**Phil 106 – Introduction to Philosophy**

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Phil 106 D9, 9:30-10:50, A250

Office hours T/TH 11:00-12:30, L222

**Course Description**

In this course we will investigate the place of human beings in the world. We will take up topics of traditional concern such as the possibility and nature the existence of God, the immortality of the soul, the relationship between mind and body, the nature and scope of knowledge, the possibility of free will, and the quest for human meaning. We will strive to develop an understanding of how different philosophers approach these issues by examining their writings and critically analyzing their thoughts.

**Course Objectives**

* Develop the ability to read primary philosophical texts and to understand them by identifying the key ideas and arguments contained therein.
* Develop the ability to write concise, accurate essays about ideas, using proper citation and a logical structure.
* Develop the ability to talk in class about readings, expressing yourself cogently and articulately.
* Develop the ability to critically analyze philosophical concepts that have shaped our contemporary world.
* Develop the ability to present original arguments about complex philosophical topics.

**Required Texts**

Plato, "Five Dialogues", Hackett Publishing Company, ISBN 0-87220-633-5

Augustine, "On Free Choice of the Will", Hackett Publishing Company, ISBN 0-87220-188-0

All other texts will be available on Blackboard as PDFs

**Requirements**

2 tests - each worth 25% of your final grade

8 reading responses – each worth 5% of your final grade

Participation is worth 10% of your final grade

**Grading Scale**

100-90=A, 89-80=B, 79-70=C, 69-60=D, 59 and below=F

**Policy on Late Work**

I do not accept late work for any credit whatsoever. As a general rule of thumb, the old adage “It’s easier to ask for forgiveness than to get permission” is never going to be true in my classes. If you can foresee a difficulty, let me know and we can work something out. If you come to me after the fact, I am likely to be much less amenable.

**Academic Dishonesty**

Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated, and any assignment or exam on which cheating or plagiarism occurred will be minimally given an F, maximally you will get an F for the course and reported to the university. Ignorance of what counts as plagiarism is not an excuse. If you are unsure as to what counts as cheating, dishonesty, or plagiarism you may consult the Student Policy Manual at http://www.ccc.edu/menu/Documents/studentpolicymanual.pdf

**Special Needs**

I encourage students with disabilities, including non-visible disabilities such as chronic diseases, learning disabilities, head injuries and ADD/ADHD, to discuss with me, after class or by email, appropriate accommodations that might be helpful. Students with documented disabilities should visit the Disability Access Center who can then provide me the proper accommodation guidelines.

**Assignments**

Throughout the semester, students will be responsible for submitting 8 short papers. These are to be 1 page, double spaced, Times New Roman 12-point font, with 1-inch margins. These should all be submitted to Blackboard. Students should write these papers on topics that we have recently discussed. You cannot submit more than 1 paper per week. The first 4 papers are due any time before the midterm, the second 4 are due any time before the final. The purpose of these papers is both for the student to critically respond to the authors what we are readings, as well as for the student to develop and improve their writing skills. These papers are not merely the student's opinion on one of the readings, but rather should be a well thought out response to what the author is arguing. These papers should answer questions such as: In what ways are the author's ideas beneficial or harmful to us as individuals? What arguments can be provided that demonstrate a problem with the author's stance? How might one go about strengthening the author's position? Why is the issue that the author takes up an important issue for us as humans to discuss? The topic for each paper is open to the student. If you’re struggling with developing a thesis for these papers, please let me know and I’ll be happy to help you brainstorm ideas that you can pursue.

**Participation**

In class we will often have discussion over the ideas that are presented in our readings. Participation in this discussion is part of your grade. However, I realize that not all students are comfortable presenting their own thoughts in class. To that end, any form of participation that I can access will count towards this. For instance, emailing me with questions related to the readings (and not just questions about assignments), stopping by my office hours to chat, talking to me before or after class, etc, will all count towards your participation grade. Amongst all participation you are to respect your classmates. You will most likely disagree with others on different topics, and I encourage you to voice your disagreement. However, you must always be respectful of others. No disrespectful or hateful language will be tolerated.

**Tardiness and Attendance**

I do not have an attendance policy for this class. Sometimes students are unable to attend class due to other obligations and I understand that. Students are always responsible for all of the material that was covered in class, regardless of attendance record. However, if a student is excessively late to class and disruptive in doing so on multiple occasions, I will withdraw the student from the class. An example of this kind of behavior would be showing up to class 30 minutes late and proceeding to ask questions about the material that was covered in the first 30 minutes. This kind of behavior is disruptive to the class and harmful to the learning environment of the other students.

**Electronic Devices**

The use of cell phones is prohibited in the classroom. The use of laptops is also prohibited unless there is some important reason that requires such use and all such situations must be discussed with me first.

**Schedule**

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| Date | Topic | Reading |
| August 29 | Introduction |  |
| August 31 | Basics of Logic |  |
| Sept 5 | The search for wisdom | Plato – Apology 17a-30b |
| Sept 7 |  | Plato – Apology 30c-38b |
| Sept 12 | Virtue and knowledge | Plato – Meno 70a-74b, 77a-81e |
| Sept 14 |  | Plato - Meno 86d-89e, 96b-end |
| Sept 19 | Must we obey the law? | Plato - Crito 43a-48b |
| Sept 21 |  | Plato - Crito 48b-54e |
| Sept 26 | How is the mind connected to the body? | Elisabeth of Bohemia and Descartes Correspondence – PDF 1 |
| Sept 28 |  | Elisabeth of Bohemia and Descartes Correspondence – PDF 2 |
| Oct 3 | The problem of Evil | Augustine - On Free Choice of the Will Book 1 Ch 1-2, Ch 11-15 |
| Oct 5 | The possibility of free will | Augustine - On Free Choice of the Will Book 2 Pg 30-31, Ch. 18-20 |
| Oct 10 | The problem of divine foreknowledge | Augustine - On Free Choice of the Will Book 3 Ch. 2-4 |
| Oct 12 | The nature of memory | Augustine – Confessions PDF |
| Oct 17 | Review | Review |
| Oct 19 | MIDTERM | MIDTERM |
| Oct 24 | Philosophy of humor | McGraw, Warner – Humor Code PDF |
| Oct 26 | Ethical/Cultural Relativism | Rachels – The Challenge of Cultural Relativism PDF |
| Oct 31 | The individual’s relationship to a community | Dewey – The Lost Individual PDF |
| Nov 2 | Buddhist approach to perception | Thich Nhat Hanh – PDF 1 |
| Nov 7 | Buddhist Ethics | Thich Nhat Hanh – PDF 2 |
| Nov 9 | Stoic Ethics | Epictetus Book 3 Ch 24, “verses” 1-30, 69-77, 84-88 PDF |
| Nov 14 |  | Epictetus Book 4, Ch 1, “verses” 1-28, 62-73 PDF  |
| Nov 16 | Injustice and Nonviolence | MLK – Letter from Birmingham Jail PDF |
| Nov 21 | Love and Friendship | Aristotle Book 8 Ch 2-4 PDF |
| Nov 23 | THANKSGIVING | THANKSGIVING |
| Nov 28 | Death | The Death of Ivan Ilych Ch 1, 4-6 PDF |
| Nov 30 |  | 30 – The Death of Ivan Ilych Ch 7-12 PDF |
| Dec 5 | Human search for meaning | 5 – The Myth of Sisyphus 119-123 PDF |
| Dec 7 | Groundhog Day |  |
| Dec 12 | Groundhog Day (and review) |  |
| Dec 14 | FINAL EXAM | FINAL EXAM |

If you have any questions about the schedule of readings or the syllabus, please feel free to ask.