

Fall 2007 Syllabus, Introduction to Philosophy, PHL261W05, 3 Credit Hours

Meets in AB4 301 MWF 8-8:50 AM

Professor: Alan C. Clune, Ph.D.

Office: AB4 Rm. 410

Office Hours: M-F 9AM-10AM, Or By Appointment

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1. COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course is intended to introduce students to philosophy from a historical and problem-centered perspective. We will cover a sampling of several different problems that have been prevalent in Western Philosophy and stress the views of particular philosophers on these issues. I encourage people to communicate with me freely by making office visits and using email.

2. DESCRIPTION OF APPROACH:

The course will have a good amount of lecturing with notes. Also, there will be an emphasis on class discussion and active learning whereby students are expected to generate questions and offer critical evaluations of the various positions that are explored. Such in-class activity is of prime importance to developing critical thinking skills about philosophical issues. This is because such skills require practice thinking and speaking about the issues.

3. OBJECTIVES

Fundamental Objectives

- Learning to analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments, and points of view.
- Learning fundamental principles, generalizations, or theories.

Specific Objectives

- Learn basic philosophical theories on a range of issues.
- Learn to speak and write coherently about these issues.
- Learn the difference between having an opinion and having an opinion that one can make a case in support of.

4. REQUIREMENTS:

Two Exams (Midterm 20%, Final 30% of grade): There will be a midterm (essay exam) and a final exam which in non-cumulative and all multiple choice.

Several Pop Quizzes (10% of grade): Quizzes will focus on the readings. They will be given at the beginning of the class period. No make-ups without reasonable documentation of why you missed the quiz.

Position Papers (30% of Grade): Three times during the semester, students will be asked to write a one page, single spaced, 12point font, 1” margins, reflection paper in which they reflect upon one of issues covered so far that interests them most. This one page should be a full page of writing. It’s ok if it is slightly over one page. These papers are expected to engage the readings and course lectures. Papers that do not specifically address in a substantial way the course materials will receive a low grade.

The student might answer the following types of questions: 1) what issue impressed you most in the past week? 2) What position do you take on that issue? 3) What case can you make in support of this position? 4) What would it take for you to change you position? These papers are graded both on the student’s demonstration that he/she understands the material being covered and on the student’s ability to make a case for the opinions and positions that he/she takes on issues. The papers are not graded on the student’s opinion but on the student’s ability to make a reasonable case for whatever opinion he/she happens to have.

Participation (10% of Grade): I will determine this portion of the grade based on my memory. So if you participate, do a lot of it, and be constructive. Participation means making constructive comments and asking constructive questions during class. NOTE: 1) asking for clarification *does* count for participation; 2) Attendance does NOT count for participation.

5. SPECIFIC COURSE POLICIES

ABSENCES: In accordance with University regulations, I take roll every period. You are allowed 3 unexcused absences w/o penalty. You must attend class 75% the time or you will receive a failing grade. If you decide to stop attending class, please remember to drop the course or you will receive an F.

LATENESS or EARLY DEPARTURES: For those who are habitually late or leave early, I reserve the right to start taking ¼ point off his or her final grade for each time late.

MAKE-UPS: If one is necessary, it is likely to be longer and more difficult than the regular test. You must have a good reason for missing a test; having another test the same day, for example, does not count as a good reason. If you do miss a test, see me as soon as possible. Your excuse must be written out and appropriately documented. **ANY EXCUSE THAT CANNOT BE VERIFIED WILL RESULT IN A GRADE OF ZERO FOR THAT EXAM.** If you do have a valid excuse, then we should make the arrangements for you to take a make-up **AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.**

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY: Anyone caught plagiarizing or cheating on exams will receive an F *for the course.* I will use Turnitin.com to check for plagiarism.

CLASSROOM CONDUCT: Everyone in the classroom is expected to be respectful of others. Heated discussions are often excited and good, but the expression of disagreements should not stray too far from a constructive purpose. The professor reserves the right to ask a student to leave that class period. **NO USE OF THE INTERNET DURING CLASS.**

6. ADMINISTRATION POLICIES

STUDENT SYLLABUS GUIDELINES: Go to the following website for fuller information on the three policies that immediately follow below:

<http://www.shsu.edu/syllabus/>

RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS: Students are allowed to miss class and other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. Students remain responsible for all work. *See Student Syllabus Guidelines.*

NOTICE TO PERSONS WITH A DISABILITY: It is the policy of Sam Houston State University that individuals otherwise qualified shall not be excluded, solely by reason of their disability, from participation in any academic program of the university. Further, they shall not be denied the benefits of these programs nor shall they be subjected to discrimination. Students with disabilities that might affect their academic performance should visit with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities located in the Counseling Center. *See Student Syllabus Guidelines.*

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY: Students are expected to maintain honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. *See Student Syllabus Guidelines.*

CLASSROOM CONDUCT: Students are expected to assist in maintaining a classroom environment that is conducive to learning. Students are to treat faculty and students with respect. Students are to turn off all cell phones while in the classroom. Under no circumstances are cell phones or any electronic devices to be used or seen during times of examination. Students may tape record lectures provided they do not disturb other students in the process.

VISITORS IN THE CLASSROOM: *Unannounced visitors to class must present a current, official SHSU identification card to be permitted into 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.*

This policy is not intended to discourage the occasional visiting of classes by responsible persons. Obviously, however, the visiting of a particular class should be occasional and not regular, and it should in no way constitute interference with registered members of the class or the educational process.

REGISTERING FOR CLASS: I cannot add anyone to the course, for any reason whatsoever, after the deadline for adding. This policy holds even if you were dropped due to financial aid reasons.

Q-DROPS: A Q-Drop is one made after the 12th day of classes but before the last day for dropping without receiving an F. There is now a limit of 5 Q-Drops for each student's undergraduate career at SHSU. This policy began Fall 2004. Q-Drops from other institutions and Q-Drops that occurred before Fall 2004 are not counted toward the limit of 5. Students who have reached their limit can petition the Dean to for another Q-Drop. If refused, they must stay registered for the course.

INSTRUCTOR EVALUATIONS: Students will be asked to complete a course/instructor evaluation form toward the end of the semester. Starting in the Spring 2005 semester we will be officially using a new system of evaluation call 'IDEA'.

7. GRADING SCALE

90-100	A
80-89	B
70-79	C
60-69	D
<60	F

NOTE: IN ORDER TO DO WELL ON QUIZZES AND WRITING ASSIGNMENTS YOU MUST DO THE READINGS AND COME TO LECTURES.

8. REQUIRED TEXT:

Stumpf, Samuel Enoch, and James Fieser. 2008. Philosophy: History and Problems. Seventh edition.

9. TOPICS AND READINGS:

A. Reality

1. Thales & Permanent Existence, 5(1)
2. Anaximander & Permanent Existence, 6(1)
3. Anaximenes & Permanent Existence, 8(1)
4. Pythagoras and Mathematical Basis, 9-12(1)
5. Socrates, 30-40 (1)
6. About Plato, 41(1)
7. Plato & Reality: Doctrine of Forms, 49(1)

B. How do We Acquire Knowledge?

1. Introduction to Topic: The Nature of Knowledge, 167-170(2)
2. Plato's Theory of Knowledge, 43-49 (1), 171-176(2)
3. Rationalism & Descartes, 204-215 (1), 185-193(2)
4. Empiricism and Locke, 229-236(1), 194-199(2)

C. Freedom of the Will

1. Introduction, 239-241(2)
2. Reid & Common Sense and the Will, 255-261(1)
3. Natural Science and the Will (lecture).
- 4 John Searle, 266-274 (2)

D. Ethics

1. Menicus and Hsun-tzu, 279-282(2)
2. Hume and The Is/Ought Distinction, 251-253(1)
3. J.S. Mill: Utilitarianism, 320-325(2).
5. Kant: The Categorical Imperative, 312-319(2)

E. Political Philosophy

1. St. Thomas Aquinas: Natural Law, 375-379(2)
2. Hobbes, 379-390(2)
3. Karl Marx: The Clash of Class Interests, 392-400(2)
4. John S. Mill: The Individual and the Limits of Govt., 400-404(2)
5. John Rawls: Justice as Fairness, 404(2)

F. The Existence of God

1. Anselm: Ontological Proof of God's Existence, 113-117(2)
2. Aquinas: Five proofs of God's Existence, 117-119(2)
3. Hume: Refutation of Aquinas' Cosmological and Design Proof, 132-140(2)
4. Blaise Pascal: Wagering on Belief in God, 123(2)
3. Mackie: The Logical Problem of Evil, 146-156(2)