Course Description and Instructor Information

This course helps students understand the world better by studying significant interpretations of self, the world, and God that have been offered by thinkers, past and present – the major concerns of philosophy. Meets the general studies core requirement in Heritage and Institutions (Philosophy).

Philosophy is the study and application of logic and reasoning to life’s most interesting issues, problems, and questions. Clear thinking comes neither naturally nor easily. Philosophy is the art and science of learning how to think.

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Office Hours: By Appointment

Course Objectives

The purpose of this course is to provide an introduction to philosophy. By the end of the course you should be able to:

1) Read philosophy: Philosophy can be difficult to read. Learning to read it can improve both your mental stamina and your ability to think.

2) Understand the importance of ultimate questions: You should be able to identify, formulate and explain the ultimate questions of philosophy.

3) Write and think philosophically: We will try to understand what makes philosophical writing and reasoning distinctive, and try to develop these skills in each of you.

Of course, it is impossible to fully realize any of the three goals in one course. The purpose of this course is to gain a basic sense for the practice of philosophy with these goals in mind.

Course Requirements

1. Three Exams. You will have three short answer exams covering lecture material and book material. Each exam will be worth fifteen points. 45 points total

2. Three Assignments. There will be three assignments. Each assignment will cover one of the course objectives. Each assignment will be worth fifteen points. 45 points total.

3. Professionalism. Attendance, tardiness, and behavior in class will either have negative or positive impact upon your grade. It is difficult to keep coming to class, to keep being on time, and to stay focused. Persistence is much more important than brilliance in life. This is a test of your persistence. Specifically, for every
week of class you miss, you will be docked a point. Anytime your talking is cause for class delay, you will be docked a point. 10 points total.

Three are 100 points possible. To earn an A or A- you will have to score 90 points or more. To earn a B+, B, or B- you will have to score between 80 and 89 points. To earn a C+, C, or C- you will have to score between 70 and 79 points. If you score between 60 and 69 points you will earn a D. Anything below 60 points will earn you an F.

I’ve included a place for you to record your scores throughout the semester. Write down your score and you will be able to know what your grade is at any point in the semester. The only part of your grade not included is your professionalism grade (10 points).

Assignment 1   Score____________
Assignment 2   Score____________
Assignment 3   Score____________
Exam 1         Score___________
Exam 2         Score___________
Exam 3         Score___________
Total          Score___________

Required Texts

The Story of Philosophy by Will Durant
Pensees by Blaise Pascal
Access to Class Website: http://lookingatphilosophy.blogspot.com

Notice that there is a class website. You are responsible for checking it. In addition to readings from the book, I will assign an occasional article.

Readings and Assignment Due Dates

Week 1 (Jan 12, 14) Introducing philosophy and each other, no reading

Week 2, (Jan 19, 21) Philosophy, Sex, & Gender - an interesting way to become familiar with the major concerns of philosophy. Reading: Judaism (and Christianity’s) Sexual Revolution (online reading) - read half.

Martin Luther King, Jr. day - no class on the 19th
Week 3 (Jan 26, 28) Philosophy, Sex, & Gender cont’d. Reading: Judaism’s (and Christianity’s) Sexual Revolution - second half.

Week 4 (Feb 2, 4) Philosophy, Sex & Gender - logical lessons, Durant, pp. 58 - 68

Week 5 (Feb 9, 11) Philosophy of Religion. Durant, pp. 69 - 71, Pascal, pp. 33 - 44

Week 6 (Feb 16, 18) Philosophy of Religion, Pascal, pp. 85-95
Washington’s & Lincoln’s Birthdays - no class on the 16th

Week 7 (Feb 23, 25) Philosophy of Religion, Pascal, pp. 149 - 155

Week 8 (Mar 2, 4) Epistemology and Metaphysics, Pascal, pp. 83-85

Week 9 (Mar 9, 11) Epistemology and Metaphysics, Durant, pp. 265-275

Week 10 (Mar 16, 18) Epistemology and Metaphysics, TBA

Week 11 (Mar 23, 25) Aesthetics, Roger Scruton on Art (online reading)

Week 12 (Mar 30, Apr 1) Aesthetics, Durant, pp. 466 - 475

Easter Vacation - April 4th through the 13th

Week 13 (Apr 15) Nietzsche & Morality, Durant, pp. 401 - 427

Week 14 (Apr 20, 22) Voltaire & Politics, Durant, pp. 199 - 249

Week 15 (Apr 27, 29) Summary and review

Final Exam Week: Our final is on Monday, May 4th at 2:30 PM
Policies

Don’t cheat or plagiarize. It’s stealing