Phil 216: Philosophy and Cultural Diversity Syllabus

Fall 2014/CRN 15024
Phil & Cultural Diversity
Date/Time: TR 12:00 – 1:50
Email:leichler@uoregon.edu

Instructor: Lauren Eichler
Office: SC 158
Office Hours: Thurs. 2:00 – 3:50 and by appointment

Course Description

What is knowledge? How do we know things? What is the truth? How do we differentiate between truth and falsity? Is there only one truth or one right way to know things? Can we hold contradictory things to be true simultaneously? This course will attempt to answer these questions by looking at the ways in which different cultures answer these questions. In doing so, we will challenge Western assumptions about what counts as knowledge, truth, and rationality.

In American universities today, frequently the word “philosophy” refers to a tradition of thought arising out of Europe that gradually moved west with the spread of European colonization. However, approaching philosophy strictly through the canon provides very limited view of what philosophy is and how it is practiced. Philosophy – which deals with topics such as truth, reality, existence, meaning, and ethics – arises out of particular modes of thinking and ways of interacting with the world. In the Western canon, formal logic and rational argumentation are the modes by which ideas are communicated and deemed valid. Because of philosophy’s emphasis on “right” ways of thinking that are grounded in and lead to a production of the truth, limiting oneself to the Western canon can have the unhappy side effect of closing one off to the possibility of exposure to and respect for other ways of thinking that non-Western cultures employ and cultivate in the development of their own philosophies, religions, social behaviors, and cultural practices.

This course will provide students with the opportunity to think outside of Western paradigms by introducing them to a variety of non-Western, alternative, and sometimes subversive modes of thinking and knowing. Through this exposure students will learn how different cultures exhibit different kinds of epistemologies and ways of knowing that lead to different approaches to problem-solving, knowledge production, truth, and more, allowing them to look at their own culture more critically as well as be more open-minded to alternative ways of thinking. To do this we will examine a variety of different authors from various cultural backgrounds both within the Americas and around the world to show that even Western epistemology is not as monolithic as it seems.

Learning Objectives

In addition to an exploration of these areas of philosophy, some of our main objectives include: 1) Reading and familiarizing ourselves with a breadth of alternative (and some major) texts both in the history of philosophy and in contemporary philosophy; 2) Developing the ability to think critically, raise critical questions, and engage in philosophical conversation; and 3) Improving and enhancing writing skills in an academic setting.
Required Texts

All texts will be posted on blackboard. *Printed copies are required for every class.*

Classroom Conduct

Because philosophy is a discussion-oriented discipline and may involve contentious issues, you will be expected to listen to your fellow classmates with respect, respond thoughtfully to other students and the text, and raise questions and issues with the knowledge that other people may have different perspectives. It is important to be open to new ideas, personal experiences, and perspectives that you might not share.

*Cellphones are prohibited* from the classroom unless you have received permission from me to use them.

Grading

Your final grade will be based on the following assignments and distribution of a total of 500 points:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points:</th>
<th>Final grade percentage:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Three précis</td>
<td>150 (50 each)</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm exam</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Paper</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misc.</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What kind of grade does a paper deserve? The following rubric reflects the general standards of the Philosophy Department.

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 = okay. 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.

A 94 – 100  B- 80 – 83  D+ 67 – 69
A- 90 – 93  C+ 77 – 79  D 64 – 66
B+ 87 – 89  C 74 – 76  D- 60 – 63
B 84 – 86  C- 70 – 73  F 59 and below

Précis

In this course students will develop stronger reading and writing skills throughout the term by completing three précis writing assignments. A précis is a concise summary of an article or argument. For this assignment, you will choose three of the texts we read over the course of the
Midterm
The midterm exam will consist of a mix of multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions. Each week I will provide reading questions for each of the texts to be used for class preparation and as a study guide.

Final Paper
For your final paper you will be asked to write a 5-6 page argumentative essay. Further details and paper topics will be provided later in the term. If you wish to choose your own paper topic, you must speak to me about it first.

Late Policy & Make-Up Exams
For each day that an assignment is late, you will be docked a third of the final grade for that paper. Exceptions to this policy are made for medical reasons and extreme circumstances. In these cases, please contact me via email before the deadline.

If you know you will be absent for an exam, you must inform me at least one week prior to the exam in order for you to make it up. If you miss the exam but have not informed me ahead of time, I require a written doctor’s note or other verification for your absence.

Participation/Attendance
Attendance and participation are required components of this course. Participation includes both speaking and contributing to discussion as well as attentive listening. In order to receive full credit for attendance, you will be expected to have your texts and reading assignments with you each day. Attendance will be taken during each class. More than four absences will result in no higher than a C grade for the course. Three latenesses will count as one absence.

A – Exception: To achieve an A the student must miss no more than one class, be recognized as a leader in discussion, consistently contribute to and bring the discussion to a deeper level, must not dominate the discussion or inhibit other students from participating, and bring a printed copy of the text to every class.
B – Very good: Students will miss no more than two classes, and take a very active role in discussion with on topic and thoughtful remarks, and bring a printed copy of the text to every class.
C – Good: Students will miss no more than three class sessions, will sometimes participate in discussion, and only brings a printed copy of the text sometimes.
D – Poor: To achieve, the student will miss no more than four classes, only participate in discussion very little, and only occasionally bring a printed copy of the text to class.
F – Failing: Misses more than four classes, and/or is not a positive contributor in discussions, and does not bring a printed copy of the text to class.

Academic Honesty

Plagiarism, fabrication, and cheating will result in a 0 for the assignment and potentially a failure from the course. Please review these tips and guidelines for avoiding plagiarism: [http://library.uoregon.edu/guides/plagiarism/students/index.html](http://library.uoregon.edu/guides/plagiarism/students/index.html) and be mindful of the university’s plagiarism policy: [http://uodos.uoregon.edu/StudentConductandCommunityStandards/AcademicMisconduct/tabid/248/Default.aspx](http://uodos.uoregon.edu/StudentConductandCommunityStandards/AcademicMisconduct/tabid/248/Default.aspx)

Special Needs

If you have a special need that may impact your ability to complete the course requirements, please let me know at the beginning of the term.

Reading Schedule

**Through the Veil: Racial Epistemology**

**Week 1:**
- Tues. 9/30: Introduction
- Thurs. 10/2: Du Bois, “The Forethought,” “Of Our Spiritual Strivings” from *Souls of Black Folk* and “Souls of White Folk” from *Darkwater*

**Week 2:**
- Tues. 10/7: McIntosh, “White Privilege” and Leonardo, “The Color of Supremacy”

**Western Epistemologies: Traditional and Critical**

**Week 3:**
- Tues. 10/14: Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, chaps. 1 - 2
- Thurs. 10/16: Kant, “What is Enlightenment?”
  *FIRST PRÉCIS DUE IN CLASS AND ON SAFEASSIGN.*

**Week 4:**
- Thurs. 10/23: Hacking, “Making up People”

**On the Border: Entangled Epistemologies**

**Week 5:**
- Thurs. 10/30: MIDTERM

**Week 6:**
Tues. 11/4: Anzaldúa, *Borderlands*, chaps. 4 - 7
Thurs. 11/6: Lugones, “Tactical Strategies of the Streetwalker” from *Pilgrimages*

SECOND PRECIS DUE IN CLASS AND ON SAFEASSIGN.

**Indigenous Epistemology**

**Week 7:**
Tues. 11/11: Deloria & Wildcat, “Indigenizing Education,” “Traditional Technology,” and “Technological Homelessness” from *Power and Place*
Thurs. 11/14: Atleo, Introduction and “A Humble Petition” from *Tsawalk*

**Week 8:**
Tues. 11/18: Norton-Smith, Chap. 4 from *Dance of Person and Place*
   Recommended: Mishima, *Patriotism*

**Faith-Based Epistemology**

**Week 9:**
Tues. 11/25: Said, “Imaginative Geography and Its Representations” from *Orientalism*

THIRD PRECIS DUE IN CLASS AND ON SAFEASSIGN.
Thurs. 11/27: THANKSGIVING NO CLASS

**Week 10:**
Tues. 12/2: Nasr, *The Heart of Islam*, chap. 1
Thurs. 12/4: Al-Faruqi, “Women’s Self-Identity in the Qur’an and Islamic Law”

FINAL PAPERS DUE 4:00 P.M., THURS. DEC. 11 AT SC 211 AND ON SAFEASSIGN.