

PHIL 101: PHILOSOPHICAL PROBLEMS

FALL 2017

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

Classroom: 182 Lillis

1300-1350 MWF

CRN 14907

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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. 25) What is Philosophy? What is Liberal Education?
(Sept. 27) Central Role of Philosophy in Liberal Education
Murphy, “The Philosophic Mind and the Contemporary World”
(Sept. 29) Plato. *Euthyphro*.

Week II

- (Oct. 2) Plato. *Apology*.
(Oct. 4) Plato. *Apology*.
(Oct. 6) Plato. *Crito*.

Section B. Philosophy and Religious Belief

Week III

- (Oct. 9) LeoTolstoy. “My Confession.”
[Essay on Section A due]
(Oct. 11) Friedrich Nietzsche. *Antichrist*.
(Oct. 13) No Class

Week IV

- (Oct. 16) Sigmund Freud: Theism as Illusion.
William James: The Will to Believe
(Oct. 18) William James: The Will to Believe
(Oct. 19) [(Thursday) film viewing: *Crimes and Misdemeanors*, Lawrence 115, 7-9
p.m. – Notice the room change]
(Oct. 20) Discussion of *Crimes and Misdemeanors*.

Week V

- (Oct. 23) Paul Tillich, “What is Faith?”

- (Oct. 25) Jonathan Haidt, "Religion is a Team Sport"
(Oct. 27) John Dewey. *A Common Faith*.

Section C. Absurdity and Our Search for Meaning

Week VI

- (Oct. 30) Albert Camus. *The Stranger*, Part 1.
[Essay on Section B due]
(Nov. 1) Albert Camus. *The Stranger*. Part 2.
(Nov. 3) Arthur Schopenhauer, "On the Suffering of the World"

Week VII

- (Nov. 6) Albert Camus. "An Absurd Reasoning"
(Nov. 8) Thomas Nagel, "The Absurd"
(Nov. 10) Owen Flanagan. "Finding Meaning in the Natural World"

Week VIII

- (Nov. 13) Richard Taylor. "Does Life Have Meaning?"

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

- (Nov. 15) Jean-Paul Sartre. "Existentialism is a Humanism."
[Essay on Section C due]
(Nov. 17) Tim O'Brien. "The Things They Carried."

Week IX

- (Nov. 20) Ulric Neisser. "Five Kinds of Self-Knowledge."
(Nov. 22) Patricia Williams. "The Death of the Profane."
Bell Hooks. "Killing Rage."
(Nov. 24) No Class (Thanksgiving Holiday)

Week X

- (Nov. 27) Iris Marion Young. "Throwing Like a Girl."
(Nov. 28) [Tuesday] Film Viewing: *My Life as a Dog*, Lillis 182, 7-9 p.m
(Nov. 29) Discussion of *My Life as a Dog*.
(Dec. 1) Thomas Merton. "Love and Need."

Week XI

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