

Introduction to Philosophy (PHIL 101)

Summer 2013

Syllabus

“The unexamined life is not to be lived”

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Instructor: John Anders

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Office Hours: Informally, right after class everyday. Officially, by appointment.

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This class will provide you with an introduction to many central areas of philosophy including metaphysics, epistemology and ethics. In doing so, the class aims to foster the sorts of sophisticated reasoning skills required to assess arguments concerning fundamental matters. These skills include: the ability to discuss difficult questions, the ability to read difficult texts, and the ability to express yourself clearly. Also you will receive extensive practice in writing out argumentative papers that strive for clarity. The course will proceed by reading texts of famous philosophers (usually in their entirety), but it is intended as a course that introduces you to important philosophical topics rather than as an historical survey course.

COURSE CONTENT: Philosophy seeks to address what are taken to be the most fundamental questions. Thus a philosophical question is a question about some very fundamental issue. (Note that since the question “What are the most fundamental questions?”, is itself a fundamental question, the question “What is philosophy?” is part of philosophy.) Some of the questions we will consider are:

Question	Text Addressing the Question
<i>What is virtue?</i>	<i>Meno</i> , Xenophon
<i>How does learning work? How do we get knowledge?</i>	<i>Meno</i> , Descartes
<i>What is the best kind of education?</i>	<i>Meno</i> , Xenophon
<i>What are our moral duties?</i>	Kant <i>Groundwork</i> , Sartre
<i>What is philosophy?</i>	Plato, Descartes, Hume, Sartre
<i>What are the most fundamental realities?</i>	Plato, Descartes, Sartre
<i>Is Philosophy dangerous to Society?</i>	Aristophanes; Plato <i>Apology</i>
<i>What is the best kind of life?</i>	Plato, Aristophanes, Hume, Kant, Camus
<i>What is (erotic) love?</i>	<i>Symposium</i> 172a – 194e, 195a – 223d
<i>What is knowledge?</i>	Descartes, Kant, Hume
<i>Is truth relative?</i>	Nietzsche, Sartre
<i>Is there anything we cannot doubt?</i>	Descartes, Hume
<i>Does God exist?</i>	Descartes, Hume, Kant
<i>How do things get value? What is the “value” or “meaning” of life?</i>	Nietzsche, Sartre, Camus

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM CLASS-SESSIONS: This class is intended to be a discussion oriented class. You need to do the reading before class to do able to fully enjoy that discussion; do not expect to come to class without having done the readings in order to “absorb” a lecture. One of the most important things that the study of philosophy can teach is how to discuss difficult and potentially controversial things with others in a respectful and rational way. Thus the discussion component of the class will be taken very seriously; your attendance can affect your grade.

TEXTS:

Xenophon

Selections

Plato

(1) Meno, (2) Apology, (3) Symposium

Aristophanes

Clouds

Descartes

Discourse on Method

Hume

(1) Enquiry Concerning Human Knowledge (2) Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals

Kant

Groundwork

Nietzsche, Sartre, Camus

Selections

GRADING & ASSIGNMENTS: Your final grade comes chiefly from two short papers and daily writing assignments where you ask and answer questions about the reading for that class (QA). The breakdown is roughly:

First Paper – 20%

Second Paper – 30%

Daily Writing Assignments (QA's) – 30%

Final Exam - 20%

I weight the second paper more heavily so that if you do poorly on the first paper you will have a chance to correct those mistakes for the second paper. The daily writing assignments are scored as a pass/fail completion grade. There are no extra credit assignments. **All assignments are to be submitted electronically through webcampus.**

CLASS POLICIES: Late assignments will not be accepted. No Exceptions! No late homeworks and no late papers! **DO NOT USE THE INTERNET!** Reading Philosophical texts is difficult; nothing that we read will be entirely clear to you the first time you read it. But this doesn't mean that you should resort to internet sites that contain summaries or exegesis. One of the great benefits of studying philosophy is learning how to puzzle out difficult things that don't initially make sense; this struggle is part of what should happen in a philosophy class. You should not use the internet to avoid this struggle. I've chosen texts that provide a lot of help in this regard, so take advantage of the summaries, appendices, and glossaries in those texts in lieu of the internet. **Using internet sites to answer daily written questions or to write papers is a form of CHEATING!**

Cheating or plagiarism, in any form, will not be tolerated. The usual penalty is for cheating is to fail the assignment if not the course. I tend to be harsh on cheaters. (Instructors have the ability to prevent a student from dropping a class and hence take the grade penalty that comes from cheating).

If you have a documented disability that may require assistance, you will need to contact the Disability Resource Center (895-0866); I would also appreciate it if you could alert me to such disabilities so that I can be aware of them in case the class needs to be restructured in some way.

Academic Misconduct – 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 UNLV community, students accept the expectations of the Academic Misconduct Policy and are encouraged when faced with choices to always take the ethical path. Students enrolling in UNLV assume the obligation to conduct themselves in a manner compatible with UNLV's function as an educational institution.

An example of academic misconduct is plagiarism. Plagiarism is using the words or ideas of another, from the Internet or any source, without proper citation of the sources. See the *Student Academic Misconduct Policy* (approved December 9, 2005) located at: <http://studentconduct.unlv.edu/misconduct/policy.html>.

Copyright – The University requires all members of the University Community to familiarize themselves and to follow copyright and fair use requirements. **You are individually and solely responsible for violations of copyright and fair use laws. The university will neither protect nor defend you nor assume any responsibility for employee or student violations of fair use laws.** Violations of copyright laws could subject you to federal and state civil penalties and criminal liability, as well as disciplinary action under University policies. Additional information can be found at: <http://provost.unlv.edu/copyright/statements.html>.

Disability Resource Center (DRC) – The Disability Resource Center (DRC) determines accommodations that are “reasonable” in promoting the equal access of a student reporting a disability to the general UNLV learning experience. In so doing, the DRC also balances instructor and departmental interests in maintaining curricular standards so as to best achieve a fair evaluation standard amongst students being assisted. In order for the DRC to be effective it must be considered in the dialog between the faculty and the student who is requesting accommodations. For this reason faculty should only provide students course adjustment after having received an “Academic Accommodation Plan.” If faculty members have any questions regarding the DRC, they should call a DRC counselor.

UNLV complies with the provisions set forth in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. The DRC is located in the Student Services Complex (SSC-A), Room 143, phone (702) 895-0866, fax (702) 895-0651. For additional information, please visit: <http://drc.unlv.edu/>.

Religious Holidays Policy – Any student missing class quizzes, examinations, or any other class or lab work because of observance of religious holidays shall be given an opportunity during that semester to make up missed work. The make-up will apply to the religious holiday absence only. It shall be the responsibility of the student to notify the instructor no later than the end of the first two weeks of classes, **February 1, 2013**, of his or her intention to participate in religious holidays which do not fall on state holidays or periods of class recess. This policy shall not apply in the event that administering the test or examination at an alternate time would impose an undue hardship on the instructor or the university that could not reasonably be avoided. For additional information, please visit: <http://catalog.unlv.edu/content.php?catoid=4&navoid=164>.

Incomplete Grades - The grade of I – Incomplete – can be granted when a student has satisfactorily completed all course work up to the withdrawal date of that semester/session but for reason(s) beyond the student's control, and acceptable to the instructor, cannot complete the last part of the course, and the instructor believes that the student can finish the course without repeating it. A student who receives an I is responsible for making up whatever work was lacking at the end of the semester. If course requirements are not completed within the time indicated, a grade of F will be recorded and the GPA will be adjusted accordingly. Students who are fulfilling an Incomplete do not register for the course but make individual arrangements with the instructor who assigned the I grade.

Tutoring – The Academic Success Center (ASC) provides tutoring and academic assistance for all UNLV students taking UNLV courses. Students are encouraged to stop by the ASC to learn more about subjects offered, tutoring times and other academic resources. The ASC is located across from the Student Services Complex (SSC). Students may learn more about tutoring services by calling (702) 895-3177 or visiting the tutoring web site at: <http://academicsuccess.unlv.edu/tutoring/>.

UNLV Writing Center – One-on-one or small group assistance with writing is available free of charge to UNLV students at the Writing Center, located in CDC-3-301. Although walk-in consultations are sometimes available, students with appointments will receive priority assistance. Appointments may be made in person or by calling 895-3908. The student's Rebel ID Card, a copy of the assignment (if possible), and two copies of any writing to be reviewed are requested for the consultation. More information can be found at: <http://writingcenter.unlv.edu/>

Rebelmail – By policy, faculty and staff should e-mail students' Rebelmail accounts only. Rebelmail is UNLV's official e-mail system for students. It is one of the primary ways students receive official university communication such as information about deadlines, major campus events, and announcements. All UNLV students receive a Rebelmail account after they have been admitted to the university. Students' e-mail prefixes are listed on class rosters. The suffix is always @unlv.nevada.edu.

Final Examinations – The University requires that final exams given at the end of a course occur at the time and on the day specified in the final exam schedule. See the schedule at: <http://www.unlv.edu/registrar/calendars>

Any other class specific information - (e.g., absences, make-up exams, extra credit policies, plagiarism/cheating consequences, policy on electronic devices, specialized department or college tutoring programs, bringing children to class, policy on recording classroom lectures, etc.)