PL 11: ISSUES IN PHILOSOPHY

Instructor: Dr. Gertrude Postl
Office H120, Southampton Building
Fall 2004, Section 1556
Time: M/W 2:00-3:15 p.m.
Office Hours: M/W 10:00 - 11:00 a.m.
T/T 12:00 - 1:00 p.m.

OBJECTIVES
Upon successful completion of Issues in Philosophy (PL 11), the student will be able to:
(1) identify traditional and current issues in epistemology and metaphysics;
(2) distinguish between and critically assess major approaches in epistemology, such as Empiricism, Rationalism and Skepticism;
(3) distinguish and critically assess competing metaphysical approaches, for example, in Mind-Body, Personal Identity, and/or Freewill; and
(4) demonstrate skills of information management (basic on-line and/or library research).
Procedures for accomplishing these objectives: Lectures, class discussion, in-class group projects, written assignments;

TEXT:

REQUIREMENTS:
1) FOUR QUIZZES:
quiz 1 - W 9/29
quiz 2 - W 10/27
quiz 3 - M 11/29
quiz 4 - M 12/20
Quizzes will consist of brief essay questions relating to the readings and the course material in general. The lowest quiz-grade will be dropped.

2) ONE PAPER - A WRITTEN TEXT REPORT (due 11/1 but may be handed in earlier)
Choose one of the philosophical texts already discussed in class (excluding films), summarize in your own words the view of the respective author, and critically evaluate the text (E.g.: What did you find most interesting about this text and why? Is this text still relevant today? Is the author consistent and convincing in his/her argumentation? Which part of the text is not convincing? Etc.). The paper should be at least three pages long, typed, double-spaced, and in the appropriate academic format (name, title, correct quotation).
If a paper is handed in before the deadline (up to the week before the due date) it may be rewritten in order to improve the grade. The due date for the second version is in general two weeks after the first version was returned. The first version has to be handed in together with the second version! In order to raise the grade, the rewritten version has to show serious improvements! Papers received at the day of the deadline may not be rewritten. Papers received after the deadline will not be accepted!

3) ONE TAKE-HOME FINAL EXAM (due 12/13)
This exam will involve definitions, brief essay questions and one longer essay. Essay topics and questions will be distributed one week before the exam is due. The exam will cover material from the entire semester.

4) CLASS PARTICIPATION, READING ASSIGNMENTS AND BEHAVIOR
Class participation means to participate in the common effort of discussion in order to complement the reading material and to accomplish the aims stated in the course objectives. Absolute unwillingness to participate will result in a lower final grade. "Talking a lot" is not necessarily participation. Reading assignments have to be completed before class meetings. It is not enough to read a text; one should also be able to talk about it. The biographical introduction to each author is part of the reading.
Disruptive or inconsiderate behavior (including walking in and out of the classroom during class time) will affect the grade. Cell phones and beepers have to be switched off during class time.
5) ATTENDANCE POLICY
The college defines excessive absence or lateness as more than the equivalent of one week of class meetings during the semester. In this course, students are allowed no more than three absences! Any additional absence will affect the grade. Excessive absence or lateness may lead to failure in the course or removal from the class roster. If a student is late, the time will be added up and will thereby also contribute to the amount of absences. It is the student's obligation to sign the sign-up sheet which will be passed around. If a student misses a class due to sickness or other justifiable reasons, evidence needs to be shown as soon as possible! In this case the absence will be excused. If a student drops the class after the official withdraw-date (11/3) without justifiable reason, he/she will receive an "F" for the course.

GRADING
3 Quizzes: 45% of the final grade
1 Paper: 20% of the final grade
1 Take-Home Final: 20% of the final grade
Class Participation: 15% of the final grade
Excessive absence will lower the final grade!

P L A G I A R I S M:
"In writing, students must fully acknowledge the source of any paraphrased passages and any ideas which they have borrowed. Failure to conform to these academic standards is plagiarism and may result in a failing grade for the course and/or serious disciplinary sanctions as outlines in the Code of Conduct" (SCCC Catalog, p.89). Plagiarism of any kind will result in a “0” for the assignment in question and in repeated cases in an “F” for the course.

SCHEDULE
W 9/1: Introduction: What is philosophy? The areas of philosophy: focus on epistemology and metaphysics; philosophy vs. mythology, religion, and science; historical framework: Greek, medieval, and modern thought; philosophical methods;
M 9/6: No Class (Labor Day)

WHAT IS REAL? WHAT CAN I KNOW?
W 9/8: “The Matrix” (Movie);
M 9/13: discussion of “The Matrix;” introduction to Plato;
W 9/15: Plato, The Allegory of the Cave (pp.187-192);
M 9/20: Plato continued;
W 9/22: René Descartes, Meditations on First Philosophy (Meditations 1 and 2, pp.193-199);
M 9/27: Descartes continued;
W 9/29: QUIZ 1
    David Hume, Of the Origin of Ideas (pp.202-205);
M 10/4: Hume continued;
W 10/6: William James, What Pragmatism Means (pp.213-217);
M 10/11: James continued;
W 10/13: Alison Jaggar, Love and Emotion in Feminist Epistemology (pp.244-255);
M 10/18: Jaggar continued;

**WHO AM I? WHAT IS A PERSON?**

W 10/20: “Memento” (Movie);
M 10/25: discussion of “Memento;” introduction to personal identity;
W 10/27: **QUIZ 2**
John Locke, Identity and Diversity (handout);
M 11/1: Locke continued;
**PAPER DUE!**

W 11/3: William G. Lycan, Machine Consciousness (pp.72-77);
LAST DAY TO WITHDRAW FROM CLASSES WITH GUARANTEED “W”!
M 11/8: Lycan continued;
W 11/10: Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex (pp. 53-61);
M 11/15: Beauvoir continued;
W 11/17: Frantz Fanon, The Fact of Blackness (pp.134-138);
M 11/22: Fanon continued;
W 11/24: No Class (Friday Classes meet instead of Wednesday classes)

**ARE MY ACTIONS FREE OR DETERMINED?**

M 11/29: **QUIZ 3**
“A Clockwork Orange” (Movie);
W 12/1: “A Clockwork Orange” continued; B.F. Skinner, Behaviorism (pp. 106-112);
M 12/6: Skinner continued;
W 12/8: Robert Blatchford, The Delusion of Free Will (pp.15-22);
M 12/13: Blatchford continued;
**TAKE-HOME FINAL DUE!**
W 12/15: Jean-Paul Sartre, Existentialism Is a Humanism (pp. 550-559);
M 12/20: **QUIZ 4**