Course Outline

PHIL 101-300 Issues in Philosophy

Dr. Emilie Kutash

Fall: 2010: Room C 003  
Office Hours: By Appointment

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Course Objectives:

Philosophy has produced speculation about everything from the meaning of life to the nature of the universe. In attempting to work out answers to the most abstract and mysterious problems of existence philosophers have generated a vast literature which constitutes the discipline that is Philosophy. In this course the student will learn about the major issues and areas of philosophy (Metaphysics, Ethics, Philosophy of Religion, Epistemology,) by contrasting the thoughts of Philosophers from different periods expounding the same issue. This method will familiarize the student with historical context and contrasting viewpoint on issues. The course is oriented toward the questions that Philosophers ask and how they try to answer these questions. The objective is to help the student to think about the perennial questions that philosophers have addressed and to learn to read philosophy texts critically, become familiar with philosophical terminology and hopefully to come appreciate the value of philosophy for humankind.

Attendance Policy:

Absences are discouraged because class discussion and lectures are important components of this course. If you have more than two unexcused absences I will ask the philosophical question about whether you exist and have to assume you have withdrawn from the course or that you have failed the course.

Grading:

There will be two quizzes each worth 10% of the grade and a Final worth 20 percent of the grade. There will be two papers which will be worth 50% of the grade. The first papers must use the readings in the book and one or two sources from the library. The second paper must use the book and your own thoughts. The other 10% of the grade will be based on attendance, active participation and presentations. The final will cover the whole course. The quizzes will be scheduled to cover only the units covered since the preceding quiz. The first paper will contrast two philosophers from two different historical periods on one of the areas we have covered. Example: Plato and Descartes on Metaphysics or Nietzsche and Kant on Epistemology. One paper must reflect the issues covered in Units 1-4 and the second paper will be on Unit 5: Ethics, and be an analysis of one of the readings prepared in anticipation of a class discussion of the topic. Plagiarism in this age of easy access to the internet will not be tolerated. The dates
that the papers are due are not negotiable. Please make sure you begin work on them early as possible so they can be handed in on time.

**Unit One: What is Philosophy?** Philosophy’s “Isms” and Oppositions: Idealism vs., Materialism, Empiricism, Free Will v. Determinism, Nihilism.

**Aug. 31, Sept. 2.**

**Tues.** The inauguration of philosophy in the West. What is Philosophy in non western cultures? What are the issues in philosophy? How to Read Philosophical arguments.

**Thurs.** What do the periods: Ancient, Medieval, Modern, Contemporary mean and who are the Philosophers who belong to each period?

*Reading:* - Outline and be prepared to discuss main points of Bertrand Russell short essay “The Value of Philosophy” (p.19-23)

**Sept. 7, 9**

**Tues.** What are Philosophy’s “Isms” Materialism, Idealism.

Reading: The Heraclitus and Parmenides poems (Handout)

**Thurs.** No Class Rosh Hashanah Holiday

**Sept. 14, 16:**

**Tues.** Empiricism, Nihilism, Existentialism

**Thurs.** How free are we? Freedom vs. Determinism.

*Readings for Unit One.* In History of Western Philosophy by Bertrand Russell: On reserve in the library: The Rise of Greek Civilization Plato: P. 4 and The Republic Plato’s Cave: P. 123-127. St. Augustine: (Free Will) p. 67-77. Descartes (Dualism) P.199-208: Nietzsche: (Nihilism) Twilight of the Idols or How to Philosophize with the Hammer. (Handout)

**Unit Two:** What is Knowledge? How do we know? (Epistemology)

**Sept. 21, 23:** **Tues. No Class: All college Day**

**Thurs.** Introduction to Epistemology

**Sept. 28, 30:**

**Tues.** What is knowledge according to Plato and Aristotle?
**Thurs.** Film: What the Bleep do we Know?

**Oct. 5, 7:**

**Tues.** What can we know? Descartes Hume and Kant:

**Thurs.** What can’t we know? Logical Positivism, the feminist critique.


**Unit Three: Does God Exist? What are Good and Evil: Philosophy and Religion**

**Oct.12, 14:**

**Tues.** Review God or gods: East and West

* **Thurs.** Quiz # 1: Lecture: Philosophy and God in the Middle Ages and Renaissance

**Oct. 19, 21:**

**Tues.** God after the scientific revolution

**Thurs.** Natural Theology and the Problem of Evil

**Oct. 26, 28:**

* **Tues.** Library

**Thurs.** Contemporary religion, existentialism

Existentialism and Contemporary Philosophy of Religion


**Unit Four:** What is Soul, Mind, Self, Consciousness?

**Nov. 2, 4**
**Tues.:** Soul, Self, personal identity: changing approaches The Soul and the mind in Greek and Christian philosophy

**Thurs.** Mind /Body Dualism in modern philosophy and The Mind and Consciousness in Contemporary philosophy

**Nov. 9, 11**

* **Tues.** *Paper due*
  Lecture: What is the self and mind in Freud and contemporary philosophy

**Thurs.** Review: Buddhism and non western ideas of the self and soul

Readings for Unit 4: Plato Phaedo *(Selection: (Handout). Daniel Dennet (The Origins of Selves) P.265-279. Chalmers: (Facing up to the Problem of Consciousness) P. 230-242)  Pali Canon: (The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha) P.244- Freud: The Structure of the Unconscious

**Unit Five:** What is the Good Life? What is Morally Right? Ethics

**Nov. 16, 18:**

* **Tues.** *Quiz # 2* Lecture: Moral Principles: Aristotle’s Ethics, Kant


**Thurs.** Moral Pragmatism John Stuart Mill Utilitarianism,

**Reading:** John Stuart Mill *(Utilitarianism: Selection) P.365-370

**Nov. 23, 25:**

**Tues.** Existentialism and Nihilist morality

**Reading:** Jean Paul Sartre: Existentialism is Humanism 392-401; Nietzsche Beyond Good and Evil: Selection) P.384-391.

**Thurs.** *No Class: Thanksgiving*

**Nov. 30, Dec. 2:**

* **Tues.** Second paper due: Multiculturalism

**Thurs.** Plato in Jail, Martin Luther King in Jail: What is Justice?
**Reading:** Plato (*Crito*) P.430-440: Martin Luther King (*Letter from the Birmingham Jail*) P. 488-500. James Rachels: (*Cultural Relativism*) P.402-414

**Dec. 7, 9:**

**Tues.** Ethical Controversies. *Be ready for class discussion on Ethics*

**Thurs.** Continued discussion of Ethics

**Dec. 14, 16:**

**Tues:** Review: Applied Ethics

*Thurs.: . Final Exam*

**Dec. 21:** Student conferences

* Indicates important deadline