PHIL 101: PHILOSOPHICAL PROBLEMS

FALL 2014

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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 papers (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:

3-5 pp. essays (four @ 20% each)........................................80%
Discussion participation..................................................20%

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 in hard copy and also electronically on Safe Assign on Blackboard.

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).
- 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. 29) What is Philosophy? What is Liberal Education?
(Oct. 1) The Central Role of Philosophy in Liberal Education
Murphy, “The Philosophic Mind and the Contemporary World”
(Oct. 3) Plato. *Euthyphro.*

**Week II**
(Oct. 6) Plato. *Apology.*
(Oct. 8) Plato. *Apology.*
(Oct. 10) Plato. *Crito.*
[Paper on Section A due Oct. 13, in class]

**Section B. Philosophy and Religious Belief**

**Week III**
(Oct. 13) Tolstoy. “My Confession.”
(Oct. 15) Nietzsche. *Antichrist.*
(Oct. 15) Film Viewing: *Crimes and Misdemeanors*, Lillis 182, 7-9 p.m.
(Oct. 17) Discussion of *Crimes and Misdemeanors.*

**Week IV**
(Oct. 20) Freud: Theism as Illusion.  
James: The Will to Believe
(Oct. 22) Kierkegaard. “Teleological Suspension of the Ethical.”

**Week V**
(Oct. 27) Haidt. “Religion is a Team Sport”
[Paper on section B due Oct. 31]  
(Oct. 31) No Class (Johnson away at conference)
C. Absurdity and Our Search for Meaning

Week VI

Week VII
(Nov. 10) Camus. “An Absurd Reasoning”

Week VIII
(Nov. 17) Taylor. “Does Life Have Meaning?”
   [Paper on Section C due Nov. 19, in class]

Section D. Who am I?—Our Search for Identity
(Nov. 19) Sartre. “Existentialism is a Humanism.”
(Nov. 21) O’Brien. “The Things They Carried.”

Week IX
(Nov. 26) Williams. "The Death of the Profane."
   Hooks. "Killing Rage."
(Nov. 28) No Class (Thanksgiving Break)

Week X
(Dec. 1) Young. "Throwing Like a Girl."
(Dec. 2, Tuesday) Film Viewing: *My Life as a Dog*, Lillis 182, 7-9 p.m.
(Dec. 3) Discussion of *My Life as a Dog*.
(Dec. 5) Merton. “Love and Need.”

Week XI
(Dec. 8-12) Final Exam Week
[Section D paper due Tues., Dec. 9, by 5:00 p.m.]