Syllabus: Phil 002 Introduction to Philosophy: Morals and Politics De Anza College Spring Quarter, 2008 Instructor: Toño Ramirez Email: ramireztono@fhda.edu Office Hours: T/W/Th 1:00-2:00, or by appointment Office Location: Forum Building, room 2D



Course Description

This course introduces students to the methods and practices of philosophy through a rigorous investigation of central topics pertaining to morality and political life. Students will engage key readings and ideas from the history of philosophy, and will find that the themes encountered bear heavily on current issues, events and experiences. The course will focus on three primary topics: Theories of moral evaluation, freedom and responsibility, and the legitimacy of political authority.

Course Objectives

The course is designed to satisfy two primary aims. First, students will develop a critical perspective on philosophical problems found in a variety of philosophical traditions, as grouped according to the topics above. Secondly, students who successfully engage course materials will develop a working knowledge of a core set of philosophical skills, including analysis and construction of arguments, proficiency with key philosophical concepts, and philosophical writing. Readings will come from primary and secondary sources.

Course Expectations and Requirements

Attendance:

As a significant portion of the course will involve class discussion of texts, it is expected that students will have completed assigned readings *before* the corresponding class meeting. Regular attendance is also required.

- Students may miss a total of *three* class meetings without penalty during the term. Each absence beyond this limit will incur a penalty as described in the "Student Assessment" section below. Students who miss an excessive number of class meetings (as determined by the instructor) will be dropped from the course.
- Students are *not* required to provide the instructor with a reason for absence, nor are apologies necessary. I assume that absences will only occur under legitimate circumstances.
- Students who are considering dropping the course for personal reasons are encouraged to meet with me first—I'm happy to do what I can to help you succeed in this class!

- Students who miss a class meeting are responsible for obtaining any information or assignments they may have missed.
- Attendance will be taken on a daily basis. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that his/her name has been recorded accurately on daily attendance sheets.
- Students are expected to come to class *on time*. Three late arrivals will be considered equivalent to one absence on the attendance record.
- Reading assignments are *required* in this course. I have scheduled readings to allow for a reasonable workload, and expect that students will engage with the texts assigned. Reading quizzes will be given to ensure this.

Student Assessment:

Evaluations will be based upon the quality of individual student participation in discussions and written work. The final grade will be awarded according to the following criteria:

100 Pts		
15 Pts: Participation	55 Pts: Papers	30 Pts: Quizzes and Exams
10 Given	15 Argument Paper	10 Reading Quizzes
5 Earned	15 Short Essay	10 Midterm Exam
	25 Long Essay	10 Final Exam

GRADE SCALE: A+ (100-97), A (96-93), A- (92-90), B+ (89-87), B (86-83), B- (82-80), C+ (79-77), C (76-70), D+ (69-67), D (66-63), D- (62-60), F (59-0)

- Class participation: 15 percentage points
 - Students are given 10 of these percentage points at the beginning of the term. They are not earned, but can be lost as follows:
 - Each absence beyond the limit of three (3) will incur a penalty of 5 percentage points.
 - The remaining 5 percentage points are earned by contributing questions or comments to class discussions (at the rate of 1 point per question or comment). Points cannot be earned beyond the 5-point limit.
 - Participation in discussions will be evaluated according to the *quality* of student comments, and not quantity. Students who demonstrate excellence in discussions will attend closely to the comments of other students, and offer remarks that are of relevance to the discussion at hand. It is expected that students will engage one another's ideas in discussion, and that this will be done in a respectful manner. Neither disparaging remarks nor personal attacks will be tolerated in any way.
 - Class discussions will frequently feature small-group work. It is expected that students will participate actively in these groups.
 - Cell phones must be turned off during class. Students who need to leave a phone on for emergency purposes should let me know at the beginning of the class session.

- Papers: 55 percentage points
 - Written work will consist of one brief (2-3 p.) argument papers (15 percentage points), one short (3-5 p.) essay (15 percentage points), and one longer (4-6 p.) essay (20 percentage points).
 - Written work will be evaluated according to standards provided with descriptions of individual assignments. Standards for each paper will also be addressed verbally in class at the time of assignment. It is expected that students who remain unclear as to the standards of excellent written work will meet with the instructor *before* the assignment is due.
 - Academic honesty is imperative in written work. Any plagiarized paper will automatically be given a grade of 0 without a rewrite option, and may constitute dismissal from the course. Students who are unsure about standards for academic honesty should consult with me. In short, any uncited material, presented as your own original work, constitutes plagiarism. This includes uncited quotes from internet and print sources. There will be no exceptions to this policy.
 - Assignments turned in on time will be graded and returned with comments within one week of the due date. Students may submit assignments up to one week after the due date, but I make no guarantees for a prompt return. Policies for comments on late papers will vary according to the specific assignment. I will not accept papers that are more than a week late under any circumstances.
 - I practice blind grading to ensure impartiality in evaluating student work.
 Students should not write their names on the front of any written assignment.
 Rather, the name should be written lightly in pencil on the back of the last page.
- Reading Quizzes, Mid-Term and Final Exams: 10 percentage points each
 - Reading quizzes will consist of short, informal responses to questions asked about the day's reading. The questions will be available in advance on the course website. These responses will not be handed back to you, but I will read them. If your response is satisfactory, it will be reflected as "x" on the course grade tracker (which I will post to the course website weekly). If your response is not satisfactory, it will be reflected as a "-" in the grade tracker. You may email me or meet me at my office to correct unsatisfactory responses. If this is done **within one week** of the original question date, you will be given full credit for the response. At the end of the quarter, each uncorrected response will incur a penalty of 2 points from the 10 allotted for reading quizzes. If you are absent, you will be expected to answer any reading questions that have been given that day—they will be posted to the class website.
 - A make-up exam will only be available under certifiable emergency circumstances. Students who miss either exam for non-emergency reasons will not have the option for a make-up.

Course Reading Schedule

(n.b.: The schedule is subject to change at my discretion)

Introduction and Overview

- 4/6: Introduction to course
- 4/7: Read Plato, *Apology* pgs. 21-32
- 4/8: Read Plato, *Apology* pgs. 32-44
 - 4/9: In-class assignment and discussion
 - Argument paper assigned and explained

Moral Action and Evaluation

- 4/13: Read Rachels, "Cultural Relativism" (in reader)
- 4/14: Class discussion
- 4/15: Read Plato, *Republic* (handout, pgs. TBA)
- 4/16: Read Plato, *Republic* (handout, pgs. TBA)
- 4/20: Read Nietzsche (in reader, pages TBA)
- 4/21: Read Nietzsche (in reader, pages TBA)
- 4/22: In-class film and discussion
- 4/23: Introduction to philosophical writing pt. 1 • First essay assigned
- 4/27: Read Mill (in reader, pages TBA)
- 4/28: Read Mill (in reader, pages TBA)
- 4/29: Read Le Guin, "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas" (in reader)
- 4/30: Read Plato, *Euthyphro*
- 5/4: Read Kant (in reader, pages TBA)
- 5/5: Read Kant (in reader, pages TBA)
- 5/6: Read Lao-Tzu (in reader)
- 5/7: Introduction to philosophical writing pt. 2 • **FIRST ESSAY DUE**

Moral and Political Freedom

- 5/11: Read Plato, *Crito*
- 5/12: Read class handout
- 5/13: Read Feinberg, "Psychological Egoism" (in reader)
- 5/14: In-class film and discussion: *Balance*
 - MID-TERM EXAM
- 5/18: Read Wolff (pages TBA)
- 5/19: Read Wolff (pages TBA)
- 5/20: In-class assignment and discussion
- 5/21: Introduction to philosophical writing pt. 3
 - Final paper assigned
- 5/25: NO CLASS
- 5/26: Read Wolff (pages TBA)
- 5/27: Read Wolff (pages TBA)
- 5/28: In-class assignment and discussion
 - LAST DAY TO SUBMIT ARGUMENT PAPER

- 6/1: In-class film and discussion: A Clockwork Orange
- 6/2: In-class film and discussion: A Clockwork Orange
- 6/3: In-class film and discussion: A Clockwork Orange
- 6/4 In class assignment and discussion

Justice and Authority

- 6/8: Read Wolff (pgs TBA)
- 6/9: Read Wolff (pgs TBA)
- 6/10 Read Wolff (pgs TBA)
- 6/11: In class assignment and discussion
- 6/15: Read Wolff (pgs TBA)
- 6/16: Read Wolff (pgs TBA)
- 6/17: Read King, "Letter from a Birmingham County Jail" (in reader)
- 6/18: Course Review
 - FINAL PAPER DUE
- 6/22: **FINAL EXAM**

Texts

The majority of readings will come from the following books, which are available for purchase at the bookstore:

- Plato. Five Dialogues. trans. G.M.A. Grube. Hackett, 2002.
- Wolff, Jonathan. An Introduction to Political Philosophy. Oxford University Press, 1996.
- Course Reader

Additional course readings will be handed out in class.