Philosophy 1301.001, 002—Introduction to Philosophy  Fall 2013
Dr. Bill Bolin
Office & Hours: HL 324, Tuesdays and Wednesdays 2:30p—5:00p and by appt.
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COURSE DESCRIPTION
This course will allow you many opportunities to explore important philosophical issues that people have pondered for centuries and continue to ponder today. These issues include the sources of knowledge, of identity, of morality, of theology, of justice, to name but several. We will read a number of essays that explore different ideas about where those concepts originate and how our thinking about them might determine our actions. The course is organized so that conflicting, competing, and even complementary theories will be investigated and can be discussed in interesting and civil ways. Assignments include two essay exams, four short written responses to the reading, and a few short quizzes over the reading. One textbook is required:


Also, you'll need to access the website for this class. To do so, go to [http://phil1301.wikidot.com](http://phil1301.wikidot.com).

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES
- Students will write response papers that demonstrate an understanding of important philosophical concepts and how those concepts might be applied to contemporary issues.
- Students will write two exams that demonstrate understanding of the main schools of thought in Western philosophy.

COURSE OBJECTIVES
- to acquire an overview of the field of philosophy and its major subfields
- to acquire an overview of the various cultural and social influences on thinking throughout the ages
- to formulate articulate responses to the reading assignments and ensuing discussions

ASSIGNMENTS
**Exams:** You'll have a mid-term and a final, each covering roughly half of the semester. These exams will solicit short answers of 3 or 4 sentences as well as longer, more richly detailed essay responses. Submit two blank blue books with your name on them before the midterm.

**Response papers:** In addition, you'll turn in four written responses (1-2 typed, double-spaced pages each) to some of the reading assignments. These responses are not designed to test how well you've read the assigned material. Rather, they serve as opportunities for you to comment on one or two points in the reading, connecting those points to other reading and/or experiences. Each response paper will be evaluated according to the level of detail in your insightful commentary and sensible connections to other reading and/or experiences or observations. Specific assignments are forthcoming.
Quizzes: You’ll take six quizzes to test your comprehension of some of the reading. These quizzes will be at the beginning of the class period and cannot easily be made up. Be present and on time for them.

As a rule I do not accept late papers.

EVALUATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment Values</th>
<th>Final Grade Ranges</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Midterm Exam 50 pts.</td>
<td>A=180--200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam 50 pts.</td>
<td>B=160--179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response Papers 40 pts. (4 @ 10 pts. each)</td>
<td>C=140--159</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quizzes 60 pts. (6 @ 10 pts. each)</td>
<td>D=120--139</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F=0--119</td>
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ATTENDANCE

Regular attendance is important for several reasons, but it is especially important for you to keep up with the assignments in this class. The tentative calendar below offers only the most general description of activities; more detail will be provided in class as the semester goes on. If you are absent the day an assignment is due, you must contact me and make satisfactory arrangements for turning in the assignment. In most cases, such arrangements will include your emailing the assignment to me as an attachment by the deadline. Failure to make prior satisfactory arrangements will result in your forfeiting the right to turn in that assignment. As per university policy, excessive absences (three weeks’ worth) will result in your being dropped from the course.

PLAGIARISM/ACADEMIC DISHONESTY STATEMENT

Instructors in the Department of Literature and Languages do not tolerate plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty. Instructors uphold and support the highest academic standards, and students are expected to do likewise. Penalties for students guilty of academic dishonesty include disciplinary probation, suspension, and expulsion. (Texas A&M University-Commerce Code of Student Conduct 5.b[1,2,3]). Plagiarism on one assignment in this course will most likely lead to a failing grade for the course.

TENTATIVE CALENDAR (All reading assignments are from the textbook unless otherwise indicated. Some other readings are likely to appear as the semester progresses.)

Aug. 27 Overview: Intro to class; reflective writing
Aug. 29 Overview: Lecture on Socrates; online text

Sept. 5 Introduction: Plato, “Defense of Socrates”
Sept. 10 Reasoning: Wesley Salmon, “The Scope of Logic”; RP1
Sept. 12 Reasoning: Stephen Barker, “Improving Your Thinking”

Sept. 17 Reasoning: Morris Cohen and Ernest Nagel, “Fixing Belief”


Oct. 3 Knowledge: David Hume, “An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding”


Oct. 15 Mind: René Descartes, “Meditations on First Philosophy”
Oct. 17 Midterm Exam

Oct. 24 Free Will: William James, “The Dilemma of Determinism”


Nov. 7 Moral Theory: James Rachels, “The Challenge of Cultural Relativism”; Tom Regan, “How Not to Answer Moral Questions”


Nov. 19 Moral Problems: Peter Singer, “Famine, Affluence, and Morality” and “The Singer Solution to World Poverty”; RP4
Nov. 28 Thanksgiving holiday

Dec. 3 Value of Philosophy: Bertrand Russell, “The Value of Philosophy”
Dec. 5 Value of Philosophy: Plato, from *The Republic*, pp.682-687

Dec. 10 @ 8:00--10:00 (Final Exam schedule) Section .001
Dec. 12 @ 8:00--10:00 (Final Exam schedule) Section .002

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**Students with Disabilities:**
The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Resources and Services
Texas A&M University-Commerce
Gee Library
Room 132
Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835
Fax (903) 468-8148
StudentDisabilityServices@tamuc.edu

All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. (See Student’s Guide Handbook, Policies and Procedures, Conduct)¹

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¹ In other words, don’t be a distraction during class.