

PHILOSOPHY 101: Introduction to Philosophy

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Fall 2009
Office Hours: MWF 1:00-2:00, TR 12:30-1:30

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COURSE OUTLINE

Course Description: An introduction to philosophical thought and skills. Issues that traditionally have been of central importance in philosophical inquiry, such as the nature of knowledge, reality, and values, will be emphasized.

Course Content: 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. As such, this course will encourage the examination of ideas, the questioning of assumptions and the rational defense of one's beliefs. The pursuit of philosophy is an attempt to get to the bottom of things. So we will examine questions like: What is the true nature of reality? Why is there something rather than nothing? What is knowledge and can we have it? Are there any certainties? Does God exist? If so, can we know God's will? What is consciousness? Who am I? What is the good life? The questions that are of interest to philosophers are the ones that are most fundamental. Thus, they are relevant to all and of interest to any who aspire to think for themselves. This is a General Education course, satisfying Area C3.

Student Learning Goals:

1. Improve reading, writing, and critical thinking skills.
2. Instill intellectual curiosity through the introduction of interesting philosophical ideas, arguments, and theories.
3. Demonstrate knowledge of major philosophical traditions and figures in historical context.
4. Demonstrate understanding of some of the most important issues in philosophy, such as those in epistemology, metaphysics, and the philosophy of mind.

Required Text: *Introducing Philosophy, 9th edition*, by Robert C. Solomon, Oxford University Press.

Course Requirements: There will be four exams and one term paper. The exams will be based on 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).

Participation in class discussion is part of your grade. Your ability to respond to questions will be a large component of your participation score. You will be required to attend at least four relevant public events or arts events and demonstrate an integration of the event with the course subject matter. Any sort of cultural event—artistic display, wedding, funeral—will qualify as they will rest on certain basic philosophical presuppositions that are required to make sense of the proceedings and behavior there manifested. A 1 - 2 page typewritten paper integrating your experience with the course material will be submitted for each event.

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:

Public events papers (4) and participation		100 pts.
4 exams	100 points each	400 pts.
1 term paper		<u>100 pts.</u>
		600 pts.

Notes and Suggestions: Come to class prepared for that day's discussion. As previously noted, 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 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?

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). I too will be available for outside discussion. My office hours 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 class participation, and hence your grade. Should you miss a class meeting it is your responsibility to obtain notes and the next reading assignment from fellow class members.

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 any other place on a day when class meets. If there is 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.