PHIL 1301: INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY – FALL 2019
MW 12:00 – 1:20 PM, ULC 126

Contact Information

Instructor: Dr. Chris Lay
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Required Materials

All course readings are made freely available on the course website.

Course Description and Objectives

Philosophy is a discipline so broad that it would probably be impossible to even lightly cover all of its relevant sub-fields in a single course. With that in mind, while still a survey-style class, this course is designed around a unifying theme that will develop throughout the semester. Though this means that some areas of interest in philosophy will doubtless be left out, this narrowing of scope also allows the readings to connect together in a more comprehensive way than they otherwise would have. The aim is that this will encourage the student of philosophy to remain engaged with a number of core ideas and questions so that s/he can see philosophy as more than just a set of unrelated readings about a series of loosely-connected but largely disjointed topics.

For this course, we will be examining a couple of central questions of philosophy: (a) what is our nature as human persons and (b) both what can we know of this nature and how can we come to this knowledge? These are questions of metaphysics on the one hand—the nature of reality—and epistemology on the other—the boundaries of knowledge. Philosophy is a discipline of questioning and reflection. It requires a unique skill-set that demands the philosopher be attentive, inquisitive, and capable of critical thinking. From the nature of the course outlined above and these general comments about philosophy come three learning objectives for this course:

Learning Objectives

- Gain familiarity with various answers to the questions of our nature and what we can know about it by reading and assessing both classical and contemporary philosophers.
- Cultivate skills of critical analysis, including considering multiple perspectives and evaluating your own thinking
- Be able to recognize and reproduce good arguments (and avoid bad ones)

Course Requirements

- Two exams (25% of final grade each)
- One final course paper (35% of final grade)
- Reading quizzes (15% of final grade total)
Please note that, while things like punctuality, preparedness, and participation do not have a dedicated percentage in your final grade, they are important to you. For instance, I take each of these into consideration when deciding whether to round up a final score that falls right between two letter grades, to grant you leniency for late work, or to permit additional absences beyond the specified limit, among other things.

**Format**

Each class will consist of lecture and discussion of assigned readings with in conversational style. Reading assignments from the required texts are listed in the Course Outline. As each class is really an ongoing dialogue between the students and instructor, the reading should be done before class each day.

**Exams**

Exams will be offered on Blackboard. Each exam will be available for three specified days and will be due by 11:59 pm of the third day. Moreover, each exam will have a clearly indicated time limit. The Exam schedule is as follows:

- Exam #1: Available Oct. 18-20 (Covers weeks 1-8)
- Exam #2: Available Dec. 5-7 (Covers weeks 9-15)

*Note: Late exams will not be accepted.*

**Reading Quizzes**

Short writing assignments over the nightly readings will be given at random intervals throughout the course. Unless otherwise announced, these quizzes will all follow a uniform format so that students will always know what to expect. Detailed quiz instructions and reading tips are posted to Blackboard.

**Paper Extensions**

Your final course papers are to be submitted on the date and time specified in the Course Outline. Should circumstances outside your control make this impossible, you must request an extension from me. This can be done via email or in-person. Please note that extensions will not typically be granted on the day the paper is due (or the day just before), nor will more than one extension usually be granted per semester. You may be required to present documentation of the circumstances related to your extension request.

**Late Papers**

All papers submitted late (without an extension) will be docked one full letter grade for every 24-hour period (or fraction thereof) after the assigned due date and time. Papers that are more than three days late (72 hours, counting from the date/time the paper is due) will not be accepted, and you will receive a failing grade (F) for that assignment.

**Grading Policy**

Exams and papers will be given a numerical grade corresponding to the list below. Reading quizzes are pass/fail (either 100 or 0).

| Scale | A = 90-100 | B = 80-89 | C = 70-79 | D = 60-69 | F = 0-59 |
Attendance

Attendance is required and will be taken in each class. You are expected to arrive on time for class and leave only when the whole class is dismissed. If at some time you find that you will need to arrive late for class or leave early, you should contact your instructor beforehand. Should you wish to withdraw from the course, you should initiate the withdrawal before the midterm withdrawal deadline (November 1). Withdrawals after this point will receive a WF. Additionally, any student who misses more than four (4) classes unexcused will automatically be dropped from the course, which may result in a final grade of WF or F.

Accommodation for Disabilities

Any student with a documented disability (e.g., physical, learning, psychiatric, vision, hearing, etc.) who needs to arrange reasonable accommodations must contact the Center for Accommodations and Support Services at the beginning of the semester. A disability determination must be made by this office before any accommodations are provided by the instructor.

Electronic Devices

It is the policy of this classroom that all electronic devices are to be off or silenced during class. This includes, but is not limited to: cell phones, laptops, tablets, and eReaders. If you are observed using electronic devices or should a device create a disturbance during class—for instance, if your phone rings during class—you may be asked to pack your things and leave the room. Exceptions: electronic devices are permitted in the event the Center for Accommodations and Support services has certified that you have a legitimate disability such that an electronic aid is necessary for you to learn.

Academic Honesty

You are expected to abide by the University standards for academic honesty. These standards can be located online at https://www.utep.edu/student-affairs/osccr/student-conduct/academic-integrity.html

Other Course Policies

Please do not email your instructor about problems accessing assignments on Blackboard. If you encounter difficulties accessing material, open a ticket with University technical support and request within the ticket that your instructor be informed.

Course Outline

Week 1: Living the Life of a Philosopher

Aug 26  Course Introduction and Syllabus Review
Aug 28  Plato, Apology

Week 2: Can We Know Anything at All?

Sept 2  Labor Day (No Class)
Sept 4  Short excerpt from Theaetetus, Gettier, “Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?”
### Week 3: The Forms, the Universe, and Maintaining Both Body and Mind

- **Sept 9** Plato, *Timaeus* p.1234-55
- **Sept 11** Plato, *Timaeus* p.1266-91

### Week 4: Potentiality, Actuality, and Soul

- **Sept 16** Aristotle, *De Anima*: Book II, Chapters 1-7, 12
- **Sept 18** Aristotle, *De Anima*: Book III, Chapters 1-8

### Week 5: Connections Between Memory, Mind, and Time

- **Sept 23** Augustine, *Confessions*: Book X, Chapters V-XXVI
- **Sept 25** Augustine, *Confessions*: Book XI, Chapters XIV-XXVIII

### Week 6: Doubting to Knowledge

- **Sept 30** Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*: Books I-II, IV
- **Oct 2** Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*: Books V-VI

### Week 7: Empiricism and the Origins of Personal Identity

- **Oct 7** Locke, *Essay*: Book II, Chapters I-II, XII, XXIII
- **Oct 9** Locke, *Essay*: Book II, Chapters XXV-XXVII

### Week 8: Common Sense Idealism


### Week 9: The Natural Endpoint of Empiricism and Kant’s Dogmatic Slumber

- **Oct 21** Hume, Enquiry Sections 2-5
- **Oct 23** Kant, *Prolegomena* p.15-31

### Week 10: Pure Intuitions, Categories of the Mind

- **Oct 28** Kant, *Prolegomena* p.32-45
- **Oct 30** Kant, *Prolegomena* p.46-62

### Week 11: Technology and Ourselves

- **Nov 1** Withdrawal Deadline
Nov 4  Putnam, "Philosophy and Our Mental Life" and Searle, "Minds, Brains, & Programs" (p.1-5)

Nov 6  Clark and Chalmers, “The Extended Mind” and Harris, “How Technology…”

**Week 12: Is There a Problem of Consciousness?**

Nov 11  Jaynes, “Consciousness and the Voices of Mind” and Nagel, “What Is It Like to Be a Bat?”

**Papers Assigned**


**Week 13: The Metaphysics of Race and Gender?**

Nov 18  Tiptree, “The Girl Who Was Plugged In”


**Week 14: Are We Our Minds or Our Bodies?**

Nov 25  Parfit, “What We Believe Ourselves to Be”

Nov 27  Olson, “An Argument for Animalism” (pp.1-18)

**Week 15: Alternatives to Traditional Persistence Claims**

Dec 2  Schechtman, “The Narrative Self Constitution View”

Dec 4  Unger, “I Do Not Exist”

Dec 6  **Dead Day**

Dec 11  **Final Papers Due**

An electronic copy of this syllabus is available on Blackboard. The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary. If there are changes, these will be announced in class and an updated copy will be posted to Blackboard.