

PHILOSOPHY 104: PERSONAL VALUES

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COURSE OUTLINE

Course Description: An examination of various answers to the question, "What is the good life?"

Course Content: The course begins with a discussion of American culture and its affect on our conception of the good life and our understanding of true human happiness. This section of the course will include a study of class (or caste) in America. We will then consider matters of human existence and the meaning of life. This will be followed by the presentation of alternative views regarding what it is to live well, including egoism, hedonism, existentialism, stoicism, Kantian ethics, Utilitarianism, and Natural Law Theory. The course concludes with discussions of everyone's three favorite subjects: sex, drugs, and rock & roll. This is a General Education course, satisfying Area C3.

Course Goals: Students shall demonstrate knowledge of major philosophical issues and seminal figures in ethics, both in the context of their place in the history of ideas and their relevance to life in the twenty-first century.

Required Texts: *Class* by Paul Fussell, available in the AS Bookstore.
Phil 104 Reader, available at Sir Speedy Printing Center, 730 Main St. The cost of the Reader is around \$21. Sir Speedy accepts cash and credit cards, but NOT checks.

Course Requirements: There will be four exams and one term paper. The exams will be based on the reading assignments, lectures and discussions. The content of the term paper, which will be due at the end of the semester, will be at the discretion of the student (with instructor approval). The paper is not to exceed 6 pages in length (typewritten and double-spaced).

Two study questions will be assigned along with each reading assignment. You must submit your typed responses to the questions at the beginning of the class for which the reading assignment is made. The total possible points accumulated by responding to these questions will equal one exam score (100 pts).

Extra credit can be earned by attending approved extra-curricular events and writing a 1-2 page paper reflecting on what you learned. These opportunities will be announced in class as they arise.

Course grades will be determined on a straight percentage scale. If you accumulate 90% or more of the total points you will receive an 'A'. A 'B' will go to those who earn 89-80% of the total points, etc. The definition of each letter grade (A, B, C, D and F) is provided in the College Catalog. I would like to highlight the following points. A grade of 'B' is not representative of average work but of highly competent, highly motivated college-level performance. A grade of 'C' represents adequate competence. If you meet the minimum requirements you deserve (and will receive) a 'D'.

Points will be accumulated as follows:

Study questions		100 pts. (16.7%)
4 exams	100 points each	400 pts. (66.7%)
1 term paper		<u>100 pts. (16.7%)</u>
		600 pts. (100%)

Notes and Suggestions: Come to class prepared for that day's discussion. The study of philosophy does not entail learning certain facts but rather learning to think, critique and argue in a certain way. That is, philosophy is not an academic subject; it is an intellectual activity. You will learn by doing. You must therefore be prepared for what we are doing each day.

It will be necessary for you to complete the assigned reading and study questions before class. But it will not be sufficient for you to do so. Allow time to think about what you've read. After completing an assigned reading, consider whether you agree or disagree with the author's view. Come to class with a personal agenda - what do you want clarified?; what do you wish to say in support of a particular view?; what objections do you desire to make? Make sure that you prepare well thought-out responses to the assigned study questions. They will be the basis for in-class discussions.

You will find that, no matter how much time is allotted for a particular topic, many interesting avenues of argument and discussion will remain. I encourage you to continue discussions outside of class. Other class members are excellent candidates for honing your philosophical skills (again, by doing philosophy). My office hours, and those of our Teaching Assistant, Sarah Aiken, are scheduled for your benefit. Take advantage of them.

In order to successfully complete this course, you must attend class. Attendance will not be taken. But active attendance will dramatically increase your chances of mastering the course material. This most assuredly will be reflected in the quality of your work and hence your grade. Should you miss a class meeting (for there will be times when you will have perfectly good reason for doing so) it is your responsibility to obtain notes and the next reading assignment from fellow class members. No make-up assignments will be accepted. If you must miss a class meeting and study questions are due, you must email your answers to the TA before the start of the class you miss. Two study question scores will be tossed out. You can miss two assignments without fear of penalty. After that, you take your chances.

All written assignments must reflect standard English usage. Proper spelling, grammar, punctuation and syntax count because they are necessary for the accurate expression of ideas. Philosophy is hard enough without the additional complexity of (easily correctable) imprecision.

Exams will not be rescheduled without extremely compelling reasons. Hospitalization is extremely compelling. A malfunctioning alarm clock is not. If you are sick enough to go to the Doctor, you are sick enough to miss an exam. If you are not sick enough to go to the Doctor, you are not sick enough to miss an exam. If you cannot provide a Doctor's note, you will not be allowed to make up an exam. Do not schedule trips home or to Tahoe or to your sister's wedding or to Aspen or to any other place on a day when class meets. If there ends up being a test on a day when you've planned to be out of town, then you will have to change your plans (even if you've already paid for a nonrefundable airline ticket). Exams are not optional or to be taken at your convenience. You are responsible for taking them when scheduled. I will hold you to that responsibility.

Class Schedule

I. Preliminary Issues: What is Philosophy? What is "The Good Life"?
Plato

II. Where do we get our values?
Fussell

III. Sympathy vs. Principle: What should values be based on?
Bennett

IV. I Create My Own Values
Nietzsche, Sartre

EXAM 1

VI. How Should I Live?
Egoism? Plato
Hedonism: Nozick, Voltaire
Virtues: Aristotle
Stoicism (Buddhism): Koller & Koller

EXAM 2

Utilitarianism: Mill, Le Guin
Kant
Natural Law: Finnis

EXAM 3

VII. Sex, Drugs & Rock and Roll
Sex: Mappes, Kant
Drugs: Szasz
Rock & Roll: Ducasse, Beardsley

EXAM 4