

# PHIL 101: PHILOSOPHICAL PROBLEMS

FALL 2016

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Office Hours: MW 8:00-10:00, and by appointment (240 Susan Campbell Hall)

Classroom: 180 PLC

1300-1350 MWF

CRN 14900

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“Any adult who still philosophizes ought to get a good beating. Philosophy is only something for young lads.” . . . . Plato, *Gorgias*

“. . . the unexamined life is not worth living.” . . . . Plato, *Apology*

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**Course Description:** Living a human life poses certain problems for each of us: Who am I? Is there some meaning to my life? How should I act? Using short philosophical readings and literary works, we will reflect on issues such as the role of reason in our lives, the nature of religious belief, whether human existence makes any sense, and how we construct meaning in our lives.

There will be three lectures and one discussion section each week. There are also two film screenings scheduled on the evenings before we discuss them the next day in class. Since you do not have readings for those days, you are expected to attend the film showings. Reading assignments will be announced in advance, and they are listed in the tentative schedule given below. Every student is expected to attend all lectures and their discussion section each week and to read the assigned texts by the assigned dates (i.e., to have read the text **before it is discussed in the lecture**). Grades will be based on four short essays (approximately 3-5 double-spaced, typewritten pages) and on attendance and performance in discussion sections. The percentage of the grade for each of these is as follows:

Four 3-4 page essays (25 possible points each)

Discussion participation (25 possible points)

Two-fifths of your discussion section grade will be based on attendance (i.e., one point for each section) and the other three-fifths on the quantity and quality of your contribution to the discussion. **Late papers will not be accepted. If the essay is not turned in on time, you will receive no points for that one-fifth of your grade. Only in cases of documented medical excuse or special documented circumstances (e.g., family emergency) will you be allowed to turn in a late essay.** You must submit your essay online through Canvas by the date and time specified for each assignment. Your essay will be screened by Vericite, which is a plagiarism detection tool.

Academic dishonesty (e.g., cheating, plagiarism) is strictly prohibited and may result in severe penalties. Definitions, procedures, and penalties for such cases are spelled out on the UO website for Academic Dishonesty.

**Topics/Readings:** Below is a list of topics for discussion along with a tentative schedule of required readings. There are only three required texts:

- Plato. *The Trial and Death of Socrates*. (Hackett).
- Albert Camus. *The Stranger*. (Random House).
- PHIL 101 Course Packet of selected readings available at the UO Bookstore (The Duck Store). [Note that in a few of the readings in the Course Packet there are missing pages. This is not a mistake, but rather an attempt to shorten some of the longer readings.]

### **Section A. Philosophy and the Examined Life**

#### Week I

- (Sept. 26) What is Philosophy? What is Liberal Education?  
(Sept. 28) Central Role of Philosophy in Liberal Education  
Murphy, “The Philosophic Mind and the Contemporary World”  
(Sept. 30) Plato. *Euthyphro*.

#### Week II

- (Oct. 3) Plato. *Apology*.  
(Oct. 5) Plato. *Apology*.  
(Oct. 7) Plato. *Crito*.

### **Section B. Philosophy and Religious Belief**

#### Week III

- (Oct. 10) Tolstoy. “My Confession.”  
Essay on Section A due]  
(Oct. 12) Nietzsche. *Antichrist*.  
(Oct. 13) [Thursday] Film Viewing: *Crimes and Misdemeanors*, PLC 180, 7-9 p.m.  
(Oct. 14) Discussion of *Crimes and Misdemeanors*.

#### Week IV

- (Oct. 17) Freud: Theism as Illusion.  
James: The Will to Believe  
(Oct. 19) Tillich, “What is Faith?”  
(Oct. 21) Haidt, “Religion is a Team Sport”

#### Week V

- (Oct. 24) Dewey. *A Common Faith*.

### **Section C. Absurdity and Our Search for Meaning**

- (Oct. 26) Camus. *The Stranger*, Part 1.  
[Essay on Section B due]  
(Oct. 28) Camus. *The Stranger*. Part 2.

Week VI

- (Oct. 31) Schopenhauer, "On the Suffering of the World"  
(Nov. 2) Camus. "An Absurd Reasoning"  
(Nov. 4) Flanagan. "Finding Meaning in the Natural World"

Week VII

- (Nov. 7) Taylor. "Does Life Have Meaning?"

**Section D. Who am I?—Our Search for Identity**

- (Nov. 9) Sartre. "Existentialism is a Humanism."  
[Essay on Section C due]  
(Nov. 11) O'Brien. "The Things They Carried."

Week VIII

- (Nov. 14) Neisser. "Five Kinds of Self-Knowledge."  
(Nov. 16) Young. "Throwing Like a Girl."  
(Nov. 18) Williams. "The Death of the Profane."  
Hooks. "Killing Rage."

Week IX

- (Nov. 20) [Sunday] Film Viewing: *My Life as a Dog*, PLC 180, 7-9 p.m.  
(Nov. 21) Discussion of *My Life as a Dog*.  
(Nov. 23) Merton. "Love and Need."  
(Nov. 25) No Class (Thanksgiving Break)

Week X

- (Nov. 28 – Dec. 2) No Class (Johnson away for conference in Denmark)

Week XI

- [Section D essay due Tues., Dec. 6, by 5:00 p.m.]