

Syllabus: Introduction to Philosophy

Course number: PHI 2010

Meeting Times: Tuesdays and Thursdays days from 11:30-2:50 p.m.

Location: Building 1, Room 115

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. First, it addresses different questions. 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 psychological). Philosophers, in brief, ask questions about the notions that are fundamental to our conception of ourselves and of the world. Scientists answer the questions they ask by means of the scientific method. This involves making observations, forming hypotheses, and testing those hypotheses by making predictions. Philosophers, on the other, reflect on the very foundations of science and common sense. It is this “armchair” approach that makes some believe it to be impossible for one philosophical position to be more reasonable than another because it is all “just semantics”. I hope the course will persuade you that philosophy does address matters of substance and that it is possible to make genuine philosophical progress.

We will explore a number of traditional philosophical issues concerning the nature of knowledge, free will, consciousness, morality, and God. This is not a course in which you are expected simply to memorize and regurgitate information. The course is mainly about ideas, and our aim will be to think carefully and critically about the topics mentioned and, more generally, to develop a framework for thinking about the arc, pursuits, and priorities of the rest of our lives. We will question our preconceptions vigorously and work together to establish a communal atmosphere that will make the course both challenging and fun.

What this Course should contribute to your Education

I encourage you to view this course—and your other courses—as a contribution to a larger process. College provides an opportunity for you grow as a person. While day-to-day tasks and deadlines can make college feel like mere busy work, it really is about human flourishing. Your college curriculum is designed to promote growth in the following Valencia Core competencies:

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

This course was designed to contribute to a larger curriculum that revolves around these competencies. Part of Valencia's mission is to provide students with a basic liberal arts education, and education that serves as a foundation for you to develop a mind free habit and prejudice. Valencia's general education program includes goals for this aspect of your education. This course aims to promote the following Valencia General Education Outcomes:

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

Ultimately, it is up to you to decide whether knowledge of the humanities 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 make available in Blackboard

Grade Determination

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

- Reading Quizzes: 10 quizzes (2 points each for a total of **20 points**).
- Writing: 1 paper (**20 points**)
- Exams: 5 in-class exams (10 points each for a total of **50 points**)
- Presentations: 2 presentations (5 points each for a total of **10 points**)

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

Weekly Reading Quizzes

There will be weekly 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 six in-class exams. These will consist of 10 questions (true/false, multiple-choice, and short essay). The exams cover the material in the textbook and what is covered in class. I will post a study guide for each exam in Blackboard. The sixth exam—the final—is cumulative. The

score you get on the final will replace your lowest score of the previous five (unless it is lower than all of those scores).

Attendance and participation

Class attendance should be viewed as a responsibility. I will take attendance every class period, and I consider attendance mandatory, but it will not affect your grade directly. In other words, you will not earn an attendance score. If you come to class, you will get a much better handle on the readings and the issues we discuss. Also, when you miss class on a day when there is an exam, you miss the exam, which will hurt your grade. **Please read the policy below under “Classroom Etiquette and Make-up Work”.**

Presentations

At the beginning of the semester I will divide the class into groups of 4. **Each group will have 2 presentations worth 5 points each.** One of the presentations will be during the first half of the semester, the other will be during the second half. Your task will be to present material covered in the textbook. The presentations will be at least 15 minutes long. I will assign specific content to your group so that you know just what to cover and will ensure that your audience is friendly and helpful. Your group will be graded on a 0-5 scale. You can find a detailed description of the assignment in Blackboard. **Please see the rubric on presentations at the end of the syllabus.**

Writing

There will be one paper. It will require a clear representation of an argument advanced by one of the philosophers we cover in the course 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. You can find a detailed description of the assignment in Blackboard. **Please see the rubric for the paper at the end of the syllabus.**

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 discussion and group work. Don't worry about getting something wrong. If something is unclear to you, it is probably unclear to several other people, 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.**

Missing class on a day when there is an exam is not something that can be taken lightly because of fairness and exam security. The final exam is cumulative and can count twice to replace a “0” on an exam. You should consider it very unlikely that you will be able to make up a missed exam. I can allow such make-up work only if your circumstances are truly extreme and you provide proper documentation in a reasonable amount of time. Excusable absences include absence due to documented medical emergencies and deaths in the family. Telling me that you were sick or having a roommate write a note will not count as documentation. A conflict with prior travel plans does not constitute an excuse.

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 in Blackboard. Those are marked below with an (e).

1. God

Saint Anselm: The Ontological Argument

Gaunilo: On Behalf of the Fool
J.L. Mackie: Critique of the Cosmological Argument (e)
William Paley: The Argument from Design (e)
Saint Thomas Aquinas: Five Ways to Prove the Existence of God
Paul Davies: A Naturalistic Account of the Universe (e)

2. Free Will

Harry Frankfurt: Alternate Possibilities and
A.J. Ayer: Freedom and Necessity
Roderick M. Chisholm: Human Freedom and the Self

3. Knowledge

René Descartes: Meditations on First Philosophy, I and II
George Berkely: Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous
G.E. Moore: Proof of an External world
David Lewis: Elusive knowledge
Jonathan Vogel: Cartesian Skepticism and Inference to the best explanation (e)

4. Mind

John Searle: Can Computers Think?
Frank Jackson: Epiphenomenal Qualia
Paul Churchland: Jackson's Knowledge Argument

5. Ethics and Justice

John Stuart Mill: Utilitarianism
Peter Singer: All Animals are Equal
Immanuel Kant: Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Morals
Onora O'Neill: Kantian Deliberations on Famine Problems (e)
Norman Daniels: Is There a Right to Health Care, and, if So, What Does it Encompass? (e)

Scoring Rubric for Oral Presentations

	Satisfactory	Needs Improvement
PRESENCE	1	0
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Demonstrated appropriate body language• Maintained eye contact with audience• Spoke with appropriate volume• Demonstrated poise		
LANGUAGE SKILLS	1	0
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Used vocabulary and good grammar• Spoke rather than read• Spoke with appropriate volume• Presented appropriate background information		
ORGANIZATION	1	0
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stated clear objectives• Gave information a logical structure• Used signposting/transitions		
MASTERY OF THE SUBJECT	1	0
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Presented only pertinent information• Provided appropriate depth of commentary• Was able to answer questions		
VISUAL AIDS	1	0
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Used appropriate transparencies, slides, handouts, etc.• Used appropriate audio, video, etc.		

TOTAL SCORE _____ / 5

COMMENTS:

Scoring Rubric for Papers

	Good	Satisfactory	Needs Improvement
FOLLOWED INSTRUCTIONS.....	2	1	0
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explained an argument from one of the specified course readings• Criticized the argument• Considered possible replies• Assessed the replies			
LANGUAGE SKILLS.....	2	1	0
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Used appropriate vocabulary and good grammar• Wrote clearly• Presented appropriate background information			
ORGANIZATION.....	2	1	0
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stated clear objectives• Gave information a logical structure• Used signposting/transitions			
MASTERY OF THE SUBJECT.....	2	1	0
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Represented the author's argument accurately• Presented relevant course material accurately			
CRITICISM AND COMMENTARY.....	2	1	0
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Presented a criticism that engages the author• Addressed possible replies• Furthered the discussion			

TOTAL SCORE _____ / 10

COMMENTS: