

Syllabus
Survey of Philosophical Thought
Philosophy 2010

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Texts:

- (1) Plato, *Euthyphro*, *Apology*, *Crito*, *Meno*, *Gorgias*, *Menexenus*: *The Dialogues of Plato*, Vol. 1. Yale University Press. 0-300-04488--7 (Paperback);
- (2) Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy, Cambridge University Press. ISBN: 0-521-62695-1 (Paperback).
- (3) Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols and The Anti-Christ*; Penguin Classics

Graded Tasks, etc:

(1) We will devote about one third of the course to each of these philosophers. For each, you will write a 3-5 page essay, due one week after we finish discussing the text(s) of that philosopher, and this will be announced in class. 3-5 pages sounds quite short, but you are expected to put a lot into these papers. They should be well written, well thought out and should show considerable involvement on your part with the thought and ideas expressed in the texts we're reading. Don't expect to just sit down and blabber something out; it should take you more than one draft to compose such an essay. Each will count 30% of your grade for the course.

This course requires some serious writing. It is not acceptable to hand in a paper with grammatical, punctuation, spelling and stylistic errors. You are encouraged to get help with your writing if you need it, and you should at least read your paper out loud to yourself to see whether it reads okay, whether the sentences are written correctly, whether the paragraphing makes good sense, whether there is proper development of your topic, etc.

I will read from some of these papers in class (good, bad and middling). I'll put them on the camera, so you can look at it and see what's going on. I will try not to show the writers names, since that's not the point. The point is rather that it's often easier to understand the typical mistakes people make when we see them on other people, or in other people's work, than to come to terms with them in ourselves, and it also gives you a chance to see in some cases what better writing than yours looks like. This is usual in sports, music and other areas, and there is no reason why writing shouldn't be exposed in the same way, as something more like a class presentation (in text), since ultimately the goal is to write in a way that one would not mind publishing.

(2) You should come to every class prepared by having read the material we're going to discuss. I have previously based the grade entirely on the three short, 3-5 page essays. However, it has been my experience that students often put off the reading until just before they write their papers, figuring I have no way in the interim to know who is reading and who isn't. This doesn't work, since most of the students underestimate the difficulty and amount of time required to read, re-read and contemplate these texts before writing on them, as well as the amount of time required to write the papers. Thus, there will be quizzes. I'm not yet sure how many quizzes. But, you will be told the meeting before that there will be a quiz at the next meeting and specifically what you will be asked on the quiz (specific questions).

This will count the remaining 10% of your grade, however many there are being averaged and the counted 10% of your grade. There will be no make-ups for this if you miss it.

These are difficult, classical texts of philosophy. You should normally expect to spend about six hours/week reading and re-reading them. It requires a lot of sustained effort and patience to read this material. It won't likely be obvious what the point is, and you may have doubts about whether you're "learning" anything "useful." There is no time to persuade you of it before you do it. You are under a lot of pressure to not do it, to devote your time to something else; it's expensive to be doing this, and thus you'll sometimes even experience a bad conscience for pouring time into this when you've got other pressing concerns, obligations, family, friends, work, etc. That's why we grade you, to keep it from becoming something you regard as a "leisure" activity. We regard it as serious business, and there is simply no substitute for putting hours into studying the material.

Philosophy is the beginning and the end of academia. It is historically that out of which the rest of academia has grown, and it requires deep, difficult, long and persistent study. This survey is a sampling of just a few classics, one ancient, one modern, one more post-modern. It should give you a good idea of what philosophy is about and how it is practiced, as we explore it through just a few representative works which have come to be classics.

Class attendance is required. If you are absent more than about 15%, you will be penalized and possibly withdrawn with a WF. You should not be working on your computer or text-messaging or the like during class. If you think about it, you'll realize that such behavior *shows contempt for the instruction*; and if you don't think about it, it means that anyway. So, think about it!

If you plagiarize, I'll give you an 'F' for the course. It's easy to detect and easier to document. I give a lot of time and attention to these papers. When someone gives me a plagiarized paper, it means I'm devoting my time and serious, professional skills to a fraud, a mockery, and I feel I'm being trifled with in a big way when I discover it. Also, the very existence of these papers means I cannot just grade in an instruction mode in good faith, but that I have to spend that much of my time and attention playing the cop instead of the teacher; you're ruining it for me by doing this, and I'd rather get you booted out of the system, so I can focus on teaching those who are trying to learn. Thus, I find it easy to say, "No!" when you ask me to let you slide on it. It's is fundamentally disrespectful. Don't do it!

Recommended: *A Pocket Guide to Correct Punctuation* (Barron's Educational Series), by Robert Brittain. It's widely available; about \$6.95. It is short and clearly explains nearly everything you need to know about punctuation to write college papers. The vast majority of you need it, and the benefit of learning the basics in this tiny volume will be long term, resolutely answering 98% of the questions you'll ever have about punctuation. It would be difficult to overemphasize the importance of this to your ability to write well. Clue: it's almost impossible for a poorly punctuated paper to have any liveliness to it or to develop any interesting ideas in its sentences. You'll need to consult other sources for *development*, which is essentially *paragraphing*. Without some mastery of these elements, students tend to *dread* writing papers, and for good reason. Master these and you can major in almost anything in the traditional sciences and humanities. So, do it now and make your college experience both easier and more fun and productive!