

PHL 200: Introduction to Philosophy

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course introduces students to key paradigms in the history of philosophy that have been crucial to the development of the contemporary world and continue to shape our thoughts and practices today. We will survey classical, modern, and contemporary themes with a critical eye towards the hegemony of the Western tradition, while appreciating the variety of its archetypes, including (but not limited to): Buddha, Socrates, Aquinas, Descartes, Kant, Nietzsche, Heidegger and Wittgenstein.

INSTRUCTOR	Matthew Johnson Department of Philosophy
CONTACT	john2603@msu.edu
OFFICE HOURS	M. 3-5p; Tu. 10-11a ... <i>and by appointment</i> 528 South Kedzie Hall
CLASS MEETS	Tu., Th. 1-2:20p 306 Ernst Bessey Hall

Students are expected to be active participants in class discussions and will frequently work in small groups to discuss the material and improve their writing.

GOALS

- ▶ Understand different archetypes that shape the landscape of philosophy, while recognizing the limitations of the Western philosophical tradition
- ▶ Apply philosophical ideas to issues in our contemporary world, such as capitalism, poverty, and alienation
- ▶ Strengthen critical thinking and argumentative writing skills
- ▶ Appreciate the role of philosophy in understanding film and other fine arts

REQUIRED TEXT

Soccio, Douglas J. *Archetypes of Wisdom : An Introduction to Philosophy*. 7th ed. Australia ; Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Cengage Learning, 2010. ISBN-13: 9780495603825

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- ▶ 2 Exams (10/18 & 12/13)..... 50% total, 25% each
- ▶ 3 Essays (9/22, 9/27; 11/3, 11/8; 12/1, 12/6) 45% total, 15% each
- ▶ Class Participation..... 5% total

ATTENDANCE

I expect students to be responsible for their own class attendance. Although I do not keep a formal record of your attendance, your attendance and participation every day in class is crucial for your mastery of concepts and arguments in this course, as well as for learning to respond critically to them. Consequently, it is essential to the grade you can expect to earn.

Please arrive on time for class and prepared to discuss the readings scheduled for that day. This means that you should have read the textbook selections assigned, noting any questions or comments that you might have about the reading. Students should always bring their text with them to class. Before class begins, please silence and put away cell phones and/or other items that might distract you or others from participating in class.

If you are unable to attend class for any reason, it is *your responsibility* to get any handouts, assignments, and/or graded work that you might have missed. Since I will not usually repeat what has been covered for students who do not attend class, I encourage you to exchange contact information with at least one or two other “study buddies” who can let you know any important information via e-mail should that become necessary.

CLASS PARTICIPATION

A small percentage of your grade is based upon the strength of your contribution to both small group and class discussions assessed on the 4.0 scale. Students should be active participants in our discussion of the textbook readings, and be prepared to consider questions about the assigned readings in small groups. From time to time, I may collect in-class group writing assignments and your participation in those exercises would influence your participation grade.

The best way to be an active participant in class is to become engaged in your own learning. Towards this end, I encourage students to keep a reading journal to keep track of author’s positions, record confusing terms in the text, and make note of questions that you have. Active participation in class does not require you to speak continuously; in fact, I think it frequently involves being a careful listener. In any case, participation in class involves the ability to give cogent responses to questions about course readings.

EXAMS

There will be two exams, on 10/18 and 12/13. Each exam counts for 25% of your final grade. The exams will be composed of true/false, multiple choice, and short essay questions that test your comprehension of the assigned readings, and ability to critically analyze the views and arguments presented in the course text and discussions. The final is not cumulative; each exam will cover only the readings assigned for that half of the course.

GRADING SCALE

4.0.....	100 - 90
3.5.....	89 - 85
3	84 - 80
2.5.....	79 - 75
2	74 - 70
1.5.....	69 - 65
1.0.....	64 - 60
0.0.....	< 60

Except in extraordinary situations which are usually documented and/or discussed with me in advance, I do not give make-up exams. Accordingly, students must be in class on the scheduled exam days in order to take the exam.

CRITICAL ESSAYS

Students will submit three essays, 2-3 pages (max. 500 words) in length, in response to a prompt distributed during class at least one week prior to the due date. These will emphasize critical argumentation, i.e., they will require you to understand and respond to the issues discussed in the text by taking a position and offering compelling reasons in support of it. A non-graded draft of your paper for peer review will be due the class period before submission.

Peer Review

During the classes before your essays are due, we will devote roughly 40 minutes to discussion of a draft of your paper with your peers. You will work in 3-person groups in order to engage in critical reflection on the ideas of others as well as your own. While I will not grade your draft or your review of your peers' essays, failure to participate in this exercise will result in a penalty of -1.5 (on the 4.0 scale) for that paper. (E.g., a paper I would grade as a 3.5 would instead be recorded as a 2.0). You will have time after the review to revise your essay before submitting them for grading the following class period.

Late Policy

Unless you have a legitimate excuse documented in writing or discussed with me in advance, I will not accept late essays. Failure to turn your essay in on the due date will result in a 0 for the assignment. If you know that you will be away for a university event that is officially excused, please let me know in advance so we can discuss alternatives.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

[Article 2.3.3](#) of the Academic Freedom Report states: "The student shares with the faculty the responsibility for maintaining the integrity of scholarship, grades, and professional standards." In addition, the Department of Philosophy adheres to the policies on academic honesty specified in General Student Regulation 1.0, Protection of Scholarship and Grades; the all-University Policy on Integrity of Scholarship and Grades; and Ordinance 17.00, Examinations. (See [Spartan Life: Student Handbook and Resource Guide](#) and/or the MSU Web site www.msu.edu.)

Therefore, unless authorized by your instructor, you are expected to complete all course assignments, including homework, lab work, quizzes, tests and exams, without assistance from any source. You are expected to develop original work for this course; therefore, you may not submit course work you completed for another course to satisfy the requirements for this course. Also, you are not authorized to use the www.allmsu.com Web site to complete any course work

in this course. Students who violate MSU rules may receive a penalty grade, including but not limited to a failing grade on the assignment or in the course.

ACCOMMODATION FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students with disabilities should contact the Resource Center for People with Disabilities (RCPD) at the beginning of the semester to develop reasonable accommodations. For information regarding RCPD's services, visit them on the Web at www.rcpd.msu.edu, or call (517) 884-7273 / TTY: (517) 355-1293. Please let me know if you have any special needs or requirements that I should be aware of.

DATE	TOPIC	READING/ASSIGNMENT
TH 9/1	Course introduction	None
TU 9/6	Philosophy and the Search for Wisdom	“What to Expect from this Book” (1-14) “Overview of Classical Themes” (16-20)
TH 9/8	The Asian Sages: Lao-Tzu, Confucius, and Buddha	“The Harmony of Heaven and Earth”— “The Thread of Humanity” (23-40)
TU 9/13		“The Buddha”—“Commentary” (40-54)
TH 9/15	The Wise Man: Socrates	“The General Character of Socrates”— “Socrates at Work (87-102)
TU 9/20		“The Unexamined Life”—“Commentary” (102-116)
TH 9/22	The Naturalist: Aristotle	DRAFT OF PAPER #1 DUE FOR PEER REVIEW “Works”— “Aristotle’s Hierarchy of Explanations” (153-161)
TU 9/27		PAPER #1 DUE “The Four Causes”— “Commentary” (161-177)
TH 9/29	The Scholar: Thomas Aquinas	“The God-Centered Universe”— “Proving the Existence of God” (213-230)
TU 10/4		“Commentary on the Five Ways”— “Commentary” (231-237) “Overview of Modern Themes” (239-244)
TH 10/6	The Rationalist: Descartes	“The Problem of Authority”— “The Cartesian Genesis” (247-261)
TU 10/11		“The Innate Idea of God”— “Commentary” (261-271)
TH 10/13		Film: <i>Aguirre: The Wrath of God</i> (1972)
TU 10/18		MIDTERM EXAM
TH 10/20		Class Cancelled
TU 10/25	The Skeptic: David Hume	“John Locke”— “Commentary” (277-306)
TH 10/27	The Universalist: Immanuel Kant	“The Professor”— “Kant’s Copernican Revolution” (311-323)
TU 11/1		“The Metaphysics of Morals”— “Commentary” (323-335)
TH 11/3	The Materialist: Karl Marx	DRAFT OF PAPER #2 DUE FOR PEER REVIEW “The Prophet”— “Critique of Capitalism” (367-377)
TU 11/8		PAPER #2 DUE “Alienation”— “Commentary” (377-387)
TH 11/10	The Existentialist: Søren Kierkegaard	“Søren Kierkegaard—“Truth as Subjectivity” (391-405)
TU 11/15		“Becoming a Subject”— “Commentary” (405-418)
TH 11/17	The Anti-Philosopher: Friedrich Nietzsche	“The Outsider”— “Attack on Objectivity” (453-464)
TU 11/22		“The Will to Power”—“Commentary” (464-478)

DATE	TOPIC	READING/ASSIGNMENT
TH 11/24		Thanksgiving. No Classes
TU 11/29	The Twentieth Century:	“Two Approaches to Philosophy”—”Martin Heidegger” (483-500)
TH 12/1	Ludwig Wittgenstein and Martin Heidegger	DRAFT OF PAPER #3 DUE FOR PEER REVIEW “Phenomenology: The Science of Beings”—“Witther Philosophy” (500-519)
TU 12/6	Philosophy as a Way of Life	PAPER #3 DUE “The Reemergence of Other Voices”—“Peter Singer: ‘The Dangerous Philosopher’ ” (523-535)
TH 12/8		“Martha C. Nussbaum: ‘Lawyer for Humanity’ ” —“A Vision for You” (535-545)
TU 12/13		FINAL EXAM — 12:45-2:45p