PHIL 1301: INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY – SPRING 2020  
MW 9:00 – 10:20 am, Union Cinema

Contact Information

Instructor: Dr. Chris Lay  
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Office: Worrell 301  
Office Hours: MW 10:30 AM – 12:00 PM, 1:30-3:00 PM

Teaching Assistant: Edgar Llamas  
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Office: Worrell 102  
Office Hours: Tuesdays 1:00 – 4:00 PM

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 (20% of final grade each)
- One final course paper (40% of final grade)
- Reading quizzes and argument summaries (20% of final grade)
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. Each exam will have a clearly indicated time limit, will require the use of Respondus Lockdown Browser, and will allow for two attempts. The Exam schedule is as follows:

- Exam #1: Available March 13-15 (Covers weeks 1-8)
- Exam #2: Available May 7-9 (Covers weeks 9-15)

*Note: Late exams will not be accepted.*

**Reading Quizzes and Argument Summaries**

Short quizzes will be given at random intervals throughout the course. Quizzes may include short answer, multiple choice, or fill-in-the-blank style questions. Argument summaries over specific readings will be due via Blackboard on the dates announced below. Summaries submissions will be available for three specified days and will be due by 11:59 pm of the third day. All summaries have a 200 word minimum. Detailed instructions for writing argument summaries, including other requirements, and additional reading tips are posted to Blackboard.

- Summary #1: Available Jan 29-31
- Summary #2: Available Feb 19-21
- Summary #3: Available Mar 4-6
- Summary #4: Available Apr 1-3
- Summary #5: Available Apr 22-24

*Note: Late summaries will not be accepted.*

**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. Grading for reading quizzes and summaries will be discussed in a separate document.

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

Attendance

Attendance is not taken each class, but assignments tied to attendance—such as reading quizzes—will be used as a rough measurement. Any student who fails to submit more than five (5) assignments *unexcused* will automatically receive a grade of F. 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 (April 3). Withdrawals after this point will receive a grade of 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](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.
**Week 1: Course Introduction**

Jan 20  
Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday (No Class)

Jan 22  
Course Introduction and Syllabus Review

**Week 2: Thinking for Ourselves and with Others**

Jan 27  

Jan 29  
Gilbert, “Collective Epistemology”

**Week 3: The Forms, the Universe, and Maintaining Both Body and Mind**

Feb 3  
Plato, *Timaeus* Part 1

Feb 5  
Plato, *Timaeus* Part 2

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

Feb 10  
Aristotle, *De Anima*: Book II, Chapters 1-4

Feb 12  
Aristotle, *De Anima*: Book II, Chapters 5, 12 and Book III, Chapters 3-4, 8

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

Feb 17  
Augustine, *Confessions*: Book X, Chapters VII-XXV

Feb 19  
Augustine, *Confessions*: Book XI, Chapters XIV-XXVIII

**Week 6: Rationality as a Source of Knowing: Doubt and the ‘Light’ of Reason**

Feb 24  
Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*: Meditations I-II, V

Feb 26  
Yacob, *Treatise*: Chapters III-VIII

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

Mar 2  
Locke, *Essay*: Book II, Chapters I-II, XII, XXIII

Mar 4  
Locke, *Essay*: Book II, Chapter XXVII

**Week 8: Common Sense Idealism**

Mar 9  

Mar 11  

Mar 16  
Spring Break (No Class)

Mar 18  
Spring Break (No Class)
Week 9: The Natural Endpoint of Empiricism and the Kantian Reply

Mar 23  Hume, Enquiry Sections 2-5
Mar 25  Kant, *Prolegomena*, First Part

Week 10: Kantian Anthropocentrism and Overcoming It

Mar 30  Kant, *Prolegomena*, Second Part
Apr 1   Lugones, “World-Traveling and Loving Perception”
Apr 3   **Withdrawal Deadline**

Week 11: Technology and Ourselves

Apr 6   Putnam, “Philosophy and Our Mental Life” and Searle, "Minds, Brains, & Programs"
Apr 8   Clark and Chalmers, “The Extended Mind”

Week 12: Is There a Problem of Consciousness?

Apr 13  Jaynes, “Consciousness and the Voices of Mind”
**Papers Assigned**
Apr 15  Jackson, “Epiphenomenal Qualia” and Churchland, “The Hornswoggle Problem”

Week 13: A Metaphysics of Race and Gender?

Apr 20  Tiptree, “The Girl Who Was Plugged In”
Apr 22  Zack, “The Philosophical Roots of Racial Essentialism and Its Legacy”

Week 14: Are We Our Minds or Our Bodies?

Apr 27  Parfit, “What We Believe Ourselves to Be”
Apr 29  Keyes, “Flowers for Algernon”

Week 15: Alternatives to Traditional Persistence Claims

May 4   Schechtman, “The Narrative Self Constitution View”
May 6   Gallagher, “Phenomenology and Embodied Cognition”
May 13  **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.