

Syllabus: Introduction to Philosophy

Course number: PHI 2010

Meeting Times and Location: Tuesdays and Thursdays days from 1:00-2:15 p.m.

Location: Building 2, Room 304

Instructor: William Butchard, Ph.D.

Email: Please contact me through Blackboard messaging

Course Description and Objectives

What is philosophy? It is similar to science in that each is a rational pursuit of truth. But philosophy differs from science in two crucial ways. It address different questions, and, as a result, employs a different methodology. Scientists come to understand various things about the world by using the scientific method. This involves making observations, forming hypotheses, and testing those hypotheses by making predictions. Scientists proceed in this way because it is the best way to answer the sorts of questions they ask. Philosophers ask questions of a different sort, and, as a result, rely on a different methodology. While scientists ask, for example, what the various causes of cancer are, philosophers ask what it is, in the first place, for one thing to *cause* another. While scientists seek to discover the fundamental building blocks of matter, philosophers seek to discover what it is, in the first place, for something to be material (as opposed, say, to being mental). No amount of laboratory work can answer the philosopher's questions. The philosopher must rely on *the method of possible cases*—otherwise known as *conceptual analysis*. In this course, will explore a number of traditional philosophical issues concerning the nature of knowledge, free will, consciousness, morality, and God.

In addition to familiarizing students with the above topics, the course aims to provide opportunities for student growth in the following Valencia Core Competencies:

- Think clearly, critically, and creatively, analyze, synthesize, integrate and evaluate in many domains of human inquiry
- Make reasoned judgments and responsible commitments
- Act purposefully, effectively, and responsibly
- Communicate with different audiences using varied means

The course also aims to promote the following Valencia General Education Outcomes:

- Demonstrate understanding of the diverse traditions of the world, and an individual's place in it.
- Engage in effective interpersonal, oral, and written communication.
- Demonstrate awareness of personal responsibility in one's civic, social, and academic life.
- Effectively analyze, evaluate, synthesize, and apply information and ideas from diverse sources and disciplines.

College provides an opportunity for you grow as a person. This course was designed to that end. Ultimately, it is up to you to decide whether philosophical reflection is truly valuable. In my view, it is—and I am very excited to be working with you this semester.

Required Readings

1. Textbook: John Chaffee. *The Philosopher's Way* (fourth edition). Pearson (2013)
2. Supplemental readings I will supply electronically in Blackboard

Grade Determination

You can earn a total of 100 percentage points in the course. Each course requirement is worth a certain number of points. The distribution of points is as follows:

- Weekly Reading Quizzes: 10 quizzes (2 points each).
- Writing: 1 paper (20 points—completion required to pass the course.)
- Exams: 5 in-class exams (10 points each)
- Daily Attendance and Participation (10 points, determined by a curve—see policy below)

Here are the details about the factors that determine your grade.

Weekly Reading Quizzes

There will be weekly open-book reading quizzes to be completed in Blackboard in preparation for the coming week's classes. Each quiz will be available to you from Friday afternoon to Sunday night and will need to be completed by Sunday night (11:59) before the school week starts for you to get credit.

Exams

There will be five in-class exams. These will consist of 10 questions (multiple-choice, true-false, and short essay). See attendance policy for policies related to make-up exams.

Writing

There will be one writing assignment. It will require a clear representation of an argument from at least one of the assigned readings and a critical discussion of that argument. Your writing will be graded on the basis of your demonstrated understanding of the course material and your ability to respond to an argument with an illuminating critical observation. The paper will require an extended planning period during which you engage in electronic correspondence with the instructor. **This is not a simple topic approval or a draft submission—it is a joint effort to work out some of the content of your paper before you write it.** Please note that failure to write the paper will result in a failing grade for the entire course.

Attendance and participation

This is the only portion of the course that is based on a curve. There is no fixed number of points that you lose for missing a class. At the end of the semester, I will create an attendance curve and award you between 0 and 10 points depending on where you end up on the curve.

Grade Scale

The grade scale for the course will be as follows:

- 90% to 100%: A
- 80% to 89%: B
- 70% to 79%: C
- 60% to 69%: D
- 0% to 59%: F

Classroom Etiquette and Make-up Work

I strongly encourage you to be a full participant in class discussions. Don't worry about getting something wrong. If something we are discussing is unclear to you, chances are a lot of other people are confused by the same thing, and your input may well help us focus in on the difficulty. Voicing your opinion, putting an idea on the table for examination, or just asking a question can be very helpful in a class discussion. *Always remember to be civil towards people who have different beliefs from yours.*

Lateness is never acceptable. It is nothing short of rude and disrespectful.

Class attendance should be viewed as a responsibility. I will take attendance every class period. If you come to class, you will get a much better handle on the course material. I will pass around the sign-in sheet at the beginning of class. If you are late, or forget to sign in, you will not sign in for that day and will receive no attendance credit. If you have to leave early, please let me know before class. If you just leave without explanation, you may not get attendance credit.

Your attendance score is based on attendance *and* participation. The assumption will be that you participated on the days that you attended and therefore deserve full credit for being in class. But if you spend class time sleeping, texting, surfing the web, checking your email, horsing around, doing work for another class, and the like, I may well count you absent.

Missing class on a day when there is an exam is not something that can be taken lightly because of fairness and exam security—for this reason *you should consider it very unlikely that you will be able to make up missed exams*. I can allow a make-up exam only if you provide proper documentation in a reasonable amount of time. Excusable absences include (e.g.) documented medical emergencies, deaths in the family, and car accidents. Telling me that you were sick or having a roommate write a note will not count as documentation. A conflict with your work schedule and travel plans do not constitute an excuse.

Please note that any problems you have with the particular computer you use to try to complete a weekly reading quiz will not constitute an excuse for missing a quiz.

Academic Honesty

Plagiarism includes copying and submitting as your own a passage from a text, the work of a fellow student; handing in a paper prepared by another as your own; using sources for writing your paper and not citing them in the paper. Plagiarism does cover materials found on web-sites. Note that it is possible to plagiarize even if you cite your sources, if, e.g., the wording is too close to the cited text.

If, in writing a paper, you have any questions about what counts as plagiarism or how to avoid plagiarism, please discuss the paper with me before turning it in.

CLEAR EVIDENCE OF PLAGIARISM OR ANY OTHER FORM OF CHEATING WILL RESULT IN AN AUTOMATIC FAILING GRADE FOR THE ENTIRE COURSE, AND YOU WILL BE REPORTED TO THE DEAN OF STUDENTS FOR POSSIBLE FURTHER DISCIPLINARY PENALTY

For more information on plagiarism (and other forms of academic dishonesty), go to

http://valenciacollege.edu/generalcounsel/policy/default.cfm?policyID=193&volumeID_1=8&navst=0

Students with Disabilities

If you have a disabling condition that may interfere with your ability to successfully complete this course, please register with Office for Students with Disabilities:

<http://valenciacollege.edu/osd/>

They will provide you with the proper documentation for you to show your instructors if you request accommodations.

Topics and Readings

Our pace will depend to some extent on how quickly you grasp the material. As a result, it is not easy to predict when a given reading will be assigned. Therefore, the readings will be assigned as we go, and we may not get to every selection listed. Some of the selections are not in your textbook and will be available on the course website. Those are marked below with an (e).

1. Free Will

Compatibilism

Chaffee: 172-184; 185-192

Harry Frankfurt: Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility (e)

A.J. Ayer: Freedom and Necessity (e)

Libertarianism

Chaffee: 193-202

Roderick M. Chisholm: Human Freedom and the Self (e)

2. God

The Ontological Argument

Chaffee: 376-380

The Cosmological Argument

Chaffee: 380-383

J.L. Mackie: Critique of the Cosmological Argument (e)

The Argument from Design

Chaffee: 383-385

3. Knowledge

Foundationalism

Chaffee: 256-268;

Jonathan Vogel: Cartesian Skepticism and Inference to the Best Explanation (e)

G.E. Moore: Proof of an External world (e)

Idealism

Chaffee: 300-305

Skepticism

Chaffee: 305-365

4. Mind

Mind-Body Dualism versus Materialism

Chaffee: 111-118

Frank Jackson: Epiphenomenal Qualia (e)

Gilbert Harman: The Intrinsic Quality of Experience (e)

John Searle: Can Computers Think? (e)

5. Ethics

Utilitarianism

Chaffee: 506-522

John Stuart Mill: Utilitarianism (e)

Peter Singer: Famine, Affluence, and Morality

Kantian Ethics

Chaffee: 493-506

Onora O'neal: Kantian Deliberations on Famine Problems (e)

Virtue Ethics

Chaffee: 482-492