

Philosophy 1301.01E—Introduction to Philosophy Fall 2019

Dr. Bill Bolin

Office & Hours: Talbot HL 324, MTWR 3:30p—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, two short written responses to the reading, and several short quizzes over the reading. One textbook is required:

- Cahn, Stephen M. *Exploring Philosophy: An Introductory Anthology*, 6th ed. New York: Oxford UP, 2012. ISBN: 9780190674335 (The e-book version is fine, too.)

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.
- Students will be able to view themselves as engaged citizens within an interconnected and diverse world, and this ability will be assessed through a response paper.
- Students will be able to analyze, evaluate, or solve problems when given a set of circumstances, data, texts, or art.
- In written, oral, and/or visual communication, A&M-Commerce students will communicate in a manner appropriate to audience and occasion, with an evident message and organizational structure.
- Students will understand and practice academic honesty.
- Students will demonstrate an understanding of societal and/or civic issues.

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 will 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. You will need two exam blue books or green books, one for each exam.

Response papers: In addition, you'll turn in two written responses (300-400 words 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 in MyLeoOnline.

Quizzes: You will take eight quizzes to test your comprehension of some of the reading. These timed quizzes will be available in D2L and cannot easily be made up. Be attentive to their deadlines.

As a rule I do not accept late papers.

EVALUATION

Assignment Values	Final Grade Ranges
Midterm Exam 50 pts. Final Exam 50 pts. Response Papers 20 pts. (2@ 10 pts. each) Quizzes 80 pts. (8 @ 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. 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) may 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

Sept. 3 Introduction: Monroe and Elizabeth Beardsley, "What Is Philosophy?"; Bertrand Russell, "The Value of Philosophy"

Sept. 5 Plato, "Defense of Socrates"; **Quiz 1**

Sept. 10 Reasoning: Cahn, Kitcher, and Shur, "The Elements of Argument"

Sept. 12 Reasoning: Stephen Barker, "Improving Your Thinking"; **Quiz 2**

Sept. 17 Reasoning: Linda Zagzebski, "Caring and Epistemic Demands"; Immanuel Kant, "Critique of Pure Reason"

Sept. 19 Reasoning: Carl Hempel, "Scientific Inquiry"; **RP1 due**

Sept. 24 Knowledge: A.J. Ayer, "What Is Knowledge?"

Sept. 26 Knowledge: Edmund Gettier, "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?"; Robert Nozick, "Conditions for Knowledge"; **Quiz 3**

Oct. 1 Knowledge: Bertrand Russell, "Appearance and Reality"; D.Z. Phillips, "What Can I Know?"; **Quiz 4**

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

Oct. 8 Mind: Gilbert Ryle, "The Ghost in the Machine"

Oct. 10 Mind: Alan Turing, "Computing Machinery and Intelligence"; John Searle, "Do Computers Think?"; **Quiz 5**

Oct. 15 Mind: René Descartes, "Meditations on First Philosophy"

Oct. 17 **Midterm Exam**

Oct. 22 Free Will: Thomas Nagel, "Free Will"; W.T. Stace, "Free Will and Determinism"; Harry Frankfurt, "The Principle of Alternative Possibilities"; Neil Levy, "The Capacities of Agents"

Oct. 24 Free Will: William James, "The Dilemma of Determinism"; **Quiz 6**

Oct. 29 God: Ernest Nagel, "Does God Exist?"; Richard Swinburne, "Why God Allows Evil"

Oct. 31 God: Anselm and Guanilo, "The Ontological Argument"; Thomas Aquinas, "Summa Theologiae"; William Paley, "Natural Theology"

Nov. 5 God: Michael Scriven, "Faith and Reason"; Blaise Pascal, "The Wager"; Simon Blackburn, "Pascal's Wager"; **Quiz 7**

Nov. 7 Moral Theory: Tom Regan, "How Not to Answer Moral Questions"; Mary Midgley, "Moral Isolationism"

Nov. 12 Moral Theory: Louis Pojman, “Assessing Utilitarianism”; Virginia Held, “The Ethics of Care”

Nov. 14 Moral Theory: Aristotle, “Nicomachean Ethics”; Onora O’Neill, “Kant’s Ethics”; **Quiz 8**

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

<http://www.nytimes.com/library/magazine/home/19990905mag-poverty-singer.html>

Nov. 21 Moral Problems: Travis Timmerman, “A Reply to Singer”

Nov. 26 Asian Outlooks: Christopher Gowans, “The Buddha’s Message”; Henry Rosemont, “The Confucian Way”; **RP2 due**

Nov. 28 Thanksgiving holiday

Dec. 3 Asian Outlooks: Ray Billington, “The Tao”; “Twelve Zen Stories”

Dec. 5 Review

Dec. 10 @ [1:15--3:15 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 162

Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835

Fax (903) 468-8148

StudentDisabilityServices@tamuc.edu

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***Campus Concealed Carry statement:** Campus Concealed Carry - Texas Senate Bill - 11 (Government Code 411.2031, et al.) authorizes the carrying of a concealed handgun in Texas A&M University-Commerce buildings only by persons who have been issued and are in possession of a Texas License to Carry a Handgun. Qualified law enforcement officers or those who are otherwise authorized to carry a concealed handgun in the State of Texas are also permitted to do so. Pursuant to Penal Code (PC) 46.035 and A&M- Commerce Rule 34.06.02.R1, license holders may not carry a concealed handgun in restricted locations. For a list of locations, please refer to ([http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedure s/34SafetyOfEmployeesAndStudents/34.06.02.R1.pdf](http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedure%20s/34SafetyOfEmployeesAndStudents/34.06.02.R1.pdf)) and/or consult your event organizer). Pursuant to PC 46.035, the open carrying of handguns is prohibited on all A&M-Commerce campuses. Report violations to the University Police Department at 903-886-5868 or 9-1-1.*

***Tenets of Common Behavior statement:** 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*

¹ In other words, don't be a distraction.