

PHL 372 — Philosophy of Science — Minimester 2008

3 Credit Hours

5/16-5/30 M-F 8:00 am -12:00 pm	AB4 Room 302
Glenn M. Sanford 401 Academic Building 4 (936) 294-1510 Sanford@shsu.edu	Office Hours: M-F 12:00-1:00 pm and by appointment Psych Office: (936) 294-1174 — AB4-317

Catalog Description

PHL 372 PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE. A survey of topics in philosophy of science including the logic of explanations in the physical and social sciences, the relations of science to the realm of values, and a look at the “mind-body problem”. Credit 3.

Objectives

The primary objective of this course is to examine the role of science within our society. We will attempt to accomplish this goal through two broad projects. The first question we will investigate is, "What constitutes scientific knowledge or knowledge gathering practices?" The second question is, "Should science and scientific practices be granted special epistemological status?" The first question is a constitutive question asking us to draw a line between science and non-science. The second asks us to make a value judgment about those things on either side of the line. Through these two questions, we should gain insight into both the epistemological foundations and the social implications of science. Upon completion of the course, students will be able to appreciate potential roles and tensions for scientific research within a democratic society. A major component of all course work will be a focus critical evaluation of evidence and arguments. The mind-body problem will be discussed within the context of epistemology.

Note: One of my personal objectives is to make myself available to students as much as possible. If you wish to meet with me to discuss any portion of this course, please feel free to contact me at the e-mail address above or in person and I will be happy to set up a mutually convenient meeting.

Texts

Philip Kitcher (2003) *Science, Truth, and Democracy*. Oxford University Press, USA ISBN: 0195165527

Additional readings will also be required.

Notice to Persons with Disabilities

It is the policy of Sam Houston State University that no individuals otherwise qualified shall, solely by reason of their disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any academic program or activity. Students with a disability, which affects their academic performance, are expected to arrange for a conference with the instructor in order that appropriate strategies can be considered to ensure that participation and achievement opportunities are not impaired.

SHSU adheres to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If you have a disability that may affect adversely your work in this class, then I encourage you to register with the SHSU Counseling Center and to talk with me about how I can best help you. All disclosures of disabilities will be kept strictly confidential. NOTE: no accommodation can be made until you register with the Counseling Center.

Assignments

Readings: Reading assignments will be posted on Blackboard as the course progresses. All students are expected to have read all assignments before attending the class on the day for which they are assigned. Please note that some readings may be difficult to comprehend. It is very important that you read all assignments before coming to class. If there are specific portions you do not understand, you are expected to notify me of this at the start of each class. I welcome questions as a basis for the day's discussion.

Response papers: These are in-class writing assignments. They will consist of a single essay question. You will be expected to present an answer of 1-1.5 pages. Students are expected to demonstrate a grasp of the material covered while providing their own analysis of the relevant content for each question. These answers will be graded on content, clarity, specificity, and directness. I also reserve the right to deduct points for spelling and grammar errors.

Exams: These will take-home. They will consist of 2 essay questions. I will expect 4-6 paragraphs per question. These numbers will all be specified in advance of a particular exam and will vary with the nature of the exam. Students are expected to demonstrate a grasp of the material covered while providing their own analysis of the relevant content for each question. These answers will be graded on content, clarity, specificity, and directness. I also reserve the right to deduct points for spelling and grammar errors.

Both exams will be submitted electronically. It is your responsibility to ensure that the exam arrives in Adobe PDF or MS Word format. Exams submitted in any other format will receive a grade of zero points, unless an acceptable version is submitted prior to the deadline. If you submit an exam in an unapproved format prior to the deadline, but I do not receive the appropriate electronic format until after the deadline, I will deduct points according to the late exam policy.

Grading

Grades for this course will be determined based upon your percentage of total points on the following scale: 90-100% = A, 80-89.9% = B, 70-79.9% = C, 60-69.9% = D, below 60% = F. There will be two exams (worth 100 points each) and 4 response papers (worth 20 points each). There will be no extra credit in this class.

Attendance

In accordance with University regulations, I will take attendance every class period. Any student who misses more than two classes will have her/his final grade lowered by 10% for each absence beyond the first.

Make-ups and Late Submissions

There are no make-ups in this course, except as required by law or university policy. For take-home exams, I will deduct 10 points from your exam grade for each 12-hour period, or part thereof, from the time that the exam was due until I receive the exam.

Section 51.911(b) of the Texas Education Code requires that an institution of higher education excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. A student whose absence is excused under this subsection may not be penalized for that absence and shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment from which the student is excused within a reasonable time after the absence.

University policy 861001 provides the procedures to be followed by the student and instructor. A student desiring to absent himself/herself from a scheduled class in order to observe (a) religious holy day(s) shall present to each instructor involved a written statement concerning the religious holy day(s). The instructor will complete a form notifying the student of a reasonable timeframe in which the missed assignments and/or examinations are to be completed.

Academic Dishonesty

All students are expected to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is above reproach. Students are

expected to maintain complete honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. Any student found guilty of dishonesty in any phase of academic work will be subject to disciplinary action. The University and its official representatives may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a student accused of any form of academic dishonesty including, but not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work which is to be submitted, plagiarism, collusion and the abuse of resource materials.

For more information see Academic Policy Statement 810213 and the Faculty Handbook

Classroom Decorum

Since the classroom represents a community of scholars, it is my expectation that all members of this community will arrive on time and prepared to discuss the assigned materials. I understand that each student has his/her own reasons for taking this course. Despite these differences, each student has chosen to commit his/her time, energy, and resources toward taking this course. As such, I expect each of us to conduct ourselves accordingly. Arriving late, leaving early, walking out during lectures or discussions, are all disruptive and negatively impact the learning environment both for myself and others enrolled in the course. Likewise, reading newspapers, sleeping, talking to your neighbor or giggling during lectures or discussions disrupts the learning environment for those around you. As such, I ask that all students conduct themselves as responsible adults, showing proper respect for others, throughout this course. Any student who is disruptive or abusive will be asked to leave the classroom. If this occurs, the student will receive a grade of zero for any of that day's assignments and I will refer the student to the appropriate

Visitors in the Classroom

Unannounced visitors to class must present a current, official SHSU identification card to be permitted in the classroom. They must not present a disruption to the class by their attendance. If the visitor is not a registered student, it is at the instructor's discretion whether or not the visitor will be allowed to remain in the classroom.