

PHIL 1301-08 (80892): Introduction to Philosophy

Sam Houston State University, Fall 2017

M/W/F 2:00 – 2:50 PM, CHSS 140

Instructor: Dr. Thomas J. Brommage
Email: brommage@shsu.edu
Website: <http://brommage.freeshell.org>

Office Hours: 11 – 11:50 AM & by appt.
Office: CHSS 347
Phone: 936-294-2460 (office)
267-CALL-DR-B (Google Voice)

This course is designed to be a general examination of the fields and issues of Western philosophy as discussed by both classical and modern philosophers. The presentation will be historical: starting from the earliest days of Western intellectual tradition, with some emphasis on the development of the modern age. Some attention to contemporary philosophers will be given, time allowing. Some of the problems to be discussed include the existence of God, the nature of knowledge and truth, the issue of human free will, and theories of moral judgment.

Learning Outcomes and Skill Objectives

1. The student will come to understand the arguments of key figures in the Western Philosophical tradition.

- *Learning outcome:* learning fundamental principles, generalizations, and theories
- *Skill objective (Critical Thinking):* The point of the course is to examine arguments for contrasting positions on classical and contemporary philosophical issues. The arguments are to be critically evaluated from the standpoint of the acceptability of their premises and the cogency of the inference they present. In addition to studying the competing arguments of the sources they encounter, students will be required to present arguments for their own views on the issues with a clear logical structure and with premises that are arguably acceptable and that are strongly relevant to the conclusion.

2. The student will develop skills explaining and evaluating the ideas of the various philosophers studied

- *Learning outcome:* developing skill in expressing oneself orally and in writing.
- *Skill objective (Communication):* The paper assignments will require written communication that displays an accurate understanding of the course material and a developed view of the issues. As far as oral communication and visual communication skills are concerned, students are expected to participate in class discussion by raising questions, presenting alternatives, and offering reasons pro and con, and arguments will also be diagrammed to display the structure of their premises and the steps of inference that lead to a conclusion.

3. The student will come to have a more examined approach to the beliefs one holds.

- *Learning outcome:* learning to analyze and critically examine ideas, arguments, and points of view; acquiring an interest in learning more by asking one's own questions and seeking answers
- *Skill objective (Personal and Social Responsibility):* By examining the variety of ethical theories, students can begin to recognize that alternative points of view may have some validity. However, in the end each must choose an ethical stance and articulate what their reasoning is for it, and Personal Responsibility requires that someone be able to give a reasoned explanation for their decisions. Furthermore, the ability to give a reasoned explanation for recommending one policy over another is a core skill for Social Responsibility. In pursuit of this, it is helpful to realize the variety of fundamentally different ways politics and society have been conceived, for example, in relation to what genuine justice requires.

Required Texts*:

1. Plato, *Republic* tr. Reeve and Grube, 2nd ed. (Hackett, 1992). ISBN: 978-0872201361, \$13
2. Marcus Aurelius, *The Meditations*, tr. Grube (Hackett, 1983). ISBN: 978-0915145799, \$10
3. John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (Hackett, 1978). 8th. ed. ISBN: 978-0915144433), \$8
4. Soren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling* (Penguin, 1986), ISBN: 978-0140444490, \$8

* = Note that there are other acceptable editions, but translations can vary radically in accuracy and readability. Please consult your instructor for assistance if you plan to use a different edition of any text.

Schedule: The dates and content listed are tentative and subject to change by the whim of the instructor.
Readings marked with an "[E]" will be delivered electronically though Blackboard

August 23rd	Introduction to Course	--
August 25th	What Is Philosophy?	--
August 28th	Plato, <i>Republic</i> Book I, 327a-344d (pp.1-20)	Justice and Power
August 30th	<i>Republic</i> Book I 344d-354c; Book II, 357a-362d (pp.21-38)	Why be virtuous?
September 1st	<i>Republic</i> , Book II, 362d-383c (pp. 38-59)	Justice and the City
September 4th	Labor Day: No Class!	--
September 6th	<i>Republic</i> , Book III 386a-412b (pp. 60-88)	Education
September 8th	<i>Republic</i> , Book III, 412c-417b; Book IV 419a-427d (pp.89-102)	The Kallipolis
September 11th	<i>Republic</i> , Book IV 427d-445e (pp. 102-121)	Justice, completed
September 13th	<i>Republic</i> , Book V 449a-471c (pp. 122-146)	The Family and the City
September 15th	<i>Republic</i> , Book V 471c-480a; Book VI 484a-491a (pp. 146-164)	The Philosopher-King
September 18th	<i>Republic</i> , Book VI 491a-511e; Book VII 514a-520a (pp. 164-192)	Sun, Line, Cave
September 20th	<i>Republic</i> , Book VII 520a-541b (pp. 192-212)	Education
September 22nd	<i>Republic</i> , Book VIII (pp. 213-240)	Types of Consitutions
September 25th	<i>Republic</i> , Book IX (pp. 241-263)	Tyranny
September 27th	<i>Republic</i> , Book X (pp. 264-292)	Poetry and Politics
September 29th	TBA	TBA
October 2nd	Marcus Aurelius, <i>Meditations</i> Book I-II (pp. 3-17)	Life, Death, and Virtue
October 4th	Aurelius, <i>Meditations</i> Books III-IV (pp. 18-36)	Stocism and (true) apathy
October 6th	Aurelius, <i>Meditations</i> Book V (pp. 37-48)	Revenge
October 9th	Aurelius, <i>Meditations</i> Book VI (pp. 49-60)	Duty
October 11th	Aurelius, <i>Meditations</i> Books VII (pp. 61-73)	Patience and Tolerance
October 13th	Aurelius, <i>Meditations</i> Books VIII (pp. 74-85)	Purpose and the Great Chain of Being
October 16th	Aurelius, <i>Meditations</i> Books IX-X (pp. 86-109)	Virtues
October 18th	Aurelius, <i>Meditations</i> Books XI-XII (pp. 110-129)	Self-love
October 20th	Mill, <i>On Liberty</i> Part I (pp. 1-14)	Social Liberty
October 23rd	Mill, <i>On Liberty</i> , Part IIa (pp. 15-33)	Freedom of Speech
October 25th	Mill, <i>On Liberty</i> , Part IIb (pp. 33-52)	Corrosive Opinions

October 27th	Mill, <i>On Liberty</i> , Part III (pp. 53-72)	Individuality
October 30th	Mill, <i>On Liberty</i> , Part IV (pp. 73-93)	Individual and Society
November 1st	Mill, <i>On Liberty</i> Part V (pp. 93-113)	Applications
November 3rd	TBA	
November 6th	Kierkegaard, <i>Fear and Trembling</i> (pp. 41-56)	Abraham and Issac
November 8th	Kierkegaard, <i>Fear and Trembling</i> "Preamble" (pp. 57-82)	Leap of Faith
November 10th	Kierkegaard, <i>Fear and Trembling</i> "Problema I" (pp. 83-95)	Suspension of the Ethical
November 13th	Kierkegaard, <i>Fear and Trembling</i> "Problema II" (pp. 96-108)	Absolute Duty
November 15th	Kierkegaard, <i>Fear and Trembling</i> "Problema III" (pp. 109-144)	Disclosure
November 17th	Kierkegaard, <i>Fear and Trembling</i> , "Epilogue"	Faith and Passion
November 20th	TBA	--
November 22nd-24th	Thanksgiving Break: No Class!	--
November 27th	Frantz Fanon, "On Violence" [E]	Colonialism
November 29th	Frantz Fanon, "On Violence" [E]	Atmosphere of Violence
December 1st	Review for Final	--
December 4th	Final Exam (3:30-5:30 PM)	--

Evaluation: After the completion of each text, a response paper will be assigned. Each paper should be between 500-750 words (about 2-3 pages double-spaced), and relevant to a topic in the respective texts. The lowest single grade on these papers will not be counted into your final grade. They will be due approximately one week following the completion of each of the texts. More details will be announced. In addition to that, there will be a cumulative in-class final exam at the end of the course.

The following weighting will be used to calculate your grade:

Response Papers (best 3 of 4): 3 x 20% ea. =	60%
Final Exam =	20%
Attendance and Participation (10% each) =	20%

Your rounded average of these assignments will determine your grade, based on the following scale: A = 100-89.5; B = 89.4-79.5; C = 79.4-69.5; D = 69.4-59.5; F = 59.4-0.

This is a Writing Enhanced course which satisfies the "W" requirement, since 80% of your course grade will derive from writing activities designed to help you master course objectives. Writing in this course is one of the tools your instructor will use to help you learn course material. Students are encouraged to submit early drafts to your Instructor to get feedback on your grasp of the material. You should approach writing in this course as a tool to use as part of your learning as well as a tool your instructor will use to assess your level of learning.

Attendance and Participation: An attendance sheet will be distributed most class days. It is your responsibility to get your name on the sign-in sheet, otherwise you will be considered absent. Your attendance will be judged as a percentage of the number of days that you attend class. Everyone will have three (3) absences that will not count against his or her grade (should you have been absent fewer than three times this semester, then your grade will be adjusted up accordingly). For example, if I take attendance 22 times in the semester, and you have attended 17 of those meetings, your attendance grade would be a 91% (20/22).

Your participation grade will be a qualitative measure based on your effective in-class participation. For this measure, "effective" participation is a function of the *quality*—not the *quantity*—of your participation. In most cases, your participation grade will be no higher than your attendance grade (since, of course, if you're not there you can't participate).

Disability Policy: It is the policy of Sam Houston State University that individuals otherwise qualified shall not be excluded, solely by reason of their disability, from participation in any academic program of the university. Further, they shall not be denied the benefits of these programs nor shall they be subjected to discrimination. Students with disabilities that might affect their academic performance are expected to visit with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities located in the Counseling Center. They should then make arrangements with their individual instructors so that appropriate strategies can be considered and helpful procedures can be developed to ensure that participation and achievement opportunities are not impaired. The policy can be read here: <http://www.shsu.edu/dotAsset/9edd8433-cad5-40d1-b4bf-6a91b08f90e4.pdf>

SHSU adheres to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If the student has a disability that may affect adversely their work in this class, then he or she needs to register with the SHSU Counseling Center and to talk with the instructor about how they can best be helped. All disclosures of disabilities will be kept strictly confidential. NOTE: no accommodation can be made until the student registers with the Counseling Center. There will be no retroactive accommodations.

Academic Dishonesty: In accordance with the University's Academic Policy Statement 810213, all students are expected to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is above reproach. Students are expected to maintain complete honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. Any student found guilty of dishonesty in any phase of academic work will be subject to disciplinary action. The University and its official representatives may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a student accused of any form of academic dishonesty including, but not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work which is to be submitted, plagiarism, collusion, and the abuse of resource materials. The policy can be read here: <http://www.shsu.edu/dotAsset/728eec25-f780-4dcf-932c-03d68cade002.pdf>

Plagiarism: Clear-cut cases of plagiarism will be punished according to the following rule of thumb: first offense, you fail the paper; second offense, you fail the class. A paper which is failed for plagiarism will not be eligible to be "dropped" per the above grading policy.

Classroom Conduct: Students are expected to assist in maintaining a classroom environment that is conducive to learning. Students therefore must refrain from behavior in the classroom that intentionally or unintentionally disrupts the learning process and, thus, impedes the mission of the university. Cellular phones, pagers, and music players (for example, iPod-type devices) must be turned off and earphones removed before class begins. Students are prohibited from using tobacco products, making offensive remarks, reading newspapers, talking at inappropriate times, or engaging in any other form of distraction. Inappropriate behavior in the classroom shall result in a directive to leave class. Students who are especially disruptive also may be reported to the Dean of Students for disciplinary action in accordance with university policy. The policy can be read here: <https://netreg.shsu.edu/mirror/codeofconduct.html>.

Visitor Policy: Unannounced visitors to class must present a current, official SHSU identification card to be permitted in the classroom. They must not present a disruption to the class by their attendance. If the visitor is not a registered student, it is at the instructor's discretion whether or not he/she will be allowed to remain.

Student Absence on Religious Holidays: Section 51.911(b) of the Texas Education Code requires that an institution of higher education excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. Section 51.911(a)(2) defines religious holy days as: "a holy day observed by a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation under Section 11.20, TaxCode...."

A student whose absence is excused under this subsection may not be penalized for that absence and shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment from which the student is excused within a reasonable time after the absence.

University policy 861001 provides the procedures to be followed by the student and instructor. A student desiring to absent himself/herself from a scheduled class in order to observe (a) religious holy day(s) shall present to each instructor involved a written statement concerning the religious holy day(s). The instructor will notify the student of

a reasonable time-frame in which the missed assignments and/or examinations are to be completed. The policy can be read here: <http://www.shsu.edu/dotAsset/0953c7d0-7c04-4b29-a3fc-3bf0738e87d8.pdf>

For more information please visit: <http://www.shsu.edu/syllabus/>

Course Evaluations: In accordance with University policy every student will have an opportunity at a specified date and time near the end of the semester to complete a course evaluation form from the IDEA course evaluation system.

Q-Drops: A Q-drop is a drop made after the last date for tuition refunds (12th class day for fall/spring; 4th class day for summer) but before the date for which a drop would result in the grade of 'F' as published in the Academic Calendar. Students will be allowed no more than five Q-drops during their academic career at Sam Houston State University. Classes that are dropped prior to the Q-drop date will not count toward the limit. Students who have used their limit of five Q-drops will need to petition their respective dean to drop a class. If the dean refuses to grant permission to drop a class, a student will be required to remain in the class. This limit took effect with the start of the fall 2004 semester. Any drops accumulated prior to the fall 2004 semester will not be included in the five Q-drop limit, nor will Q-drops from other universities.

Use of Cell Phones: Telephones and pagers or similar devices have become increasingly a part of everyday life. In the academic classroom, however, during class these devices can be a serious distraction and during tests they can be a serious problem. The technology is constantly changing and evolving. So, the present policy does not specify particular devices or device types. Rather, the policy applies to any device that performs the function of a telephone or pager.

The use by students of cell phones or any device that performs these functions during class-time is prohibited unless specifically permitted by the instructor. All such devices should be turned off or put in a silent or vibrate mode and should not be visible during class. At no time should students answer a call or text during class or leave the classroom to answer a call or page. Failure to comply with this policy could result in expulsion from the classroom or with three or more offenses, failure of the course.

Any use of a cell phone or any device that performs these functions during a test period is prohibited. These devices should not be present during a test or should be stored securely in such a way that they cannot be seen or used by the student. Even the visible presence of such a device during the test period will result in a zero for that test. Use of these devices during a test is considered *de facto* evidence of cheating and could result in a charge of academic dishonesty (see pages 36-38 of the student code of conduct at the following link): <http://www.shsu.edu/students/guide/StudentGuidelines20132016.pdf>

If there is an emergency situation for a student, that student should inform the instructor and place himself/herself in a seat near the door where an exit for a phone call would be only minimally disruptive. Other arrangements for handling potential emergency situations may be granted at the discretion of the instructor.

Expectations, Suggestions and Mandates for an efficient class:

1. Please arrive to class on time and expect to stay the entire duration of the class. If this is an impossibility, please make every attempt to notify me in advance of tardiness or absence.
2. Especially true in philosophy more than most other subjects, diligence is important. Some of the reading will be difficult—since we are looking at some of the most profound texts in the history of the world. The difficulty of the subject is indirectly proportional to the amount of work put into the course. Expect to have up to five hours a week of reading and thinking about the material in order to get an "A" for the course. Additionally, for these reasons, attendance is of vital importance. *If you do not attend class or keep up with the reading, do not expect to pass this class!*
3. Please come to class prepared (i.e., any reading assigned read, any questions concerning exercises or lectures prepared, etc.)
4. Please be respectful of each other in the class. There will be times when students disagree about a topic discussed in class. This is a didactic process, not a combative one.
5. Due to the great excess of material and limited time in which we must cover ground, please do not create a disruption for those people who are attempting to learn. Disruptions include blurting out answers, name calling, chiding each other, snoring, etc. Laughing at the Instructor's jokes is obviously exempted from this policy. In addition, personal audio devices (except those in use to record lectures) and loud crunching snack foods are prohibited from the classroom.
6. Please feel free to make mistakes. We all will from time to time, even your omniscient instructor.
7. Please feel free to make an appointment to discuss the material you do not understand. Waiting until the last moment in the semester to catch up is not advisable. I am excellent at fixing small problems, but horrendous at fixing large ones. The only difference between small and large problems is time.
8. Have fun! The material is only as dry as you make it out to be. Sharpening one's mind can be an exhilarating process.