

MORAVIAN COLLEGE
COURSE SYLLABUS
Fall 2009

PHIL 120A Introduction to Philosophy
TR2b (8:55 AM – 10:05 AM)
Classroom: Memorial Hall, 302

Instructor: Dr. Bernie Cantens
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Office Hours: MTW and TR 2:30-3:30 PM

Text

Twenty Questions: An Introduction to Philosophy, (6th Edition) editor, G. Lee Bowie, Meredith W. Michaels, and Robert C. Solomon (Belmont, CA: Thompson-Wadsworth Publishers, 2007)

ISBN-10: 0495007110 | ISBN-13: 9780495007111 | 848 Pages

*** Make sure you bring the text to every class!**

Course Description

Tasks and subject matters of philosophy, including major theories of reality, knowledge, religion, morality, and social justice. Attention to several classic philosophical texts as primary source readings. (M3)

100-Level Course

This course is meant as a first course in philosophy. It introduces students to basic vocabulary. It is a general survey course, touching on various areas of philosophy (e.g., Philosophy of Religion, Epistemology, Metaphysics, Ethics, Social Political Philosophy, etc.)

Relationship of Course to University Mission

A quality liberal arts education must take into account the ability to reflect across the spectrum of disciplines. This task requires skills of analysis of basic concepts and principles, reading and writing skills, and a constructively critical attitude. The study of philosophy is an integral part of a general curriculum that helps students achieve these cognitive skills.

Course Goals

The objectives of this course are the following: 1) to study the origin and nature of philosophy and philosophical reflection; 2) to study the various branches of philosophy (ethics, epistemology, metaphysics, etc.) and how these relate to everyday practical concerns; 3) to understand the methods and nature of philosophical inquiry; 4) to understand the difference between inductive and deductive reasoning; 5) to develop critical reading and writing skills; 6) to understand the central role of the discipline of philosophy in relation to the arts and sciences, and

7) to introduce students, through primary texts, to the thought of some of the most prominent philosophers in history.

Learning Outcomes

The following outcomes are expected of the students who complete this course: 1) to think and write intelligibly about ultimate questions; 2) to have a basic understanding of the relevance and importance of ultimate questions for the prosperity of individuals and society; 3) to be able to critically evaluate their own and others' answers to ultimate questions; 4) to have a basic understanding of prominent themes in the history of philosophy; 5) to have a basic understanding of ethical, metaphysical, and epistemological concepts, doctrines, and theories; 6) to have a basic understanding of the nature of philosophical inquiry and how it relates to inductive and deductive reasoning; 7) to have a basic understanding of the central role of philosophy for a liberal arts education; 8) to have a basic understanding of the thoughts of some of the most prominent philosophers in history.

Grading and Assignments

Reflection Paper (30 points)

Students will complete a philosophical reflection paper on a topic *directly* related to this course and that has been part of the reading assignments and class discussions. The paper should be approximately 5-pages long (or longer), double-spaced and 12-Times New Roman font.

The students will be graded according to four criteria: (1) whether the introduction has a clear and explicit thesis and organized developing statements; (2) whether the paper is well organized and demonstrates a logical flow of ideas; (3) whether there are well constructed and developed arguments and/or critical explanations of philosophical problems and solutions; and (4) whether the writing skills, such as word use, sentence structure, grammar, and punctuation are correct.

The reflection paper will be completed in 4 parts: (1) Thesis, (2) Introduction and Outline, (3) 1st Draft, and (4) Final Paper.

Paper thesis: October 29 (-2 if assignment is missed)

Paper introduction and outline: November 10 (-2 if assignment is missed)

First Draft: November 19

Final Draft: December 8

Journal (20 Points)

Students will maintain an in-class journal in which they reflect and write about the assigned readings and lectures for that day. Approximately 15 minutes of the class period will be devoted to in-class journal essay writing, and this can take place at the beginning, in the middle and /or at the end of the class period. The journal reflection essays will *not* be open to any topic, but will be restricted to the lecture and specific readings assigned for that class period. To further insure that students do not deviate from the topic, every journal entry will begin with a question posed by the professor. All journal entries should include the date and the question.

Exams (50 Points)

There will be two exams throughout the semester. Each exam is worth 25% of the final grade.

The exam will be composed of essays and short answers.

Exam 1: October 1, 2009

Exam 2: December 17, 2009 (Thursday, 8:30 AM)

It is within the instructor's purview to apply qualitative judgment in determining grades for an assignment or for the course.

Class Participation

Attendance will be taken every class period and students will be marked down for unexcused absences. Students will lose 1 point for every unexcused absence up to a possible 5 points. Students can make up lost points in unexcused absences by actively participating in class discussions or by attending out-of-class philosophy lectures and events. Unexcused absences included only the following: (1) sickness with a doctors' note, (2) death in the family, or (3) some other extraordinary event.

Chronological Order of Assignments, Quizzes and Exams

September 10	Journal 1	(4 points)
September 24	Journal 2	(4 points)
October 1	Exam 1	(25 points)
October 22	Journal 3	(4 points)
October 29	Paper Thesis	(-2 if assignment is missed)
November 10	Introduction and Outline	(-2 if assignment is missed)
November 12	Journal 4	(4 points)
November 19	First Draft of Paper	Optional (Recommended)
December 3	Journal 5	(4 points)
December 8	Reflection Paper	(30 Points)
December	Final Exam	(25 points)

Topics:

1. INTRODUCTION
2. THE MEANING OF LIFE
Friedrich Nietzsche: God is Dead, The Anti-Christ
Albert Camus: The Absurd
3. PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION
Introduction
William Paley: Teleological Argument
David Hume: Why Does God Let People Suffer?
William James: The Will to Believe

MIDTERM

4. WHAT IS THE MEANING OF DEATH
Patricia Mann: Meanings of Death
James Rachel Active and Passive Euthanasia
5. THINKING AND KNOWING (EPISTEMOLOGY)

- Plato: The Myth of the Cave
Rene Descartes: Meditations
John Locke: Where our Ideas Come From
6. LIVING A GOOD LIVE (ETHICS)
Plato: The Ring of Gyges
Aristotle: Happiness and the Good Life
John Stuart Mill Utilitarianism
7. WHAT DO I JUSTLY DESERVE?
Plato: Does Might Make Right?
Thomas Hobbes: Justice and the Social Contract

Learning Methods

Multimedia This course will combine traditional classroom lecturing with multimedia presentations. Every lecture will be supplemented with power point presentations and internet information. All course materials, such as syllabus, review questions, term paper information, etc., are posted on my website: <http://berniephilosophy.com> . This will give the students direct access to most of the materials for this class at their convenience.

Class Dynamic Class participation is expected of all students enrolled in this course. Questions and class discussions are encouraged as an effective vehicle to motivate students' interest in the subject matter. *If there are few questions and little discussion taking place in the classroom, the professor reserves the right to choose individual students to answer questions or give their view and the arguments on a particular issue.* Therefore, careful daily reading of the text and handouts is essential for success in this course.

Attendance Policy:

Attendance is mandatory. Students **must** bring their text and journals to every class! Students will lose 1 point for every unexcused absence up to a possible 5 points. Students can make up lost points in unexcused absences by actively participating in class discussions or attending out-of-class philosophy lectures and events. Unexcused absences include only the following: (1) sickness with a doctors' note, (2) death in the family, or (3) some other extraordinary event.

Academic Dishonesty Policy

See Student Handbook pp. 32 – 38

Students who wish to request accommodations in this class for a disability should contact Mr. Joe Kempfer, Assistant Director of Learning Services for Disability Support, 1307 Main Street (extension 1510). Accommodations cannot be provided until authorization is received from the office of Learning Services.

Student Behavior:

See Student Handbook pp. 38 – 40

Course Requirements

Reading of assignments before class is essential to succeed in this course. Students are expected to be ready for class and to write intelligibly in their journals every class period. This means that he or she should read the assigned chapters before the professor introduces it. Class participation, note taking, and discussion are highly encouraged. The study of philosophy does not only consist of memorization; students must also read analytically and reflect critically on the texts and reading assignments. When studying difficult material, it is often necessary to read it several times before a proper understanding is achieved. Do not be disappointed if you do not understand a philosophical reading assignment on your first try.

Grading/Measures of evaluations:

Journals:	20%
Exam 1:	25%
Exam 2:	25%
Reflection Paper:	30%

A=100-94; A- =93-90; B+=89-87; B=86-84; B- = 83-80; C+=79-77; C = 76-70; D=69-60; F=<59

PROGRAM AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

Sept. 1	INTRODUCTION What is Philosophy (Handout)
Sept. 3	Some Logic (Handout)
TOPIC 1	RELIGION AND THE MEANING OF LIFE
Sept. 8	Does Religion give my life meaning? Friedrich Nietzsche: “God is Dead” pp. 21-22. “The Anti-Christ” pp.22-23
Sept. 10	Albert Camus: “The Absurd” pp. 30-33. Collect Journal 1
Sept. 15	How do I know whether God exists? Introduction
Sept. 17	William Paley: “Teleological Argument” pp.47-49.

Sept. 22	David Hume: "Why Does God Let People Suffer?" pp. 50-54. Introduction
Sept. 24	David Hume: "Why Does God Let People Suffer?" pp. 50-54. Collect Journal 2
Sept. 29	William James: "The Will to Belief" pp. 61-65.
Oct. 1	Midterm
TOPIC 2	WHAT IS THE MEANING OF DEATH
Oct. 6	Patricia Mann: "Meanings of Death" pp. 398-406 Introduction
Oct. 8	Patricia Mann: "Meanings of Death" pp. 398-406
Oct. 13	Recess
Oct. 15	James Rachel: "Active and Passive Euthanasia" 389-393
TOPIC 3	THINKING AND KNOWING
Oct. 20	Paper Discussion: Writing Center
Oct. 22	What Can I know? Plato: "The Myth of the Cave" pp. 205-207. Introduction Collect Journal 3
Oct. 27	Rene Plato: "The Myth of the Cave" pp. 205-207.
Oct. 29	Descartes: "Meditations" pp. 207-210 Thesis is due

Nov. 3	John Locke: “Where Our Ideas Come From” pp. 214-217. Introduction
Nov. 5	John Locke: “Where Our Ideas Come From” pp. 214-217.
TOPIC 4	LIVING A GOOD LIFE
Nov. 10	Why shouldn’t I be selfish? Plato: “The Ring of Gyges” pp. 461-464. Introduction Introduction and outline are due
Nov. 12	What is the right thing for me to do? Aristotle: “Happiness and the Good Life” pp. 524-531. Collect Journal 4
Nov. 17	What is the right thing for me to do? Aristotle: “Happiness and the Good Life” pp. 524-531.
Nov. 19	John Stuart Mill “Utilitarianism” pp. 536-539. TERM PAPER <u>DRAFT</u> DUE (optional)
Nov. 24	John Stuart Mill “Utilitarianism” pp. 536-539.
Nov. 26	Thanksgiving
TOPIC 5	JUSTICE AND RESPONSIBILITY
Dec. 1	What do I justly deserve? Plato “Does Might Make Right” pp. 621-624.
Dec. 3	Thomas Hobbes “Justice and the Social Contract Theorists” pp. 624-628. Collect Journal 5

Dec. 8	Review TERM PAPER DUE
	FINAL EXAM: December 17, 2009 (Thursday, 8:30 AM)

PLEASE, as a courtesy to the other students in the class, turn off all phones upon entering class!