

Philosophy 331.001—History of Philosophy I            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 from the time of the Ancient Greeks to the time of the European Renaissance and continue to ponder today. These issues include reality, an afterlife, ethics, and consciousness, 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, even as we gain an understanding of how such thinking developed through the those historical eras. 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:

- Melchert, Norman. *Philosophical Conversations: A Concise Historical Introduction*. New York: Oxford UP, 2009. ISBN: 9780195328462

Also, you'll need to access the website for this class. To do so, go to <http://phil331.wikidot.com> .

### STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Students will write response papers that demonstrate an understanding important philosophical concepts addressed from antiquity through the European Renaissance 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 from antiquity through the European Renaissance.

### COURSE OBJECTIVES

- To acquire an overview of the history of philosophy from antiquity to the Renaissance.
- to acquire an overview of the various cultural and social influences on thinking throughout the ages and from different cultures.
- 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 assignments.

## EVALUATION

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

## 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. A few other readings will likely be assigned as the semester progresses.)

Aug. 26 Overview: Intro to class; reflective writing

Aug. 28 Overview: Lecture on the meaning(s) of *philosophy*

Sept. 2 Labor Day Holiday

Sept. 4 “A Word to Students” and Chapter 1: Hesiod and Homer

Sept. 9 Chapter 2: Pre-Socratics

Sept. 11 Chapter 2, continued: Pre-Socratics

Sept. 16 Chapter 3: Socrates and the Sophists; **RP1**

Sept. 18 Chapter 3, continued: Socrates and the Sophists

Sept. 23 Chapter 4: The Trial and Death of Socrates

Sept. 25 Chapter 4, continued: The Trial and Death of Socrates

Sept. 30 Chapter 5: Plato

Oct. 2 Chapter 5, continued: Plato

Oct. 7 Chapter 6: Aristotle

Oct. 9 Chapter 6, continued: Aristotle

Oct. 14 RP: Demonstration of Aristotle’s four causes; **RP2**

Oct. 16 Midterm Exam

Oct. 21 Interlude 1 and 2: Skeptics and Christians

Oct. 23 Chapter 7: Augustine

Oct. 28 Chapter 8: Anselm and Aquinas; Avicenna, Averroës, Maimonides; **RP3**

Oct. 30 Chapter 8, continued: Anselm and Aquinas; Avicenna, Averroës, Maimonides

Nov. 4 Interlude 3: Medieval to Modern

Nov. 6 Interlude 3, continued: Medieval to Modern

Nov. 11 Chapter 9: Descartes

Nov. 13 Chapter 9, continued: Descartes

Nov. 18 Chapter 10: Locke

Nov. 20 Chapter 10, continued: Locke

Nov. 25 Fascinating reading assignment (TBD); **RP4**

Nov. 27 Thanksgiving holiday

Dec. 2 Value of Philosophy: Bertrand Russell, “The Value of Philosophy”

[\[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x1mI2OljCus\]](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x1mI2OljCus)

Dec. 4 Value of Philosophy: Plato, [\*from The Republic\*](#)

Dec. 11 @ 10:30--12:30 Final Exam

**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](mailto: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)<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> In other words, don't be a distraction during class.