

PHILOSOPHY 1001.001, SPRING 2015

INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY: THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE

I.

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II.

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III.

LOCATION & TIME

205 McMicken

MWF, 10:10-11:05

IV.

SYNOPSIS

What is philosophy? What questions do philosophers ask? What distinctive techniques or skills can be brought to bear on philosophical problems? What makes a question philosophical—rather than scientific, historical, political, and so forth?

In this class we will approach these issues by examining some philosophical theses and arguments regarding knowledge and truth. We will practice skills for reading, thinking, and writing about philosophy. Along the way we will learn some things about who thought what and when, who influenced whom, and what others had to say about it all. These are the materials with which we shall work. Of foremost importance is what we are able to do with those materials.

This is an introductory philosophy course. That means that there are no prerequisites, so we do not expect you to already have any prior experience with philosophy. Sometimes students believe that introductory courses will be easy but that is not usually the case. After all, you will never know less about a subject than before you take an introductory course—you will never again be less prepared than you are right now. This is not a hard course; but it is not an easy course, either.

In this course you will learn some of the background concepts and skills that will help you in more advanced university courses, both in philosophy and in other subjects. This course fulfills the McMicken and General Education Breadth of Knowledge (BoK) area of *Humanities*. It promotes the development of Baccalaureate Competencies skills in *Critical Thinking* and *Effective Communication*.

V.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Michael Lynch's *True to Life* (The MIT Press) is available at the UC and Du Bois bookstores. Other readings will be online, via Blackboard. You should always bring the relevant text to class with you each day.

VI.

BLACKBOARD

You are responsible for information distributed via Blackboard and email. The Blackboard pages will provide copies of the syllabus and reading list, and other class materials. You will need Acrobat Reader to access many of the materials. Blackboard will be used to distribute announcements, including schedule changes, class cancellations, corrections, and information about readings and assignments. Blackboard will also be the mechanism by which you will turn in some assignments. Please be sure that your email address is up to date in Blackboard.

VII.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADES

Your final grade in this course will be determined by a practice quiz (5%), three quizzes (10% each = 30%), two papers (20% each = 40%), and a research project with two parts (10% and 15% = 25%).

Late and Make-up Policy

Quizzes may be made-up before the next class meeting with a 20% penalty on the grade. Assignments submitted after the scheduled deadlines will be penalized 20% per day. Only if a quiz or assignments was missed due to a documented emergency can it be made up after the subsequent class meeting or without a penalty. Jobs, job interviews, vacations, childcare, routine medical appointments, oversleeping, and projects for other classes are not emergencies. Illness where your physician or the University recommend that you stay home will count as medical emergencies for these purposes. Inclement weather does not count if the University is open. Technical and computer difficulties are not legitimate excuses.

Grading Policy and Tips

Every effort will be made to ensure that you understand in advance what is expected of you on each assignment. It is important that you ask questions. If you do not understand any aspect of an assignment, you should ask the instructors as soon as possible, either in class or during office hours if you prefer. If we make a clerical error in calculating your grade, please let us know promptly and we will fix it. If you have a substantial disagreement with a grade, we will be happy to review your assignment. In that case, bring your assignment to us, along with a short letter explaining the mistake that you think we made. We will review your assignment and grade by regrading the entire assignment; note that your grade could be revised upward or downward.

Philosophy is not a “just the facts” sort of discipline; the texts merely provide the material with which we will work. Philosophy involves learning and demonstrating skills of thinking and communicating. Thus, this class requires actively engaging with the material philosophically. Memorizing the texts is neither necessary nor sufficient for getting an ‘A’.

VIII.

PORTABLE ELECTRONIC DEVICES

Many students use laptops, tablets, etc. in class for note taking and for access to online course materials. Such use is permitted so long as it is not distracting to students or instructors, or otherwise disruptive to the classroom environment. **Texting is always distracting.** Please turn off ringers on your cell phones, as well as the audio feedback or speakers on any other electronic devices. Use of headphones, earbuds, or similar is prohibited excepting documented medical need. *Use of portable electronic devices is subject to the usual standards of classroom decorum and common courtesy. You may at any time be asked to discontinue use.*

IX.**INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY**

- (1) If UC is closed during all or part of the class period: No class.
- (3) If UC is delayed or partially closed: check Blackboard and email.
- (4) Inclement weather does not delay or extend scheduled due dates for assignments that are submitted online.
- (5) Use common sense: Do not endanger yourself or others.
- (6) Do not use (5) as an excuse, or abuse the trust implied. As always, you are responsible for any material missed. The Professor will decide whether weather is a legitimate excuse for missing a quiz.

X.**THE FINE PRINT**

You are responsible for knowing and following all University and College regulations, for example with respect to registration, drop or withdrawal, and grading status. It goes without saying, but we will nevertheless, that this course will be conducted according to the University's Student Code of Conduct. *Any student who is academically dishonest will at least fail the course; further actions may be taken.*

Please familiarize yourself with the University's guidelines on academic integrity, online at <<http://www.uc.edu/studentlife/conduct/guide.html>>. Pay special attention to the guidelines regarding plagiarism, which we take very seriously. In particular, note that academic dishonesty is a "strict liability" offense—you do not have to intend to plagiarize to be guilty of plagiarism; it is your responsibility to ensure that your work is your own and that no one else presents your work as theirs.

Any student who, because of a disabling condition, needs special arrangements to meet course requirements must contact us *immediately* so that the appropriate arrangements can be made. (All disabilities must be documented with the University and us.)

Any student who requires accommodation for religious observances must notify the instructor in advance.

All students are expected to have access to the equipment and knowledge to make use of and complete the online and Blackboard-based readings and assignments.

The readings and schedule are subject to change. You should expect to be treated with respect and fairness by the instructors and by your classmates. Among other things, you should expect that your work will be returned in a timely manner, that you understand how your work is graded, and that the instructors make themselves available to answer questions.