

Moravian College - Spring 2008
Instructor: Dr. Harold Weiss

PHIL. 120 - Introduction to Philosophy
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Class Webpage: <http://www.northampton.edu/faculty/hweiss/Phil120.htm>

“Office Hours” – for 15 minutes before and 30 min. after each class, in Memorial302

Course Description, Requirements, Policies:

Welcome to an historical survey of the most influential topics, theories, thinkers, and texts of Western philosophy, from ancient Greece to contemporary America. We will aim to not only *comprehend* ideas and arguments in their own right and time, but also to continually *relate* and *apply* the historical and conceptual material that we cover to our own experience, and to contemporary culture. The main *topics, theories, and issues* which our survey will particularly emphasize are *Metaphysics, Epistemology, Freedom, Determinism, Skepticism, Enlightenment, Existentialism, Virtual Reality, etc.*

Assignments and assessment will be varied. Philosophy challenges us to rise to new levels of linguistic, cognitive, and rhetorical skills, through active, critical, and creative – reading, thinking, speaking, writing. Full Attendance, Attention, Reading, Discussion are expected! Classes will include lectures, discussions, film clips, websites, music, etc... The goal is for students to not only acquire an objective understanding of the discipline and history of philosophy (and the multitude of issues and ideas therein) but also to display a discernible *development* in Rationality – consciousness which is reflective, clear, critical, creative and related to contemporary culture.

The successful student will demonstrate the following knowledge / capabilities:

- 1) the *four “A’s” of thinking* – Analysis, Argument, Articulation, Application
- 2) Engaged reading of primary texts, based on the *three “E’s” of reading & writing* – Explication, Elucidation, Evaluation. In speech and writing, to achieve *objective* understanding of traditions, texts, theories, and some *subjective* expression.
- 3) Efficient use of Internet and course website technologies (for timely accessing of texts & assignments); increased command and questioning of digital technology.
- 4) To question basic Beliefs , to identify Assumptions (past, present, personal), to think and speak in terms of Ideas, arguments and theories, to engage in Reflection on human nature and history, contemporary culture, and personal experience.
- 5) To engage perennial human value issues, such as free will and determinism, the existence of God, the functions of religion and science, appearance vs. reality, means vs. ends, the meaning of life, happiness, enlightenment, etc.; to clarify one’s own beliefs.
- 6) To come to class *Prepared* (with text printed out + read), to *Participate* (by asking + answering questions), to show *Effort* , both in and outside of class

Activity	Points	Final Course Grading Scale
First Essay	15	<i>A = 91-100 points</i>
Second Essay	15	<i>B+ = 87-90</i>
Third Essay	15	<i>B = 81-86</i>
4th Essay, Or Group Report	15	<i>C+ = 77-80</i>
Attendance/Participation/Effort	15	<i>C = 71-76 D+ = 67-70</i>
Final Exam	25	<i>D = 60-66 F = 59 or less</i>
Semester Possible TOTAL	100	

ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE



Topics

Texts

Tasks

Jan.15 / 17	<i>What is Philosophy? Syllabus, Socrates, Reflection</i>	
Jan.22 / 24	<i>READ</i> Plato's CAVE! (+Plato's Metaphysics) / Analogies / <i>The Matrix</i>	
Jan.29 / 31	<i>READ</i> Camus – "Myth of Sisyphus"	
Feb.5 / 7	<i>Existentialism / Determinism / Alienation / Authenticity / Angst</i> (Philos.Dictionary) 2-3page essay DUE! Tues.5th!	
Feb. 12 / 14	<i>READ</i> Cobain and Beethoven	
Feb.19 / 21	<i>READ</i> "Medicate Your Dissent"	
Feb.26 / 28	Finish ↑ Work on →	2-3page essay DUE! Tues.26th!
Mar. 11 / 13	<i>Modernism</i> <i>READ</i> "What Is Enlightenment?"	
Mar. 18 / 20	<i>Feminism</i> <i>READ</i> "Sexual Politics"	
Mar. 25 / 27	Finish ↑ Work on →	2-3page essay DUE! Thurs.27th!
Apr. 1 / 3	<i>READ</i> Skinner <i>READ</i> Fromm on Freedom	
Apr.8 / 10	<i>READ</i> Sartre "Existentialism"	
Apr.15 / 17	Skepticism & psychic phenomena, OR Empiricism & Evolution 2-3page essay DUE!Tues.15th!	
Apr.22 / 24	<i>Group Reports</i>	
	← <i>In-Class</i> Final EXAM! <i>Bring All Materials!</i>	

LATE WRITTEN WORK IS PENALIZED! (one point per day)

Length of Essays - Minimum 2 Full pages, Max.3, line SPACING at 1.5!

→ Check class webpage regularly for exact due dates, Instructions, etc.

Absence penalty doubled on day Assignments Due!