

PHIL 1301: Introduction to Philosophy (11)

Department of Psychology & Philosophy
Fall 2017, Tuesdays & Thursdays
Health & Kinesiology, Room 247 – 12:30-1:50

Course Description:

A general examination of the fields and issues of philosophy as discussed by both classical and modern philosophers. Philosophical problems discussed include the existence of God, the nature of knowledge and truth, the issue of human free will, and theories of moral judgment.

Class Description & Objectives:

This course is an introduction to some of the most exciting questions human beings ask. Where does morality come from, and how can we know the difference between right and wrong? What is justice? Does God exist? Is death bad? Throughout the course, students will acquire an understanding of some of the most exciting debates in Western philosophy and the ability to think through them using philosophical reasoning. They will also develop the ability to communicate complex and abstract ideas verbally and in writing.

Professor:

Dr. Katie Stockdale, Assistant Professor of Philosophy

Office Hours:

My office hours are **10:00-11:00 on Tuesdays and Thursdays in CHSS 339**. I *strongly* encourage you to make use of my office hours. It's totally normal to have questions, concerns, or to need help—that's what I'm here for! If you cannot make my office hours, please email me to schedule an appointment. You are also more than welcome to drop by any time, though I can't promise I will be in my office outside of office hours.

Email & Email Policy:

I very much encourage you to email me at katiestockdale@shsu.edu with any questions you might have. I will do my best to reply within 24 hours (excluding weekends). Questions about course material should be asked in class or in office hours.

Classroom Policy:

Cell phones should be off in the classroom, and laptop users should sit in the back. Note that this course includes a discussion component: students are encouraged to ask questions and voice their own views about philosophical issues. Questions and comments should always be respectful to the professor and to fellow students.

Attendance Policy:

As per university policy, attendance in this class is mandatory. I will take attendance every class. You are responsible for signing the attendance sheet. You will not be penalized for up to 4 absences, but if you miss more than 4 classes, I will dock 1% from your final grade for each class (after 4) missed. Ideally, you will not need to miss any class; but be smart about potential absences – save those 4 free passes for when you are sick, and for emergencies.

Extension and Late Policy:

There will be no extensions granted for reflections, and reflections received late will not be accepted. Essays received late will be docked 3% per day, and no essays will be accepted after *two days* following the due date. For example, if an essay is due at 11:59pm on Tuesday, essays handed in between 12:00am and 11:59pm on Wednesday will be docked 3%. Essays handed in between 12:00am and 11:59pm on Thursday will be docked another 3%. Essays submitted after 11:59pm on Thursday will receive a grade of 0.

Requests for extensions or make-up exams should only be made in very extreme circumstances (e.g., serious illness, family crisis). Having other assignments due or tests on the same day for other courses is not a good reason to request an extension. I am happy to talk with you any time about strategies for managing your work load.

Required Text:

Steven Cahn, *Exploring Philosophy: An Introductory Anthology*, 5th edition. Oxford University Press, 2014. ISBN: 9780190204419

Evaluation*:

*This course is “writing enhanced.” 60% of your final grade comes from writing assignments. Course requirements are designed to help you develop and strengthen your writing skills. Philosophical reflections provide the opportunity for low-stakes writing to learn, and essays will help you practice defending a thesis statement, writing formally, and citing sources. You are encouraged to use my office hours to receive feedback on your writing assignments prior to handing them in. You will receive feedback on each of your writing assignments to help you improve for the next.

Philosophical Reflections	20%	September 12 <i>and</i> September 28 (10% each)
Mini Exam	15%	October 3
Mini Essay	15%	October 19
Final Essay	25%	November 9
Final Exam	25%	December 5

Philosophical Reflection:

You will write 1-2 page, double-spaced reflections that answer a question posed by the professor. The purpose of this assignment is to practice writing clearly and thinking independently about philosophy. Reflections are due in class on the due date. There will be no extensions granted for reflections, and reflections received late will not be accepted.

There are 2 *optional* reflections you may choose to write; your best 2 reflections will count toward your final grade. However, you must submit both required reflections (on September 12 *and* September 28) to qualify for the optional reflection assignments. There will be no exceptions to this rule. Specific instructions for writing reflections will be provided on the course website.

Mini Exam:

The mini exam will consist of short answer questions designed to test your understanding of the course material. You will be given a set of practice questions in advance, some of which will appear on the test.

Mini Essay:

You will write a 2-3 page, double-spaced mini essay that answers a question posed by the professor. The purpose of this assignment is to practice writing a formal philosophical essay with a *thesis statement*. Specific instructions for writing your essay will be provided in the course website, and there will be an in-class tutorial on how to write an essay on October 5.

Final Essay:

Final essays should be 4-6 double-spaced pages. They should include an introductory paragraph with a thesis statement, arguments in support of the thesis statement, and a conclusion. The thesis statement will be an answer to a question posed by the professor. Specific instructions for writing your essay will be provided on the course website.

Final Exam:

The final exam will have the exact same format as the mini exam (but longer) – it will involve short answer questions designed to test your understanding of the course material. You will be given a set of practice questions in advance, some of which will appear on the test.

Grading Rubric*:

*Since there is no fair way to do so, I will not round any grades.

Grade	Description
A (90-100)	Excellent
B (80-89.99)	Above Average
C (70-79.99)	Average
D (60-69.99)	Passing (not necessarily satisfying degree requirements)
F (59.99 and below)	Failure

Course Schedule*:

**If changes to the course schedule are made, students will be notified in class and on the course website.*

Part 1: Introducing Philosophy

Aug. 24	Welcome to the course!
Aug. 29 & 31	CLASS CANCELLED (!!)
Sept. 5	Plato, "Defense of Socrates"

Part 2: Morality

Sept. 7	What is Morality?	Tom Regan, "How to Not Answer Moral Questions" Mary Midgley, "Moral Isolationism"
Sept. 12	The Trolley Problem	<i>Philosophical Reflection # 1 due in class.</i> Judith Jarvis Thomson, "The Trolley Problem" Judith Jarvis Thomson, "Turning the Trolley"
Sept. 14	Right & Wrong	Immanuel Kant, "Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals" Onora O'Neill, "Kant's Ethics"
Sept. 19		Peter Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality"
Sept. 21		John Stuart Mill, "Utilitarianism" <i>Suggested Reading:</i> Louis P. Pojman, "Assessing Utilitarianism"
Sept. 26		Aristotle, "Nicomachean Ethics" Bernard Mayo, "Virtue Ethics"
Sept. 28		<i>Philosophical Reflection # 2 due in class.</i> Virginia Held, "The Ethics of Care"

Part 3: Justice & Society

Oct. 3	Brief Interlude!	<i>No readings. Good luck on the mini exam!</i>
Oct. 5		<i>No readings. Tutorial on how to write a philosophy paper.</i>
Oct. 10		Thomas Hobbes, "The Leviathan" John Locke, "Second Treatise of Government"
Oct. 12	The Nature of Justice	John Rawls, "A Theory of Justice" Robert Nozick, "Distributive Justice"
Oct. 17		Amartya Sen, "The Idea of Justice" Virginia Held, "Non-Contractual Society: A Feminist View"

Oct. 19	Oppression & Injustice	Iris Marion Young, "Five Faces of Oppression"
Oct. 24		Martin Luther King Jr., "Letter from Birmingham Jail" <i>Mini Essay due at 11:59pm to BBL.</i>
Oct. 26	Freedom & Citizenship	John Stuart Mill, "On Liberty"

Part 4: God, Death, & Immortality

Oct. 31	God	Thomas Aquinas, "Summa Theologiae" William Paley, "Natural Theology"
Nov. 2		<i>OPTIONAL Philosophical Reflection due in class.</i> Richard Swinburne, "Why God Allows Evil"
Nov. 7		Eleonore Stump, "The Desires of the Heart" Marilyn McCord Adams, "The Problem of Hell"
Nov. 9		Blaise Pascal, "The Wager" Linda Zagzebski, "Pascal's Wager: An Assessment" <i>Final Essay due at 11:59pm to BBL.</i>
Nov. 14		Anne C. Minas, "God and Forgiveness"
Nov. 16	Death & Immortality	Plato, <i>Phaedo</i> Epicurus, "Letter to Menoeceus"
Nov. 21		<i>OPTIONAL Philosophical Reflection due in class.</i> Samuel Scheffler, "The Afterlife"
Nov. 23	THANKSGIVING	<i>No readings & NO CLASS (!!)</i>
Nov. 28		Harry G. Frankfurt, "How the Afterlife Matters" Susan Wolf, "The Significance of Doomsday"
Nov. 30		<i>No readings. Review for the final exam.</i>

Academic Dishonesty:

All students are expected to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is above reproach. Students are expected to maintain honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and outside of the classroom. Any student found guilty of dishonesty in any phase of academic work will be subjected 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, and collusion in the abuse of resource materials.

Student Absences on Religious Holy Days:

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 a religious holy day as: "a holy day observed for a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation under Section 11.20..." 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 be absent 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 complete a form notifying the student of a reasonable timeframe in which the missed assignments and/or examinations are to be completed. For a complete listing of the university policy, see: </dept/academic-affairs/documents/aps/students/861001.pdf>

Students with Disabilities:

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 from 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 should register with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities located in the Lee Drain Annex (phone #: 936-294-3512), TDD 936-294-3786, and email disability@shsu.edu). 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.

SHSU adheres to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If you have a disability that may adversely affect your work in this class, I encourage you to register with the SHSU Services for Students with Disabilities and to talk with me about how I can best help you. All disclosures of disabilities will be kept strictly confidential. Note: No accommodation can be made until you register with the Services for Students with Disabilities. For a complete listing of the university policy, see: <http://www.shsu.edu/dotAsset/7ff819c3-39f3-491d-b688-db5a330ced92.pdf>

Visitors in the Classroom:

Only registered students may attend class. Exceptions may be made on a case-by-case basis by the professor. In all cases, visitors must not present a disruption to the class by their attendance. Students wishing to audit the class must apply to do so through the Registrar's Office.

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