

Philosophy 006 – Critical Thinking

Section 01

Spring 2014

M/W/F 10:00 AM – 10:50 AM

Room: Mendocino Hall 3009

Satisfies General Education Area C3 (see course objectives/requirements below)

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Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday 11:00 AM –
12:00 PM, Mendocino Hall 3032

I do not feel obligated to believe that the same God who endowed us with sense, reason, and intellect had intended for us to forgo their use...

- Galileo Galilee (1564 – 1642)

*Tiger got to hunt, bird got to fly;
Man got to sit and wonder 'why, why, why?'
Tiger got to sleep, bird got to land;
Man got to tell himself he understand.*

- Kurt Vonnegut, *Cat's Cradle*

"Any Philosophy that can be put in a nut shell belongs in one."

- Hillary Putnam

Course Description

Course Catalogue: "Introduction to Philosophy: Knowledge, World and Self. Representative selection of philosophical problems will be explored in areas such as knowledge, reality, religion, science, politics, art and morals."

What does it mean to believe something? How do you know that what you believe is true and represents reality? Is there a real, authentic reality outside of what you perceive to be real or is reality nothing but a subjective understanding? Is there a God? What does it mean to say that you know that you are a living, thinking thing? Is there an absolute right and wrong or is right and wrong nothing but what we as individuals or cultures determine to be right and wrong? Are you free or are you a determined being? Why should we care at all? These are questions that many of us – all of us – ask or have asked at one time or another. Our answers form the background upon which we live our lives and in some measure determine the way that we interact with the world and with others. For centuries, philosophers have struggled (as we all do) to answer these questions. This class will investigate many of the answers that philosophers have proposed. We will evaluate not only what these philosophers have said, but at the same time our own answers as well with the goal of understanding not only the answers given but the importance of the questions themselves. Philosophy is the love of wisdom, and it is my hope that by the end of this class we will have a better understanding of what that statement means and why the pursuit of philosophy is important to our lives.

Required Textbook

Rauchut, Nils Ch. (2010). *Readings on the Ultimate Questions: an introduction to philosophy, 3rd edition*. Prentice Hall: Boston.

Learning Objectives

Course Objectives/Learning Objectives:

- 1) Provide students with an introduction to many of the traditional issues/problems in the study of philosophy.
- 2) Review a number of traditional and modern philosophical solutions to those problems.
- 3) Develop students' critical thinking abilities and analytic skills through analysis and critique of these positions.
- 4) Demonstrate a critical understanding and appreciation of diverse arguments on major philosophical issues such as the existence or non-existence of God; the nature of Truth; the requirements of reality; the concept of the self; the nature and limits of knowledge; and the nature of values: aesthetic, moral, and religious.
- 5) Formulate and argue, through class discussions and written work, for a position on a philosophical issue such as the possibility of knowledge or the origins of morality.
- 6) Demonstrate an overall understanding of the nature of philosophical questions and pursuits.
- 7) Encourage students to analyze their own ideas, beliefs and presuppositions in order to create a rationally informed and defensible philosophic position.

General Education Guidelines:

This course satisfies General Education Requirements in Area C3. Student Learning Objectives for Area C3 courses can be viewed at: <http://www.csus.edu/acaf/Portfolios/GE/geareaC3.stm>

These course objectives and general education guidelines will be satisfied through a variety of practical assessments including quizzes, group work, essay writing and verbal communication (class/group participation).

Student Standards of Conduct

Plagiarism and/or cheating will not be tolerated in this class. All those who engage in these activities will receive a zero on the associated assignment. In addition, all incidents of cheating and/or plagiarism will be reported to the department chair and to the Judicial Officer in the Office of Student Affairs. It is your responsibility to both know and adhere to Sac State's Academic Honesty Policy. This policy can be found at the following address: <http://www.csus.edu/umannual/student/UMA00150.htm>

In-Class Participation: Purposely "obstructing" the viewpoint of another student in the classroom during classroom discussions is prohibited. This class will involve many discussions concerning the material assigned for homework and the material presented during the classroom lectures. This being a philosophy course, many of these discussions *may* challenge certain beliefs that you hold. Open dialog and proper methods of argumentation are not only expected but required for this class.

Attendance/Participation: Students are expected to attend each class session. This class will involve many in-class discussions and in-class group work. Students are expected to have completed the readings and participate in all in-class discussions. Attendance and participation will factor into the final participation grade at the conclusion of the term (see “Total Point Breakdown” below).

Cell Phones and Computers: Please set your phone to vibrate before class! Cell phones are not to be used in class – for any reason. If you must take a call (which I discourage unless an emergency) please step outside before you answer. No texting or Internet use will be allowed in class (unless directed by me).

Disability Accommodations

If you have a disability and require accommodations, you will need to provide disability documentation to SSWD, Lassen Hall 1008, (916) 278-6955. Please discuss your accommodation needs with me after class or during my office hours early in the semester.

Evaluation/Homework Assignments

Group Work

Group Quizzes: Every Friday there will be a *group* quiz where students will be able to demonstrate an understanding of the material discussed that week. The first quiz will be held on Friday, February 7th (please see the reading and assignment schedule at the conclusion of this syllabus for a complete quiz schedule). Each group will hand in one quiz, and you will be evaluated as a group. Each quiz will be worth a total of 15 points. The lowest score on one quiz will be dropped at the conclusion of the semester. Students will be assigned by random selection to a group on Friday, January 31st (the third day of class) and will remain with that same group throughout the semester. There will be a total of 180 possible quiz points at the conclusion of the term. There will be no make-up quizzes if you miss a quiz.

In-Class Group Work: There will also be a number of in-class group exercises throughout the semester that combined will be worth a total of 40 possible points. All in class work is to be completed during the class session in which the assignment is given. There will be no make-ups for a missed in class assignment.

Group Evaluations: Before the final lecture and final exam review on May 16th, students will be required to evaluate each of their group members. These evaluations will factor into the participation grade (see “Total Point Breakdown” below).

Essays:

There will be two essays in this class. For each assignment, you will be provided with assignment topics, structural details and a grading rubric two weeks prior to the due date for each essay. Essays must be handed in at the beginning of class on the day that they are due. Late essays will be docked 5 points for every day that they are late (not every class session). If your essay is late, you must arrange a method to hand in the essay with me after the class that the essays are due.

Essay #1 Due: Friday, March 14th
Essay #2 Due: Friday, May 16th

Students are expected to adhere to the guidelines posted in “How to Analyze a Philosophical Essay” that is located on the CSUS Department of Philosophy webpage. This information will be reviewed in class on Monday and Wednesday of Week 5. Below is the link to the webpage: <http://www.csus.edu/phil/Guidance/How%20to%20Write%20an%20Analysis.htm>

Examinations:

There will be two in-class examinations in this class (a midterm and a final exam). There will be a comprehensive review held on the Friday before each exam. There will be no make-ups on exams - except with “extraordinary” circumstances - so schedule outside activities accordingly. Note: Extraordinary circumstances do not include athletic activities, vacations, car not starting, not feeling like it, etc. A doctor’s note (or something similar) will be required to schedule a make-up exam.

Midterm Exam: Monday, March 17th (Week 8)

Final Exam: TBA (Held during finals week May 19th – May 23rd)

Grading Scale

All exams/essays will be graded based upon a 100 pt scale where 1pt = 1% of the total.

A Outstanding (96 – 100 pts)
B+ Above Satisfactory (86 – 89 pts)
B- Below Satisfactory (80 – 82 pts)
C Average (73 – 75 pts)
D Poor (60 – 69 pts)

A- Very Good (90 – 95 pts)
B Satisfactory (83 - 86 pts)
C+ Above Average (76-79 pts)
C- Below Average (70 – 72 pts)
F Unacceptable (59 and lower pts)

Total Point Breakdown

Quizzes: 180 possible pts

Essay #1: 100 possible pts

Essay #2: 100 possible pts

Examinations: 200 possible pts

In Class Group Work: 40 possible points

Participation (determined through class participation, group participation and group evaluations) 40 possible points

Total Points Possible 660

Final Grade Breakdown: **A** 660 – 631 pts; **A-** 630 – 591 pts; **B+** 590 – 565 pts; **B** 564 – 545 pts; **B-** 543 - 525 pts; **C+** 523 – 499 pts; **C** 498 - 479 pts; **C-** 478 – 459 pts; **D** 458 – 393 pts; **F** 392 or lower points

Reading/Assignment Schedule

Week 1: Class Introduction – What Is Philosophy and Why We Are Not Entitled to Our Opinions?

Reading: For Mon: Class Overview

For Wed: “The Value of Philosophy” by BERTRAND RUSSELL

For Fri: “Everyone has an opinion about everything!” – lecture on the meaning and value of our opinions

Week 2: Is Philosophy Even Worth A Nickle?

- Reading: For Mon/Wed: "What is Enlightenment?" By IMMANUEL KANT
For Wed/Fri: "Letter to Menoecus" by EPICURUS
For Fri: Group Quiz, In-Class Group Work*
- Week 3: What I Know Is What I Know
*Readings: For Mon/Wed: "Meditations 1 and 2" by DESCARTES
For Fri: Group Quiz, In-Class Group Work*
- Week 4: What I Know Is What I Know ... But I Can't Actually Tell You!
*Reading: For Mon: "A Skeptic's Manifesto" by MICHAEL SHERMER
For Wed: "An Essay Concerning Human Understanding" by JOHN LOCKE
For Fri: Group Quiz and finish John Locke*
- Week 5: Everyone Thinks They Know How to Write A Philosophy Paper!
*Readings: For Mon: Review of How to Write a Philosophical Essay
For Wed: "I write good!" – A short Discussion about grammar
For Fri: Group Quiz and In-Class Group work
Review For Essay #1*
- Week 6: Well, At Least I'm Free, Right?
*Reading: For Mon: "Determinism" by RICHARD TAYLOR
For Wed: "Compatibilism" by W.T.STACE
For Fri: Group Quiz and "Human Freedom and the Self" by RODERICK CHISHOLM*
- Week 7: When I Look in the Mirror, I See Something There
*Reading: For Mon: Locke's Theory of Personal Identity (Article will be posted on Blackboard under "Additional Readings") and "A Critique of Locke's Theory of Personal Identity" by THOMAS REID
For Wed: "Where Am I?" by DANIEL DENNETT
Fri: Group Quiz and Review for Midterm Examination
Due: Essay #1, Friday, March 14th*
- Week 8: *For Midterm Exam
For Wed/Fri Group Exercises (materials provided in-class)*
- Week 9: Spring Break March 24th – 30th
- Week 10: Wait... Am I Just a Thinking Substance Or Is There Something More?
*Readings: For Wed: An Argument for Dualism from "Alcibiades I" by PLATO
For Fri: "A Critique of Dualism" by PAUL CHURCHLAND and "A Defense of Dualism" by JOHN FOSTER
Monday March 31st – Holiday (no class held)*
- Week 11: Mind Games Continued
*Reading: For Mon: Continue lecture from Friday of Week 10 (no new reading)
For Wed: "The Nature of Mind" by DAVID ARMSTRONG*

*For Fri: Group Quiz and Alan Turning and Can Machines Think
(article provided on Blackboard)*

- Week 12: Is There A God Problem?
*Readings: For Mon: Building a God Exercise (Provided in Class)
For Wed: "The Five Ways" by ST. THOMAS AQUINAS
For Fri: Group Quiz, "The Ontological Argument" by NILS
RAUHUT and "The Cosmological Argument" by RICHARD TAYLOR*
- Week 13: Pascal Loved to Gambel but What if God Doesn't Know How to Play the Game?
*Readings: For Mon: "Pascal's Wager" by GEORGE SCHLESINGER
For Wed: "The Euthyphro Problem" by Plato (Provided on
Blackboard)
For Fri: Group Quiz, Group Exercises*
- Week 14: There's Right and Then There's Kinda Right, Right?
*Readings: For Mon: What is Ethics and Why Should We Care – The problem of
Relativism ("Relativism" by JANET RADCLIFFE
RICHARDS)
For Wed: Utilitarianism - "The Principle of Utility" by JEREMY
BENTHAM
For Fri: Group Quiz and "Groundwork of the Metaphysics of
Morals" by IMMANUEL KANT and Review of Essay #2*
- Week 15: Take the Middle Path
*Reading: For Mon: Kant Continued and "Nicomachean Ethics" ARISTOTLE
For Wed: Aristotle Continued (no new reading)
For Fri: Group Quiz and The Buddhist Path – The Five Ways
(Provided on Blackboard)*
- Week 16: Picking Up The Pieces ... What Does It All Mean
*Reading: For Mon: "Apology" by Plato (Section 1 of the text)
For Wed: "The Problem of the Point of View" by James Rachels
(Posted on Blackboard)
For Friday: Group Quiz and Review for Final Exam
Due: Essay Number 2, Friday, May 16th*

Week 17: Final Examination TBA

Welcome to Philosophy 006!