

Existential Questions: First-Year Seminar
LinC 101 E
Fall 13

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Office Hours: Tuesday noon-1:00pm, Wednesday 4pm-5pm and by appointment.

Lectures: MWF 11:45am- 12:55pm, Main Street Campus, Comenius Hall, 114

Course Description:

In this course, we explore some the universal questions regarding some major concerns in human life. More specifically, we explore three major questions throughout of the course:

- (1) Is the existence of a loving God consistent with the existence of evil in this world? (The Problem of Evil).
- (2) Is it possible for us to survive our bodily death? (The Problem of Immortality)
- (3) Are we humans really free, or all our decisions are pre-determined? (The Problem of Free-will.)

FYS Description and Objectives

First-Year Seminar introduces writing as a process that is central to college learning and to life. First-Year Seminar focuses on college-level reading and writing, so students will begin to sharpen the critical reasoning skills needed for success in any academic discipline at Moravian College. The subject area focus of each section of First-Year Seminar entails reading and discussing ideas and styles from various academic disciplines, but all sections are the same in their general approach: students will practice both speaking and writing and will work collaboratively in workshop settings.

With regard to broad academic and writing skills, by the end of this course, students will:

- Demonstrate a process approach to writing
- Use writing as a way to discover new information and insights—in short, to learn.
- Demonstrate competency in writing including framing questions, posing problems, and synthesizing information to write an academic paper.
- Write effectively for a variety of audiences.
- Gather information for assignments through the use of appropriate technology and evaluate the credibility of sources needed to write an academic paper.
- Read critically and comprehensively to integrate others' ideas with their own.

➤ **With regard to transition to college expectations, by the end of this course students will:**

- Articulate an understanding of liberal education as it affects one's life now and prepares the individual for the future.
- Practice behaviors for successful learning including effective study habits, time management, goal setting and coping skills.
- Collaborate with faculty and student advisors and engage with the College community -- students, faculty and staff-- to promote the students' success at Moravian College.

Course Requirements

Each student enrolled in First-Year Seminar will complete several pieces of writing, formal and informal, graded and/or ungraded. Students should expect to receive suggestions from their instructor or classmates as they develop writing assignments through multiple drafts. Individual conferences, written

comments, small group workshops, the College Writing Center—all may be used to help you as you plan, draft, revise, and edit a piece of writing.

At least one writing assignment should involve substantial use of Reeves Library. Students will develop information literacy as they learn to identify and investigate a research topic. By the time students complete First-Year Seminar, therefore, they should be proficient in the following “**basic competencies**” of information literacy:

- Define a research need
 - Formulate a research topic
 - Determine an information need
- Plan and execute a search for information
 - Identify key terms and concepts
 - Identify the most appropriate sources of information
 - Use Boolean operators and truncation where appropriate
 - Impose limiters (e.g., scholarly vs. popular, date, language)
 - Modify the search based on search results
- Know how and where to find the sources discovered in the search process
 - Determine which sources the library owns or provides access to and retrieve them
 - Request material not owned by the library on Interlibrary Loan
 - Locate material faculty may have put on reserve in the library
- Understand the obligation to credit sources and be able to do so in an appropriate citation style

The Writing Center

The Writing Center, on the second floor of Zinzendorf Hall, is there to support the efforts of all writers at Moravian College. The tutors there are students who are good, experienced writers and who are professionally trained to help you improve your writing. They will go over an essay draft with you and guide your understanding of how you might improve that draft. You could also drop by to pick up some of the free handouts on virtually every part of writing: getting started, writing a thesis, developing paragraphs, eliminating wordiness, using commas, and the like. The Writing Center is generally open Monday-Thursday afternoons and Sunday evenings during the semester. The Writing Center is located in a building that is not accessible to persons with mobility impairments. If you need the services of the Writing Center, please call 610-861-1392.

Learning Services Office

Students who wish to request accommodations in this class for a disability should contact Elaine Mara, assistant director of learning services for academic and disability support at 1307 Main Street, or by calling 610-861-1510. Accommodations cannot be provided until authorization is received from the Academic Support Center.

Policy on Academic Honesty

Moravian College expects its students to perform their academic work honestly and fairly. A Moravian student, moreover, should neither hinder nor unfairly assist the efforts of other students to complete their work successfully. This policy of academic integrity is the foundation on which learning at Moravian is built.

The College’s expectations and the consequences of failure to meet these expectations are outlined below. If at any point in your academic work at Moravian you are uncertain about your responsibility as a scholar or about the propriety of a particular action, consult your instructor.

Guidelines for Honesty

All work that you submit or present as part of course assignments or requirements must be your

original work unless otherwise expressly permitted by the instructor. This includes any work presented, be it in written, oral, or electronic form or in any other technical or artistic medium. When you use the specific thoughts, ideas, writings, or expressions of another person, you must accompany each instance of use with some form of attribution to the source. Direct quotes from any source (including the Internet) must be placed in quotation marks (or otherwise marked appropriately) and accompanied by proper citation, following the preferred bibliographic conventions of your department or instructor. It is the instructor's responsibility to make clear to all students in his or her class the preferred or required citation style for student work. Student ignorance of bibliographic convention and citation procedures is not a valid excuse for having committed plagiarism.

When you use the specific thoughts, ideas, writing, or expressions of another person, you must accompany each instance of use with some form of attribution to the source.

You may not collaborate during an in-class examination, test, or quiz. You may not work with others on out-of-class assignments, exams, or projects unless expressly allowed or instructed to do so by the course instructor. If you have any reservations about your role in working on any out-of-class assignments, you must consult with your course instructor. In each First-Year Seminar class and in the Writing Center, we try to establish a community of writers who can review and provide helpful criticism of each other's work. Although no students in your class or in the Writing Center should ever be allowed to write your paper for you, they are encouraged to read your work and to offer suggestions for improving it. Such collaboration is a natural part of a community of writers.

You may not use writing or research that is obtained from a "paper service" or that is purchased from any person or entity, unless you fully disclose such activity to the instructor and are given express permission.

You may not use writing or research obtained from any other student previously or currently enrolled at Moravian or elsewhere or from the files of any student organization, such as fraternity or sorority files, unless you are expressly permitted to do so by the instructor.

You must keep all notes, drafts, and materials used in preparing assignments until a final course grade is given. In the case of work in electronic form, you may be asked to maintain all intermediate drafts and notes electronically or in hard copy until final grades are given. All these materials must be available for inspection by the instructor at any time.

Plagiarism

A major form of academic dishonesty is plagiarism, which we define as the use, whether deliberate or not, of any outside source without proper acknowledgment; an "outside source" is defined as any work (published or unpublished), composed, written, or created by any person other than the student who submitted the work (adapted from Napolitano vs. Princeton). Instructors often encourage—and in the case of research essays, require—students to include the ideas of others in their writing. In such cases, students must take care to cite the sources of these ideas correctly (in other words, to give credit where credit is due). The Bedford Handbook Online and OWL provide guidance in using several systems for documenting sources. You can access these pages on the Writing Center website at <http://home.moravian.edu/public/eng/writingCenter/links.htm>

At Moravian, if a First-Year Seminar instructor suspects plagiarism, the student will be asked to show the notes and drafts contributing to the final version of a paper. The instructor also has the right to see any books or periodicals that were used. The grade for the paper will be suspended until these materials have been reviewed. An instructor who suspects a student of violating the policy on academic honesty with regard to an assignment, requirement, examination, test, or quiz will consult with the Chair, First Year Seminar Committee, using a blind copy of the work in question, to verify the violation. If the charge is verified, the instructor will, in almost all cases, assign either a grade of zero to the academic work in question or a failing grade in the course in which the violation occurred. The student must be informed in writing of the alleged violation and penalty; a copy of this memo must be sent to the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs.

A student may appeal either a charge of academic dishonesty or a penalty as follows:

1. First, to the course instructor.
2. Next, in the case of First-Year Seminar, to the Chair, First Year Seminar Committee.
3. Next, to the Academic Standards Committee, chaired by the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs.

Required Assignments for the course:

To pass the course, students are required to satisfy the following requirements:

- (1) Two papers (each 700words). The paper topics will be posted on Blackboard. You have approximately a week to submit your first drafts, and after receiving the comments on your drafts, you have a week to complete and submit your final drafts. The final version of your papers should be submitted via Blackboard. Please make sure you have access to the Blackboard as soon as possible. If the papers are turned in late without prior permission, the grade will be adjusted downwards by a third of a grade for each day the paper is late (e.g., A to A-, A- to B+, B+ to B, etc.). It is always helpful to discuss the draft of your papers with your friends, roommates, or classmates so as to solicit feedback.
- (2) You will be required to write some short paragraphs (roughly two pages) consist of your critical evaluation of the material to be discussed in the class. In the paragraphs, you should concentrate on a specific concept, theme or question. I am going to assign 12 assignments throughout the semester, and you are required to complete 10 out of 12 assignments by the end of the semester. That is, you are allowed to skip two assignments of your choice. Each week, the topic will be posted on Blackboard on Wednesday. You need to bring your first draft to the class on the next Monday. On Monday, you will be given a chance to discuss your drafts with your classmates, and then you are required to submit your final drafts on Wednesday of that week via Blackboard. So you have about a week to complete each of your weekly assignments.
- (3) You will be divided into two groups, and all groups are required to participate in 3 class debates. As a group you receive a grade between 0 and 10 for each debate. If you miss a debate, you individually receive 0 for that discussion, unless you have an extremely good excuse for your absence. If your absence is excused, then I will decide how you may make up for the missing discussion. However, if you miss more than one discussion, the make-up policy applies only to one of them, and you will receive 0 for the rest.
- (4) You are expected to actively participate in class discussions. Students who wish to receive an "A" in their participation will:
 - Be present and fully engaged at every class, bringing with them whatever course materials we are using. If you are ill you should contact both the Prof and your student Advisor *before* class and let us know. The only other acceptable reasons for missing class are a family emergency or religious observance;
 - Carefully read all our assigned texts in advance of class, using active reading strategies that involve you writing in the margins and/or otherwise demonstrating your engagement as a reader, and come ready to discuss, think together and ask sharp questions;
 - Hand in every assignment on time;
 - Demonstrate leadership, cooperation, generosity, intelligence and kindness in all group work;
 - Visit the Writing Center at least 2 times during the semester in advance of handing in your two papers.

- Students should plan on spending a minimum of 2.5 hours for every hour spent in class time; when you are working on a paper for our class, plan on additional time you will need to schedule for your work.

Grading:

Papers: each 25% (total 50%) - Class debates: 20% - 10 Weekly Paragraphs: 20%- Active Class Participation 10%.

The grading scale is as follows:

Points	Grade	4-point conversion
95-100	A	4
90-95	A-	3.7
87-90	B+	3.3
84-87	B	3
80-84	B-	2.7
77-80	C+	2.3
74-77	C	2
70-74	C-	1.7
67-70	D+	1.3
64-67	D	1
60-64	D-	0.7
0-60	F	0

Sources:

Required Texts:

1. Perry, John, *Dialogue on Good, Evil, and the Existence of God*, Hackett Pub Co; 1 edition, 1999. ISBN-13: 978-0872204607.
2. Perry John, *A Dialogue on Personal Identity and Immortality*, Hackett Pub Co, 1 edition, 1978. ISBN-13: 978-0-915144-53-2.

Recommended Text:

3. Kane, Robert, *A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will*, Oxford University Press, 2005.

Tentative Schedule:

***August:**

26, 28: What is Argument? How to evaluate an argument?

30: Campus Safty, Student Conduct, and the Deans

***September:**

2, 4: From the book, *Dialogue on Good, Evil, and the Existence of God*, Ch. 1 (The First Morning)

6, 9: Ch. 2 (The First Afternoon)

11, 16: Ch. 3 (The Second Morning)

13: Counseling Center, Health Center, Religious Life

18, 23: Ch.4 (The Second Afternoon)

20: Academic Support Center

25: Your First Class Debate

27: Student Involvement & Leadership

Note: On Sept. 27, your First Paper Assignment on the Problem of Evil will be posted on Blackboard. Your first draft must be submitted to you Student Advisor on October 4th. Your draft will be returned to you on October 9th with comments. The due date for submitting the final

draft is October 16th via Blackboard.

***October:**

Sep 30, Oct. 2: From the book, *A Dialogue on Personality and Immortality*, Ch. (The First Night)

4: Career Center

7, 9, 16: Ch.2 (The Second Night)

11: International Education and Intercultural Advancement & Inclusion

18, 21, 23: Ch.3 (The Third Night)

25, 28, 30: Ch. 3 (The Third Night)

***November:**

1: Visiting the Library

4, 6: From the book, *A Contemporary Introduction to Free Will*, by Robert Kane, Ch. 1. (Will be posted on Blackboard)

8: Your second class debate on Immortality.

Note: On November 8, your Second Paper Assignment on the Problem of Immortality will be posted on Blackboard. Your first draft must be submitted to your Student Advisor on November 15. Your draft will be returned to you on November 22. The due date for submitting the final draft is November 2nd via Blackboard.

11, 13: Ch. 2 (Compatibilism) (Will be posted on Blackboard)

15, 18: Ch. 3 (Incompatibilism) (Will be posted on Blackboard)

21, 22: Ch. 7 (Is Free Will Possible? Hard Determinism and Other Skeptics) (Will be posted on Blackboard)

***December:**

2, 4: Ch. 8 (Moral Responsibility and Alternative Possibilities)

6: Your Third class debate on the Problem of Free Will.

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- The Writing Center is located in a building that is not accessible to persons with mobility impairments. If you need the services of the Writing Center, please call 610-861-1392. The Writing Center tutors will make arrangements with the student who needs tutoring services to meet in an accessible location, such as the library or a study/conference room in PPHAC.