

PHIL 1301

**INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY**

Mondays and Wednesdays 10:30-11:50

Undergraduate Learning Center 116

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**Office Hours:** Mondays and Wednesdays 2:00-3:00 and by appointment

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**Office Location:** Worrell Hall, TA Office, 1<sup>st</sup> floor

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

The study of philosophy involves careful and intensive exploration of some of life's most puzzling questions. Who am I? What does it mean to live a good life? What, if anything, is real and/or true? What, if anything, do I know? What, exactly, is justice and fairness—and how are these things to be implemented in society?

This course offers an introduction to some of these timeless questions, and to how a number of philosophers have attempted to answer them. We will focus, in particular, on three "big questions": (1) What does it mean to be a philosopher, or to lead one's life philosophically? (2) What is knowledge? and (3) What is justice?

As you explore these questions, you will gain experience reading critically a number of fascinating, yet challenging, philosophical texts. You will learn to identify main claims and evaluate argument structure. You will also gain confidence in assessing the merits of the arguments you encounter. You shall develop your philosophical writing skills by preparing biweekly, structured journal entries on the philosophical ideas you are engaging. You will analyze and debate philosophical questions with your peers in class, and you will explore the question of how to live your own life philosophically.

**SPECIFIC LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

- To gain familiarity with a number of important canonical and contemporary philosophical works
- To learn to read, closely and critically, difficult philosophical texts
- To gain competency identifying and explaining, in your own words, main claims and argument structure
- To develop critical thinking and writing skills as part of this process, and put these skills into practice in your regular journal assignments and in-class writing activities
- To learn to philosophize creatively about timeless philosophical questions
- To consider ways to be philosophical in one's day-to-day life

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- You will complete at least one in-class writing exercise during each lecture. This exercise will often consist in a “free-write” response to a philosophical question we are considering in class. You are allowed to miss/skip **two** of these in-class writing exercises. After that, your grade for this particular assignment (not for the full course) will be dropped by one letter grade for each in-class exercise that you miss.
- You will complete a number of journal entries about the assigned readings for various lectures. Each journal entry is due **by 9:00am** on the day of the lecture that corresponds with the readings on which you are writing your journal entry. **Note that journal entries are not due for every day of class. It is your responsibility to check the syllabus to see if you are required to submit a journal for a particular day.** Further instructions:

1. Each journal entry should include two full paragraphs—no more and no less. In the first paragraph you will identify the **main claim** of the article(s) you have read, and the **reasons** that the philosopher has offered in support of that main claim. In the second paragraph you will reflect upon the philosophical argument you are assessing. Do you agree or disagree with the argument—and why? *Further instructions for writing journal entries can be found at the end of this syllabus and on the slides from the first day of class.*

2. Note that late submissions will not be accepted under any conditions, so you should plan on submitting your journal entries **before** 9:00am to avoid any technical complications, etc.

3. Journal entries will be graded on a Pass/Fail basis. You are allowed to fail and/or skip **two** journal entries without negative consequences for your grade. After this point, you will be dropped one full letter grade for each journal entry that you fail and/or miss. There will be **one** extra credit opportunity for journal assignments.

4. **Do not email your instructors to find out if a journal entry is due for a particular day.** We will not respond to these emails, as the information is available on the syllabus.

- You will take a midterm and a final exam.
- Final notes: for the first three weeks of class, the TAs will send (individual) emails to those who have failed a journal entry with an explanation for why that assignment was failed. After that, it is the student's responsibility to make an appointment with the TA to discuss what her/his assignment was failed.

## **GRADES**

- Journal entries – 40%
- In-class writing exercises – 30%
- Midterm exam – 15%
- Final exam – 15%

## **RULES AND GENERAL EXPECTATIONS**

- If you want to use a laptop in class, you must sit in the front rows. You are expected to use your laptop respectfully (i.e. for purposes of note-taking only). If you are caught accessing inappropriate content on your laptop (that is, if you are caught using your laptop for something other than note-taking purposes), you will not be permitted to turn in your in-class free-write for the day. Furthermore, you may be asked to leave the class. There will be times during class when I ask you to close your laptops. If you do not do this during the designated times, you will not be permitted to turn in your in-class writing activity, and you may be asked to leave the class. Laptops are a privilege, not a right; the instructor has the right to prohibit laptop use at her discretion.
- Texting and other phone use is also prohibited in class unless special permission is sought from and granted by Dr. Reed-Sandoval. If you are caught texting or using your phone, you will not be permitted to turn in your in-class writing exercise. You may also be asked to leave the class.
- Filming, photographing and otherwise recording lecture is prohibited unless special permission is sought from and granted by Dr. Reed-Sandoval.
- Please bring your textbook to class each day, and also a paper that you will use and turn in for your free-write activities.
- Be respectful of others (that is, of your fellow students and instructors). Raise your hand if you wish to speak. Do not interrupt, demean, or otherwise disrespect others. This list of problematic behaviors is not exhaustive; other forms of disrespectful behavior will not be tolerated.
- Do not start packing up your bag to leave until class is dismissed. If you are caught doing this you will not be allowed to turn in your in-class writing assignment for the day.

- Academic integrity is a legitimate concern for every member of the campus community; all share in upholding the fundamental values of honesty, trust, respect, fairness, responsibility, and professionalism. By choosing to join the UTEP community, students accept the expectations of the Scholastic Dishonesty Policy and are encouraged when faced with choices to always take the morally sound path. Students enrolling in UTEP assume the obligation to conduct themselves in a manner compatible with UTEP's function as an educational institution. Students should review the university's policies at: <http://admin.utep.edu/Default.aspx?PageContentID=2084&tabid=30292>
- UTEP seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services and activities for persons with disabilities. If the student has a systematic physical, cognitive, or psychological disability and requires accommodations, she or he should contact the instructor by the second week of classes so arrangements can be made with the Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) at 915-747-5148 or [cass@utep.edu](mailto:cass@utep.edu).
- If you would like help writing papers for this course (from brainstorming ideas to revising for grammar and content), please contact by email [uwc@utep.edu](mailto:uwc@utep.edu) or by phone 915-747-5112, or visit the University Writing Center located in Library 227.

### **REQUIRED TEXT**

Forrest E. Baird (editor). 2003. *Philosophic Classics: From Plato to Derrida (Sixth Edition)*. Upper Saddle Creek, NJ: Pearson Publishing, Etc.

### **GRADE SCALE**

90-100 = A

80-89 = B

70-79 = C

60-69 = D

59 and lower = F

### **READING AND TEACHING SCHEDULE<sup>1</sup>**

Monday, August 24

- Introduction to Course.

Wednesday, August 26

- Being a Philosopher

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<sup>1</sup> This schedule may be revised at Dr. Reed-Sandoval's discretion.

- Miguel Leon-Portilla. 1963. "The Birth of Philosophy among the Nahuas." In *Aztec Thought and Culture: A Study of the Ancient Nahuatl Mind*. Norman: the University of Oklahoma press pp. 3-24.

Monday, August 31

- Being a Philosopher
- Plato. "The Apology." In Forrest E. Baird (editor) 2003. *Philosophical Classics: From Plato to Derrida*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc., pp. 21-37.
- **Journal entry due today**

Wednesday, September 2

- Being a Philosopher
- Plato. "Euthyphro." In Forrest E. Baird (editor) 2003. *Philosophical Classics: From Plato to Derrida*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc., pp. 8-20.
- **Journal entry due today**

Monday, September 7

- No class – UTEP closed for Labor Day
- **No journal entry due for today**

Wednesday, September 9

- No class- Dr. Reed-Sandoval away at conference
- **No journal entry due for today**
- **TAs will be holding extra office hours this week for students who want extra help on their journal assignments. Students who visit a TA this week to discuss improving their journal assignments are eligible for extra credit for their journal grade.**

Monday, September 14

- Being a Philosopher
- Harry G. Frankfurt. 1998. "On Bullshit." In *The Importance of What We Care About: Philosophical Essays*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 117-133.
- **Journal entry due today**

Wednesday, September 16

- Being a Philosopher
- **No journal entry due for today**

- Kristie Dotson. 2014. "Philosophy from the Position of Service." Essay/interview in *Philosophy-her*. Access at <http://politicalphilosopher.net/2015/01/09/featured-philosopher-kristie-dotson/>
- Amy Reed-Sandoval. 2014. "Cross-Cultural Exploration: Reflections on Doing Philosophy with Triqui Children in Oaxaca." In *Teaching Ethics* 12(1) pp. 77-90.

Monday, September 21

- Knowledge and Skepticism
- Plato. "Book VII" of *The Republic*. In *Philosophical Classics: From Plato to Derrida*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc., pp. 119-124.
- **Journal entry due today**

Wednesday, September 23

- Knowledge and Skepticism
- In-class watch: *The Truman Show* (Peter Weir, 1998)
- **No journal entry due for today**

Monday, September 28

- Knowledge and Skepticism
- René Descartes. "Meditations I and II" of *Meditations on the First Philosophy*. In *Philosophical Classics: From Plato to Derrida*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc., pp. 384-391.
- **Journal entry due today**

Wednesday, September 30

- Knowledge and Skepticism
- John Locke. *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Book I, Chapter I and Book II, Chapters I, II, III, V, VI, VII, VIII and XII. In *Philosophical Classics: From Plato to Derrida*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc.
- **Journal entry due today**

Monday, October 5

- Knowledge and Skepticism
- John Locke. *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Book IV, Chapters I, II, IV and XI. In *Philosophical Classics: From Plato to Derrida*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc.
- **Journal entry due today**

Wednesday, October 7

- Knowledge and Skepticism
- George Berkeley. "The First Dialogue" of *Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous, in Opposition to Sceptics and Atheists*. In *Philosophical Classics: From Plato to Derrida*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc., pp. 622-646.
- **Journal entry due for today**

Monday, October 12

- Knowledge and Skepticism
- **No journal entry due for today**
- George Berkeley. "The Second Dialogue" of *Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous, in Opposition to Sceptics and Atheists*. In *Philosophical Classics: From Plato to Derrida*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc., pp. 646-658.

Wednesday, October 14

- Knowledge and Skepticism
- George Berkeley. "The Third Dialogue" of *Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous, in Opposition to Sceptics and Atheists*. In *Philosophical Classics: From Plato to Derrida*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc., pp. 659-680.
- **Journal entry due today**

Monday, October 19

- Knowledge and Skepticism
- David Hume. *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*. Section IV, Parts I and II and Section V, Parts I and II
- **Journal entry due today**

Wednesday, October 21

- Wrap-up of unit on Knowledge and Skepticism
- **No journal entry due for today**
- Review for Midterm Exam

Monday, October 26

- Midterm Exam
- **No journal entry due for today**

Wednesday, October 28

- Feminist Epistemology/Situated Knowledge
- Lorraine Code. 1981. "Is the Sex of the Knower Epistemologically Significant?" In *Metaphilosophy* 12 (3 & 4).
- **No journal entry due today**

Monday, November 2

- Feminist Epistemology/Situated Knowledge
- Linda Martín Alcoff. 2010. "Sotomayor's Reasoning." In *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 48(1), pp. 122-138.
- **Journal entry due today**

Wednesday, November 4

- Feminist Epistemology/Situated Knowledge
- Miranda Fricker. 2006. "Powerlessness and Social Interpretation." *Episteme* pp. 96-108.
- **Journal entry due today**

Monday, November 9

- Feminist Epistemology/Situated Knowledge
- Kristie Dotson. 2011. "Tracking Epistemic Violence, Tracking Practices of Silencing." In *Hypatia* 26 (2) 236-257.
- **Journal entry due today**

Wednesday, November 11

- Feminist Epistemology/Situated Knowledge
- Charles Mills. 2007. "White Ignorance." In Shannon Sullivan and Nancy Tuana (editors) *Race and Epistemologies of Ignorance*. Albany: State University of New York Press, pp. 11-38.
- **No journal entry due today**

Monday, November 16

- Political Philosophy

- Plato. "Crito." In *Philosophical Classics: From Plato to Derrida*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc., pp. 38-46
- **Journal entry due today**

Wednesday, November 18

- Political Philosophy
- Jean-Jacques Rousseau. "The Social Contract." In *Philosophical Classics: From Plato to Derrida*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc. pp. 765-774.
- **No journal entry due for today**

Monday, November 23

- Political Philosophy
- Mary Wollstonecraft. "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman." In *Philosophical Classics: From Plato to Derrida*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc. pp. 900-904.
- Simone de Beauvoir. "The Second Sex" (Introduction). In *Philosophical Classics: From Plato to Derrida*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc. pp. 1177-1188.
- **Journal entry due today**

Wednesday, November 25

- Political Philosophy
- Karl Marx. *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (Parts 1 and 2). In *Philosophical Classics: From Plato to Derrida*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc. pp. 995-1003.
- **Journal entry due today**

Monday, November 30

- Political Philosophy
- Karl Marx. Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 (section on "Alienated Labor"). In *Philosophical Classics: From Plato to Derrida*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc. pp. 986-994.
- **No journal entry due for today**

Wednesday, December 2

- Wrap-up of course and review for final exam
- **No journal entry due for today**

## **GUIDELINES FOR JOURNAL ENTRIES**

The purpose of the “journal entries” writing assignment is to give you opportunities to practice critical thinking and writing, as well as argument reconstruction, while also giving you a forum in which to develop your own philosophical views. Here are the specific requirements for your journal entries:

### **In Paragraph 1 you should:**

1. Identify, in no more than 1-2 sentences, the **main claim** of the philosophical text you have read for the day. What is the one main idea that the philosopher you are reading is trying to convince you of? State the main claim as clearly, concisely and accurately as you can. Often, in philosophy, less is more!
2. List the **reasons** that the philosopher gives in support of her main claim. What does the philosopher say to support her view? Try to list all of the reasons provided. As before, list them clearly, concisely and accurately.

### **In Paragraph 2 you should:**

Give a short (5-6-sentence) response to the philosopher’s argument. Do you agree or disagree with the philosopher—and why? Give at least one compelling reason for your opinion. Don’t simply say: “because that’s how I feel” or “because that’s what my teachers taught me to believe”. Argue philosophically for your view!