

PHIL 1050 – Introduction to Philosophy  
Section .007 - TR, 9:30 – 10:50 a.m., WH 317  
Section .008 - TR, 2:00 – 3:20 p.m., LANG 205  
Spring 2009

Instructor: Nathan Bell  
xnathanbellx@gmail.com  
Office: EESAT 334  
Hours: TR, 12:30 – 1:50 p.m., or by appt.

## INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

Course Description: Philosophy is a term used alternately to describe an academic field of study and peoples' personal belief systems, with the common feature of both being questions which are unanswerable by other fields of study, such as "does God exist?" or "what is knowledge?" In this course, we will examine philosophical topics in order to see how some of the greatest thinkers of the world have answered such questions. This course will give you a broad introduction to academic philosophy, but will also help you to examine, if you choose to, your own beliefs.

Required Text: *Western Philosophy: An Anthology*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., ed. John Cottingham (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008). This textbook contains the majority of the reading for the course, which means that you *cannot* pass this course without having regular access to this book. Additional reading materials may be provided by me.

### Course Requirements and Grading:

**Reading Quizzes (10%):** Eight to ten reading quizzes will be given *randomly* throughout the semester, with your two lowest quiz scores being dropped at the end of the semester. These quizzes serve to ensure that the assigned reading is being done, and are designed to be easy for anyone who has done the reading. *Please note that quizzes cannot be made up. Since these quizzes will usually be at the beginning of class, anyone more than a couple of minutes late to class will potentially miss a quiz. Also, anyone who attempts to show up to take the quiz and then leave shortly after (without giving a good reason) will receive a zero on that quiz.*

**Blackboard (10%):** You will be expected to participate in online message board discussions on Blackboard (<http://webct.unt.edu>). Your login name and password are the same as for the UNT system. There will be 8 or more question-based discussion topics posted throughout the semester; to get full credit you must participate in at least 6 of them. Acceptable responses must be at least 5 sentences long, and cannot be a blatant repeat of another student's response. All discussion topics will be open for 2 weeks from the time they are opened. *The Blackboard site will also contain all handouts for the course, so you always have access to necessary course information.*

**Essay (20%):** You are required to write a 3 to 5 page paper in which you examine a philosophical issue of your choice. This assignment will be due on *Thursday, March 12<sup>th</sup> at class time*. Further information can be found on the third page of this syllabus.

**Exams (60% – 3 @ 20% each):** There will be three exams in this course, two spaced throughout the semester and a "final" exam. These exams are designed to test the extent to which you understand the material from readings and lectures. The final exam may have a comprehensive element to it, but will be largely non-comprehensive.

## Class Policies

**Attendance:** Attendance is *required* for this course. While attendance is not graded as such, attendance is crucial to an understanding of the course material. Also, repeated absences will result in you missing quizzes, which will naturally result in a low overall quiz grade. Let me be excruciatingly clear that *poor attendance will result in a lower grade*.

**Late Assignment Policy:** Exams and assignments may not be made up or turned in late without an acceptable excuse, and even then there may be a point deduction. Regardless, I strongly encourage you to contact me as soon as possible if you miss an exam or an assignment deadline, no matter what your excuse (or lack of). As to what constitutes an ‘acceptable excuse,’ I generally try to be understanding of real world problems, however, *I do reserve the right to refuse any make-up exam or late assignment for **any reason** with the exception of a family or medical emergency*.

**Plagiarism:** Plagiarism will *absolutely not be tolerated* in this course. Plagiarism is defined by the University of North Texas as follows:

- (a) the knowing or negligent use by paraphrase or direct quotation of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgement and
- (b) the knowing or negligent unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or by an agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials.

[http://www.unt.edu/policy/UNT\\_Policy/volume3/18\\_1\\_11.html](http://www.unt.edu/policy/UNT_Policy/volume3/18_1_11.html)

Any acts of plagiarism will result in a grade of zero for the assignment involved and will be reported to the Office of Students Rights and Responsibilities.

**Classroom Behavior:** Respect must be shown for both me and for your fellow classmates at all times. This means being quiet while others are speaking and refraining from disrespectful comments to others. However, this also includes being on time for class, not leaving early, having your phone on silent, refraining from disrespectful comments in on-line discussion, and any other actions which may be distracting to the class. Repeated class disruptions will result in a lower grade or, in extreme cases, permanent removal from class with a final course grade of “F.” Also, laptop and cell-phone use of any kind is **not** allowed in my classroom.

**Disability Accommodation:** Anyone requiring special accommodations should contact me at their discretion during the first week of class. Any special accommodations approved by the Office of Disability Accommodation will be fully given to the extent specified by the policies of the ODA and the University.

### **PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS COURSE SYLLABUS IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE!**

This includes the essay criteria and reading schedule! Changes will be announced in class. Missing announced changes due to unexcused absences will *not* excuse you from missed or late assignments, readings, or exams!

“The unexamined life is not worth living.” – Socrates, from Plato’s *Apology*.

## ESSAY CRITERIA

**Topic:** Your topic should involve a particular philosophical idea or set of ideas, and do one of the following: (1) Summarize a particular view on a subject (i.e. Aristotle's theory of substance), and then give your own reasons for why that view is right or wrong! Or, (2) Summarize and contrast two or more particular views on a subject (i.e. Plato's theory of forms vs. Aristotle's theory of substance) and give your own reasons for which of the two views is more correct! *Note that either route requires both the summarizing of course material and your own critical thinking! You may use readings from the textbook that we have not yet or will not cover, if you wish.*

**Proposal:** By 5:00 p.m. on *Friday, Feb 27th* you must e-mail me a paragraph (4 to 6 sentences) summarizing what you intend to write about. This will help to ensure nobody chooses a problematic topic. By the following Monday, I will respond and either approve your topic or suggest you choose an alternative. Proposals should be e-mailed to [xnathanbellx@gmail.com](mailto:xnathanbellx@gmail.com)

**Due Date:** This paper is due no later than class time on **Thursday, March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2009!** Your paper must be turned in as a printed hard copy, unless you have a valid excuse for e-mailing it. Papers can be turned in directly to me in class or during office hours, or may be turned in at the Philosophy Department office, EESAT 225. Any papers received after the due date/time will be considered late, *will only be taken with an acceptable excuse and will have points taken off!*

**Formatting Criteria (please read carefully):**

- 12 pt. Times New Roman font, double-spaced.
- 1" margins on all sides.
- **No less than 3 and no more than 5 full pages.**
- *Note: these are different from the default settings on the new version of Microsoft Word*

**Sources and Citation:** Use of secondary sources beyond the textbook is recommended, but is not required. All sources, *including the textbook*, must be formally cited according to the criteria Chicago style formatting (resources for which can easily be found online).

**Grading:** An "A" paper follows all requirements, is at the standards of college writing, contains an excellent summary of course material, and shows careful thinking about the topic.

A "B" or "C" paper follows all requirements, is at or near the standards of college writing, contains a summary that shows a basic understanding of course material, and complements that summary with some original thought.

A "D" or "F" paper is one that is well below the requirements or the standards of college writing, contains a summary which shows an extremely poor understanding of course material, and/or where any thought of your own on the topic is lacking. *And of course, any paper containing plagiarism will receive an "F".*

Please be sure to ask me if you have any questions on essay criteria or expectations!

## READING SCHEDULE (Part 1: Beginning through Exam 1)

### Week 1: Introduction/ Knowledge

Tue, Jan 20<sup>th</sup>

- Introductions, Syllabus

Thur, Jan 22<sup>nd</sup>

- General Introduction to Philosophy
- Plato, "Innate Knowledge," 3-12

### Week 2: Knowledge

Tue, Jan 27<sup>th</sup>

- Plato, "Knowledge versus Opinion," 12-18
- Aristotle, "Demonstrative Knowledge and its Starting-points," 18-21
- Descartes, "New Foundations for Knowledge," 21-25

Thur, Jan 29<sup>th</sup>

- Locke, "The Senses as the Basis of Knowledge" 25-31
- Leibniz, "Innate Knowledge Defended" 31-35
- Hume, "Scepticism versus Human Nature," 35-40

### WEEK 3: Knowledge/ Being and Reality

Tue, Feb 3<sup>rd</sup>

- Kant, "Experience and Understanding," 40-43
- Hegel, "From Sense-certainty to Self-consciousness," 43-48
- Moore, "Against Scepticism," 48-54

Thur, Feb 5<sup>th</sup>

- Plato, "The Allegory of the Cave," 69-76
- Aristotle, "Individual Substance," 76-80
- Descartes, "Supreme Being and Created Things," 80-86

### WEEK 4: Being and Reality/ Soul, Mind and Body

Tue, Feb 10<sup>th</sup>

- Leibniz, "Substance, Life and Activity," 91-97
- Berkeley, "Nothing Outside the Mind," 97-102
- Hume, "The Limits of Metaphysical Speculation," 102-108

Thur, Feb 12<sup>th</sup>

- Plato, "The Immortal Soul," 203-210
- Aristotle, "Soul and Body, Form and Matter," 210-214
- Aquinas, "The Human Soul," 214-221

### WEEK 5: Soul, Mind and Body

Tue, Feb 17<sup>th</sup>

- Descartes, "The Incorporeal Mind," 221-227
- Spinoza, "The Identity of Mind and Body," 227-230
- Schopenhauer, "Body and Mind as Manifestations of Will," 236-240
- *Review for Exam 1*

Thur, Feb 19<sup>th</sup>

- **Exam 1**