HNRS 204
Truth
Spring 2018

Locations:  Sutter 276P (Tuesdays)
Sutter 276P (Thursdays, Group 1)
Glenn 212 (Thursdays, Group 2)

Instructors:  Tricia Sweet
Sutter 150
Wed. 9:00-12:30, Thurs. 1:45-2:45, Fri. 9:00-12:30.
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Brandon Fry
Modoc 219A
bfry@csuchico.edu

Course Description

This inter-disciplinary Honors course aims to help students explore questions about the nature of truth, how we can best discover it, what is its value, and what are its limits. We will use ideas and methods from philosophy, religion, cosmology, logic, literature, anthropology, sociology, psychology and other disciplines to make sense of these questions. Ultimately, the primary goal is to make students better thinkers through explicit discussion of logic and critical thinking strategies, as well active exploration of significant texts and ideas from a variety of times and places.

Course material will be organized into four historical eras/themes:
1) Thought: The Ancient World
2) Faith: The Abrahamic Traditions
3) Experience: The Enlightenment and Scientific Revolution
4) Society: The Post-Modern World

In examining each of these eras we will consider constellations of questions and answers characteristic of specific times and places, but we will also use contemporary tools of logic and critical thinking to engage them.

Course Format

Every Tuesday the students in this course will meet in a large group. The structure of those meetings will vary, but will include elements of lecture, discussion, collective and
independent work. On Thursdays, students will meet in their small groups. The small
groups will be focused on open discussion of course material. Students will be assigned to
one small group class, and the instructors will alternate between the groups. Exceptions to
this schedule will be noted in advance.

General Education and Pathways

This course is a lower division wildcard for General Education (GE), meeting the goals
for Critical Thinking (A3), Humanities (C2), Social Sciences (D1 and D2), and Lifelong
Learning (E). You may use this course to satisfy one of those requirements. You do not
need to decide now which requirement it will satisfy. The following GE Student Learning
Outcomes (SLOs) will be especially promoted in this course:

• **Active Enquiry** will be promoted through in-class activities and discussion, and
take-home exercises that require students to evaluate arguments.
• **Written Communication** will be promoted through the short written exercises
and written examinations.
• **Critical Thinking** will be promoted throughout the course through the
introduction of a variety of views about truth that often conflict with standard
views as well as each other. Students will be asked to assess these views in both
class discussion and written assignments. Moreover, there will be emphasis on
techniques of logical reasoning and common errors.
• **Global Engagement** will be promoted through the substantial coverage of East
Asian and Islamic thought concerning truth and knowledge, as well as discussion
of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

This course may not satisfy the minor requirements for the particular pathway you may
be pursuing, but it has been approved for the following pathways: Food Studies; Gender
and Sexuality Studies; Global Development Studies; Great Books and Ideas; International
Studies; Science, Technology and Values; and Sustainability Studies.

Course Materials

We ask that you acquire four books for this class. These are available at the Wildcat
Store:

• *On Truth* by Harry Frankfurt (ISBN: 9780307264220)
• *The Heart of Understanding: Commentaries on the Prajnaparamita Heart Sutra*
  by Thich Nhat Hanh (ISBN: 9781888375923) If you have a kindle, you may wish to
  buy this book on kindle. Paperbacks are in short supply.
• *Othello* by William Shakespeare
• *The Importance of Being Earnest* by Oscar Wilde
All other course readings will be available online in pdf or html formats. Each set of readings for a week can be found in the folder associated with that week of the course. You will want to have the readings accessible during class especially Thursdays. Ideally you should print out the readings and bring them to class, but you may access them with a portable electronic device. Note that some readings may change depending on the needs of the class.

**Course Requirements**

**Reading assignments:** The readings for this course are varied. None of the readings will come from a textbook. Most of them will be texts that have had a significant role in the history of ideas or represent important developments. Many of these readings will be difficult to read because the language and ideas will be unfamiliar and dense, and because the readings will be drawn from larger works and context with which you will not be familiar. Expect the reading assignments to take a fair bit of time and concentration. You will often want to read the assignments twice. Do not be disheartened by the difficulty! One of the important skills you will promote this semester is the ability to make sense out of difficult ideas and texts. Each assignment will be given for an entire week, and it will be expected that you will have done the reading by the Tuesday of that week.

**Tuesday quizzes:** On Tuesdays, at the beginning of class, you will be given a short, “closed-book” quiz on the reading material for the week. These quizzes will test for basic reading comprehension of the assigned reading. If you are ill or otherwise unable to attend class, you may make up a Tuesday quiz by turning in a one-page typed analysis of the assigned reading to Tricia Sweet.

**Thursday quizzes:** On Thursdays, at the beginning of class, you will form into small groups of three people and collectively answer a question based on the reading material for the week. This quiz will be “open-book” and will require a more thoughtful application of the ideas from the reading and the previous class session. Your group response will be submitted in writing. If you are ill or otherwise unable to attend class, you may make up a Thursday quiz by comparing the assigned reading of the week to another Truth reading in one typed page to be turned in to Tricia Sweet.

**Exercises:** Due most Tuesdays at the beginning of class, these exercises will typically ask variants of the same three questions about an argument that you choose from the week’s reading.

**Participation:** Your participation will be evaluated based on attendance as well as instructor assessment of your level of engagement in class discussion.

**Midterm examinations:** There will be two written midterm examinations in class.

**Final examination:** There will be a cumulative final essay examination during the final exam period.
Grading

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quiz Type</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Tues. quizzes</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thurs. quizzes</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exercises</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm examinations</td>
<td>20% (10% each)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final examination</td>
<td>15%</td>
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The final grade will be determined by the final percentage according to the standard scale. Student participation, especially in small group, will be a factor that could raise one’s grade.

Americans with Disabilities Act

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability or chronic illness, or if you need to make special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible, or see me during office hours. Please also contact Accessibility Resource Center (ARC) as they are the designated department responsible for approving and coordinating reasonable accommodations and services for students with disabilities. ARC will help you understand your rights and responsibilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act and provide you further assistance with requesting and arranging accommodations. ARC is in SSC 170 and can be reached at 898-5959.
# Schedule of readings and assignments

## Prelude

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 1</th>
<th>1/23</th>
<th>Introduction and the nature of logic and truth</th>
<th>Reading for Thursday, Dworkin, “Are These 10 Lies Justified?”</th>
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## Thought

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<tr>
<th>Week 3</th>
<th>2/6</th>
<th>Ancient Greek theories of knowledge and reality</th>
<th>Plato, <em>Republic</em> (Book VI-VII, selections 504e-535e) Aristotle, <em>Metaphysics</em> (Book IV, Parts 1, 3, 5-8)</th>
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<td>2/8</td>
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<tr>
<th>Week 4</th>
<th>2/13</th>
<th>Chinese Daoism</th>
<th>Zhuangzi (Chs. 2, 3 and 17(selection))</th>
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<tr>
<th>Week 5</th>
<th>2/20</th>
<th>Buddhism</th>
<th>Hanh, <em>The Heart of Understanding</em></th>
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## Faith

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<tr>
<th>Week 6</th>
<th>2/27</th>
<th>Hebrew Bible and the New Testament</th>
<th>Ecclesiastes Gospel of John Romans 1-5, 9-11</th>
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<td>3/1</td>
<td>Midterm exam on Thursday 3/1</td>
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<tr>
<th>Week 8</th>
<th>3/13</th>
<th>The lying villain</th>
<th>Shakespeare, <em>Othello</em> (We recommend you also watch the movie version directed by Oliver Parker)</th>
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## Experience

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<th>Week 9</th>
<th>3/27</th>
<th>Skepticism, scripture and sense</th>
<th>Galileo, “Letter to the Grand Duchess Christina” Descartes, <em>Meditations on First Philosophy</em> (Meditations 1, 2)</th>
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<td>3/29</td>
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### Week 10

| 4/3  | 4/5 | Scientific revolution and inductive reasoning | Newton, “Rules of Reasoning in Philosophy”  
Newton, “General Scholium”  
Francis Bacon, *Novum Organum*, (Book I Preface, Aphorisms 1-44) |

### Week 11

| 4/10 | 4/12 | Inductive skepticism and consilience | Hume, *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, (Sections IV, X)  
Whewell, *Novum Organon Renovatum* (Ch. V) |

**Society**

### Week 12

| 4/17 | 4/19 | The lying hero  
**Midterm exam on Thursday 4/19** | Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest* (We recommend you also watch the movie version directed by Oliver Parker) |

### Week 13

Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande* (Chs. I, II, VI) |

### Week 14

| 5/1  | 5/3  | Psychological fallibilism | Chabris and Simons, *The Invisible Gorilla* (Chs. 1, 4, 5) |

### Week 15

| 5/8  | 5/10 | The value of truth: truth and reconciliation | Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness*, Chs. 1, 2 |

**Exam week**  
**TBD**  
**Final Exam**