

Three Rivers Community College
Introduction to Philosophy (PHL101)
Fall 2015; Tuesdays 6-8:45

Instructor: Carol Stanland

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Required Text: *Traversing Philosophical Boundaries*, by Max O. Hallman

Additional reading as assigned

Other Requirements: an email account; access to blackboard

Course Description:

Who or what are we? Do we have an essential self or soul? What is reality, and how do we know this? How do we determine what is right...and wrong? How do we determine the best way to structure society? This course will provide an introduction to some of these basic concepts and questions of philosophy, and to the ways various people and cultures have addressed them. We will proceed historically in pursuit of an understanding of how philosophical ideas have developed since their origin in ancient times.

We will explore several of the main branches of philosophy in four ways: (1) reading, interpreting, discussing, and applying philosophical texts; (2) discussing other writings that directly or indirectly address philosophical themes; (3) watching and discussing videos that concern philosophical issues; and finally, (4) applying philosophical concepts to our own lives.

To prepare for each class, you should: 1) read the appropriate primary source selection and 2) take notes for class discussion on the answers to the "Questions for Reading" at the beginning of each selection. The questions are intended to help you to dissect the meaning of the reading. As you take notes, do not copy verbatim from the textbook: Make an effort to explain things in your own words. Even in note-taking, in the event that you wish to quote the author's words, get in the habit of using quotation marks. 3) In class, you should be prepared to discuss the primary source readings, based on the "Questions for Reading."

Often, in class, we will read or view a short supplemental reading or video clip that will address concepts from the primary source reading. The purpose of this is to help you to think about how the philosophical ideas presented in the primary source reading can be applied to various 'real life' issues. This skill of application will be evaluated on some of the paper-writing assignments, so using class discussion time to 'practice' applying ideas should be maximized.

Course Objectives and Benefits:

1) To strengthen critical and analytical reading and thinking skills. Readings will be selections from primary sources, that is, writings by the philosophers themselves. Read slowly and carefully, and realize that you may have to read a selection more than once to fully grasp the ideas.

2) To improve the ability to apply general concepts to specific real life situations through regular practice.

- 2) To hone verbal and written communication skills in order to clearly and convincingly argue a well thought-out conviction.
- 3) To heighten your self-awareness of your own personal philosophy and your core values.

Class Participation and Preparation:

A significant part of the class will involve discussion of philosophical issues and problems. In order to participate meaningfully in discussion, you must obviously be prepared by having read the assignment and taken notes on the answers to the questions for that day. Class participation is **extremely important**. As fulfillment of your homework grade (10% of total grade), expect to be called on in class to address the “Questions for Reading.”

Exams:

There will be a midterm and a final, **each** of which will constitute 20% of your grade. These will be open notebook/closed book, meaning that you may use your class notes as well as your “Questions for Reading” notes. The tests will be short essay questions that test your comprehension of the philosophical ideas presented in the reading and through the lectures, and enhanced through class discussions. Please note that comprehension and regurgitation are not the same thing. A sample test question will be provided before the midterm.

Papers:

You will be expected to write four 1 1/2- 2 page papers for this class. Guidelines and more information on papers will be given in class.

Quizzes:

On occasion, pop quizzes will be given at the beginning of class. Each quiz will typically be 3 multiple choice questions, and will cover the reading material for that day. Your lowest quiz grade will be dropped at the end of the semester.

Grading Summary

Homework	10%
Quizzes	6
Midterm	20
Final	20
Paper 1	11
Paper 2	11
Paper 3	11
Paper 4	<u>11</u>
	100%

Grading policy

- A level work indicates outstanding performance in all aspects of the assignment/course.

- B level work indicates high achievement in some aspects of the assignment/course.
- C level work indicates adequate achievement—a basic understanding of the material and, in written assignments, an ability to express one’s thoughts readably; average or satisfactory quality.
- D to F level work is inadequate in many or all areas.

This policy is meant to reestablish long-held standards so that grades are not emptied of their meaning. A grade of C is an adequate grade indicating that the student met the basic requirements of an assignment, but not to a noteworthy level. Therefore, students should not be horrified at receiving a C, but they should be able to see from the instructor’s feedback that there are many ways they could improve in the future. This policy means that an A grade is reserved for outstanding, exceptional achievement and is not the most commonly given grade on any assignment.

Attendance Policy:

Regular attendance at class meetings is expected. However, I realize that it is occasionally unavoidable. Please note that doctor/dentist appointments are not considered excusable absences, and should not be scheduled during class time. Emergencies are obviously excepted. You are responsible for obtaining the notes you missed from a classmate. In the event of an emergency, special permission to turn in papers late, or to make up exams, must be arranged with me.

Academic Integrity:

This course is subject to the University’s Academic Integrity Policy. Please review the policy online. If you have questions about how it pertains to our course, do not hesitate to ask me. PLAGIARISM WILL NOT BE TOLERATED!!!

Schedule:

Date	In Class	Assignment Due
9/1	Introduction to philosophy; pre-Socratic philosophers	
9/8	Discuss Plato	1) Read Plato’s “The Nature of the Soul and Its Relation to the Body,” Plato’s “Allegory of the Cave” and “Crito” 2) Answer questions on reading
9/15	Discuss Aristotle and Lucretius	1) Read Aristotle’s “The Proper Function of Man and Its Relation to the Good Life” and Lucretius’ “On the Nature of Things” 2) Answer questions on reading

9/22	Discuss Augustine And Aquinas	1) Read Augustine's "Confessions" and Aquinas' "Proof that God Exists" 2) Answer questions on reading
9/29	Discuss Merchant And Descartes <u>**first paper due</u>	1) Read Merchant's "Mining the Earth's Womb" and Descartes' "Meditations on the Nature of Knowledge" 2) Answer questions on reading
10/6	Discuss Locke And Hume	1) Read Locke's "The Source of our Knowledge" and short excerpt from "On Personal Identity" and Hume's "Doubts Concerning the Possibility of Knowledge" and short excerpt from "There is no Personal Identity" 2) Answer questions on reading
10/13	Discuss Rousseau And Kant	1) Read Rousseau's "The Social Contract" and Kant's "The Good Will and Morality" 2) Answer questions on reading
10/20	Midterm	
10/27	Discuss Bentham and Mill <u>**second paper due</u>	1) Read Bentham's "The Principle of Utility," Mill's "What Utilitarianism Is," and Mill's "On Liberty" 3) Answer questions on reading
11/3	Discuss Bergson And James	1) Read Bergson's "An Introduction to Metaphysics" and James' "Pragmatism's Conception of Truth" 2) Answer questions on reading
11/10	Discuss Sartre and De Beauvoir	1) Read Sartre's "Existentialism is a Humanism" and de Beauvoir's "Woman as the Second Sex" 2) Answer questions on reading
11/17	Discuss Wong and Held <u>**third paper due</u>	1) Read Wong's "Relativism" and Held's "The Ethics of Care" 2) Answer questions on reading
12/1	Discuss Rawls and Dennett	1) Read Rawls' "A Theory of Justice" and Dennett's "Darwin's Dangerous Idea" 2) Answer questions on reading

12/8	Discuss Rorty and Abram	1) Read Rorty's "Who Are We?" and Abram's "Philosophy on the Way to Ecology"
		2) Answer questions on reading

12/15	Final	
	<u>**fourth paper due</u>	

Grading Rubric for Writing

____ **Fluid, clear expression** - Ideas are expressed in a style that promotes ease of reading and clear communication of ideas.

____ **Organization** - Paper is structured logically to include: (a) an introduction with a clear statement of the central idea (e.g., purpose, position, problem, or thesis of the paper) as well as an explanation of how the paper is organized; (b) topic sentences for each paragraph that introduce supporting ideas; (c) clear transitions between paragraphs that link all the ideas; (d) a concluding paragraph that revisits your thesis and answers the question: So what?

____ **Elaboration and support** - Ideas are developed with adequate definition of terms as well as supporting details that include properly cited references, preferably to scholarly material related to the topic of the paper.

____ **Research technique and academic integrity** - Sources are cited properly through the application of a standard documentation style assigned by the instructor (in the humanities, MLA is the accepted style). Plagiarism is grounds for a failing grade and will be reported as per College guidelines.

____ **Critical thinking** - Ideas are *analyzed* (by comparing, contrasting and/or challenging them), *evaluated* (by exploring the adequacy of assumptions and taking a position on them), and *synthesized* (by connecting them to other information or by summarizing and integrating them into a concluding statement).

____ **Diction and effective use of language** - College-level vocabulary and correct spelling and word choice are used.

____ **Mechanics and usage** - Correct capitalization, punctuation, verb tense, subject-verb agreement, and use of possessives are evidenced. There are no fragmented and/or run-on sentences.

GRADE:

____ **A** Outstanding paper. It contains thought provoking insights and conclusions and demonstrates clear thinking. The paper is extremely well-written and edited.

____ **B** Good paper. It exceeds the criteria in a way that indicates a clear grasp of the topic(s) beyond merely summarizing information given. The paper is generally well written and focused.

____ **C** Average paper. It meets the criteria of the assignment. The paper may be improved with additional focus and/or editing. (Individual instructors have their own policies about accepting re-writes.)

____ **D** Below average paper. It is missing one of the more of the criteria. The paper requires additional focus and/or editing.

____ **F** Failed to meet the criteria of the assignment. (E.g. did not follow instructions, plagiarized, submitted paper late, other : _____).

