

PHIL 101: Philosophical Problems

Winter 2015 CRN: 26004

MTWR 9-950

Instructor: Megan M. Burke

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Office: SCH 250B

Office Hours: W 10-12pm

Course Description:

This course is about *us*. It is a course about what we know, how we know it, what we are, who we are, and why it all matters.

Learning Outcomes:

At the end of this course, students are expected to:

1. Identify core philosophical problems in ethics, epistemology, and metaphysics from various historical periods and cultural contexts
2. Understand the practice of philosophy through argumentation, dialogue, and critical listening and reading
3. Develop capacities for critical and creative philosophical thinking in relation to the world in which they live

Required Texts: Readings are available for copy at *The Copy Shop* (539 E 13th)

Assignments and Evaluations: This is a discussion and writing intensive class. You will be graded to a standard of merit, not a curve (i.e. it's possible for everyone to get an A or a D!)

1. **Citizenship (20%).** This is about forming a philosophical community over the course of the term, and giving you credit for the critical, in-depth reading you are required to do. Citizenship means being present in class as well as being active and engaged. Students who earn high grades for citizenship typically miss few, if any, class periods, always come prepared with reading completed and note and questions on the day's topics. As part of your citizenship grade, students will be required to submit 1 question each week based on a reading for the week- details about this will be discussed in class. If you do not come to class with your course readings on a regular basis, your grade will be negatively impacted. In other words, attendance is necessary and come prepared! Further grading criteria for citizenship will be provided.
2. **Papers (80%, 4 at 20%).** You will be required to write 4 papers this term. Prompts will be distributed. All papers must be 3-4 pages in length. Late papers will not be accepted. **All Paper Submissions will be to SafeAssign.**
Paper 1: What is Philosophy? – Due Monday of Week 4
Paper 2: Mind and Body- Due Monday of Week 6
Paper 3: Identity- Due Monday of Week 8
Paper 4: Belief and Meaning- Due in Finals Week

Grading

The following rubric reflects the general standards of the Philosophy Department at the University of Oregon, which I will follow in the evaluations of your papers for this course:

- A = excellent. No mistakes, well-written, and distinctive in some way or other.
- B = good. No significant mistakes, well-written, but not distinctive in any way.
- C = OK. Some errors, but a basic grasp of the material.
- D = poor. Several errors. A tenuous grasp of the material.
- F = failing. Problematic on all fronts indicating either no real grasp of the material or a complete lack of effort.

What counts as “excellent” depends on the nature and level of the class. Given our course, “errors” refer to fundamental misunderstandings of the text, general sloppiness, and not giving serious consideration into your work.

Citizenship Grading

- A- Exceptional:** To achieve an A the expectations are that student has perfect attendance in discussion section and near perfect attendance at lecture (1 absence), she/he/they consistently contributes to and brings the conversation to a deeper level, without dominating the discussion to such an extent that it inhibits participation by other students.
- B- Very Good.** To achieve a B, expectations are that the student will have very good attendance at lectures (no more than 2 absences). Takes a very active role in discussion section and remarks are consistently helpful and on topic.
- C- Good.** To achieve a C expectations are that the student will have good attendance (2 or more absences). Participates in discussions, but not consistently.
- D-Poor.** To achieve a D expectations are that the student will miss no more than four classes. Participates in discussions sporadically.
- F-Failing.** Misses more than four lectures and/or is not a positive contributor to discussions.

Course Policies:

- **Classroom Community.** This course will be taught in active dialogue. That is, while I will lecture to provide adequate background information and textual clarification, I expect every student to participate in thoughtful textual analysis and classroom discussion. Given the personal nature of this course, all students are expected and required to agree to a code of responsibility and confidentiality with regard to any personal information shared in this class. I expect all students to conduct themselves in a respectful and sensitive manner so as to promote an atmosphere of openness and trust. There is a no tolerance policy for hate or disrespect with regard to anyone’s sexuality, gender, race, ethnicity, etc.
- **Attendance is mandatory.** Habitual lateness or leaving early will count as being absent.
- **Computers and Cell Phones may not be used in class.** This is a strict policy. Learn to live and think without technology- at least for moment!
- **Assignments.** You must complete ALL assignments to pass the class. Late assignments are not accepted unless you have an excused absence.
- **Plagiarism will not be tolerated.** I closely follow the university’s policies on academic honesty, cheating, fabrication, helping others cheat, or plagiarism. Any of these offenses results in a failing grade and being reported to the University authorities.
- **Disability Policy.** Please let me know in the first week of class if you require academic accommodations based on a disability registered with Disability Services. If you have a barrier to learning (registered or not), I will be happy to discuss this with you.

Class Schedule:

Please note that I reserve the right to change the schedule as necessary. Any changes will be announced in class and via e-mail. You are responsible for being aware of any changes, even if you have missed class

Section 1: The Examined Life

Week 1

M: Course Overview: What is Philosophy? Why does it matter?

T: Plato, *Euthyphro*

W: Plato, *Euthyphro*

R: Plato, *Apology*

Week 2

M: Plato, *Apology*

T: Plato, *Crito*

W: Plato, *Phaedo*

R: Thoreau, excerpt from *Walden*

Week 3

M: Thoreau, excerpt from *Walden*

T: Addams, “Tolstoy and Ghandi”

W: Addams, “Tolstoy and Ghandi”

R: Review of Section 1 and Writing Workshop

Section 2: Who/What am I? Mind, Body, and Identity (Politics)

Week 4

M: Descartes, *Meditation 1*

T: Descartes, *Meditation 2* and Elizabeth of Bohemia, “Correspondence with Descartes”

W: Dennet, “Where Am I?”

R: McNerney, “A Brief Guide to Embodied Cognition: Why You are Not Your Brain”

Week 5

M: Koller, “Human Embodiment: Indian Perspectives”

T: Mead, “The Social Self”

W: Simi Linton, “Conscripts to the Calvary” in *My Body Politic*

R: Foucault, “Disciplining the Body”

Week 6

M: DuBois, excerpts from “Of Our Spiritual Strivings” and “The Souls of White Folks”

T: Zack, “An Autobiographical View of Mixed Race and Deracination”

W: Young, “Throwing Like a Girl”

R: Kimmel, “Masculinity as Homophobia” and Eribon, *Insult and The Making of the Gay Self* pgs. 15-17

Week 7

M: Film: *Brokeback Mountain*

T: Film: *Brokeback Mountain*

W: Film: *Brokeback Mountain* and Class Discussion

R: Kusalik, "Identity, Schmididentity"

Section 3: Religious Belief and the Search/Fight for Meaning

Week 8

M: Freud, "The Psychological Origins of Religious Belief"

T: Nietzsche, *The AntiChrist*

W: Tillich, "What Faith Is"

R: Dewey, "Religion Versus the Religious"

Week 9

M: James, "The Will to Believe"

T: Campbell, "Myth and Society"

W: Taylor, "The Meaning of Life"

R: Sartre, "Existentialism is a Humanism"

Closing:

Week 10

M: Flanagan, "Finding Meaning in the Natural World"

T: Film- *Lego Movie*

W: Film- *Lego Movie*

R: Course Closing