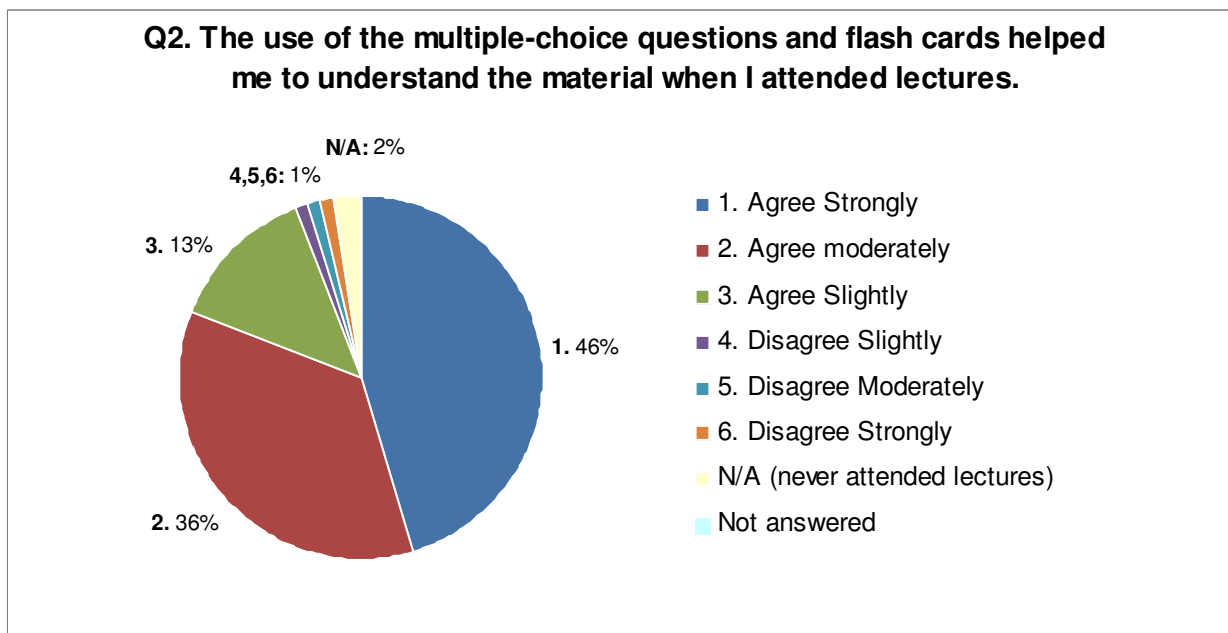
Description

Peer Instruction was used in the lectures for a first year introductory philosophy of religion course, *God, Freedom and Evil*. Approximately 3-5 questions were used per lecture. 84 students completed the questionnaire, representing 43% of the total enrolment of 195.

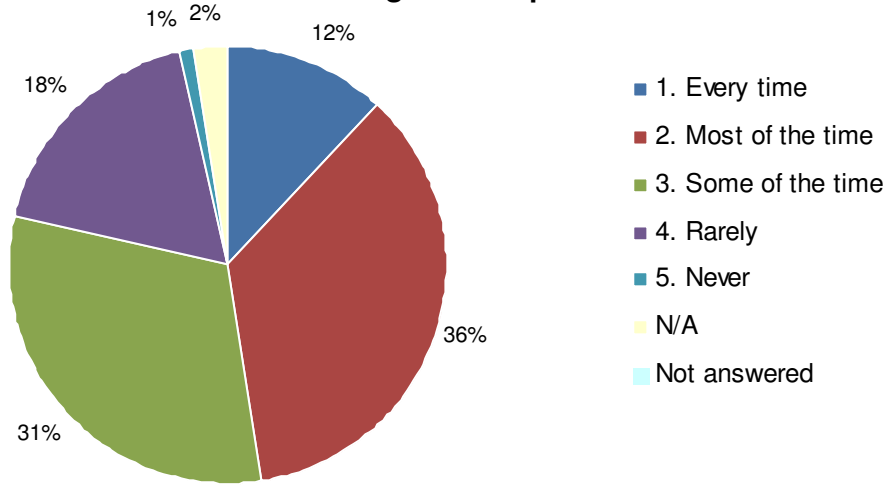
Summary

Below are the results from four key questions on the questionnaire.

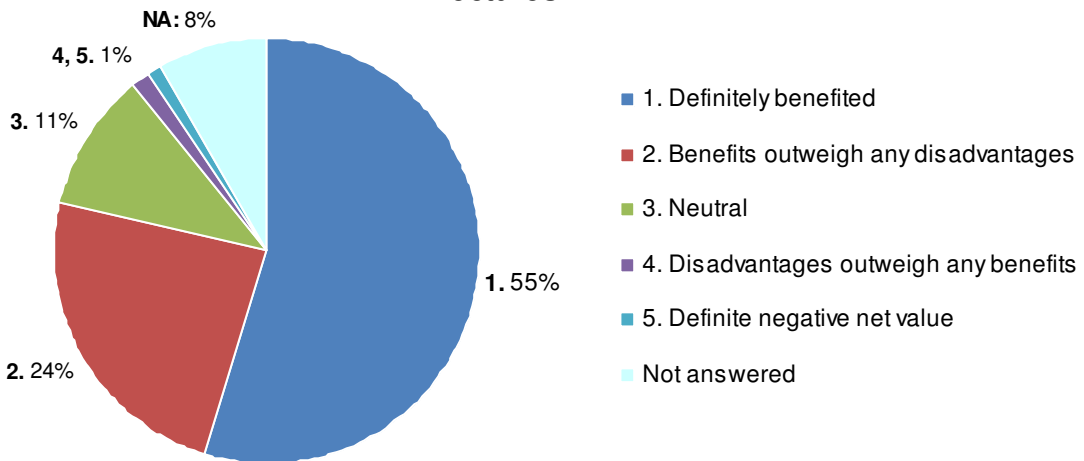
Response rate: 84 students (43%)



Q6. The discussions with fellow students helped to improve my understanding of the topic



Q12. What (for you) was the balance of benefit vs. disadvantage from the use of the multiple-choice questions and flash cards in the lectures?



Sample comments

Advantages

Improved understanding

- the discussion and back and forth really solidified my understanding of topics and theories
- I was able to either consolidate my knowledge by discussing with a friend, or was taught by a friend why my answer was wrong and what the right one was - something a lecturer doesn't always have time to do.

Improved attention

- makes you think instead of drift off, and checks that you have the right idea about the concepts.
- It gave the lecture a short break so that we could concentrate better, as well as being interactive meant that you had to pay attention and follow the lecture.

Useful feedback

- let me know if I was on the right track and understanding the topic or not
- They made the lectures far more engaging and they helped me to discover whether I had actually understood (or just thought I'd understood) what the lecture was talking about.

Interaction and engagement

- It made the lectures more interesting and interactive. The primary advantage being that I could argue a point with other students. Partly because of this I found philosophy lectures far more engaging and memorable than my other lectures.
- Had me more engaged with the lecture. Provided a challenge and so enabled me to try to understand the materials so as to have the right answers.
- It made things a lot more interesting. Kept me engaged.

Disadvantages or problems

Not enough time given to think

- GFE: I found it harder than LDM to respond to the questions because I felt sometimes I needed more time to understand the questions and think about the answer.
- GFE: Questions sometimes a bit too complicated to 'work out' in the time provided.
- GFE: There were a couple of times where I felt as if I wasn't given quite enough time to think about the answer, (like during the lecture on decision theory) but on the whole I was given enough time and the cards had me engaged!

Too easy to vote with the majority

- If I didn't know the answer I would just put up the card, from what I could see the majority had put up.

Discussions with peers not useful

- I did not find the discussion part with the person sitting next to you very effective, because usually neither had a real logical reason to back up their answer, and this could lead us in the wrong direction..

Embarrassed when answered incorrectly

- Sometimes felt a bit confronted by obvious lack of knowledge ! The format of getting every one to hold up their cards felt like a bit of a test / competition. Perhaps if you had the option of not using the cards it would alleviate the perceived "pressure to perform" (?)
- Bright colours made me hesitant to answer when I realised my answer was different from others.

Other

- The GFE lectures online sometimes didn't have the lecture material online, so I was unable to follow the questions
- can introduce confusion that did not exist before the questions was presented (when question was obscure)
- Time consuming
- Sometimes it generated a response from the students that distracted from the lecture topic.

No disadvantages

- None.
- None that were obvious. I think they are great; the lectures are interactive, and they give a chance for us to think objectively.
- None really
- No disadvantages.

Other comments

Positive (13/21 comments)

- The flash-cards are good because they allow us to communicate with the lecturer more. Sometimes in lectures in other subjects I feel as if I am just having a speech thrown at me and cannot contribute in any way, whereas the cards make me feel as if I am benefiting more from lectures because I contribute and learn more.
- Very innovative teaching method. I would have liked to have had more time for discussion before and after the questions .
- Overall I think the flash cards were great!
- I liked them!
- They are great :)
- The discussions were really beneficial, and the relaxed approach to the lecture allows us to think and feel confident in asking questions.

Neutral (7/21 comments)

- Instead of having to discuss the multi choice questions with a person next to us PERHAPS (this is only a suggestion) it would be beneficial if the class was open to discuss their own views voluntarily on why they decided on the answer they chose and thus tried to sway others in order to establish a majority vote if the responses were mixed.
- There should be more instances of students being asked to justify their answer.
- GFE: it is useful, but less so with the multiple-choice/flash-card assessment. However, this is in relation to the more content laded thought for GFE - maybe this is only due to the relatively short time spent on each individual topic, after-all, it often feels like we are covering a whole year course in 6 months on top of the LDM studies.

Negative (1/21 comments)

- Discussion just do not seem effective, and flash card should mainly be used for the benefits of the lecturer to see if students are understanding the concepts. Also, it is not the greatest experience when a lecturer points out you specifically because you got the wrong answer, and can cause a feeling of embarrassment and humiliation.