

Syllabus: Phil 001

Introduction to Philosophy: Knowledge and Reality

De Anza College

Summer Quarter, 2012

Instructor: Toño Ramirez

Email: ramireztono@fhda.edu

Office Location: Forum Building, Room 2D

Office Hours: T/W/Th 9:30-10AM and 3:00-3:30PM, or by appointment



Course Description

This course introduces students to the methods and practices of philosophy through a rigorous investigation of central topics pertaining to traditional themes in epistemology and metaphysics. 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 popular culture. The course will focus on three primary topics: The nature and scope of knowledge, understandings of reality, and the nature of personhood. Our discussions will culminate in an investigation of the relevance of these topics to the possibility of a meaningful life.

Student Learning Outcomes

Students who successfully engage with course materials will be able to:

- Identify and articulate philosophical problems pertaining to the nature of knowledge and reality.
- Compare approaches and attempted solutions to these problems from a variety of philosophical traditions.
- Defend an original position on at least one philosophical issue.
- Describe the relevance of epistemological and metaphysical problems to contemporary popular concerns.

Course Expectations and Requirements

- Students who are considering dropping the course for *any* reason are encouraged to meet with me first—I'm happy to do what I can to help you succeed in this class! To this end, I strongly encourage you to take advantage of office hours.
- Students may miss a total of *two* class meetings without penalty during the term. A third absence will result in the loss of the "attendance buffer" (explained below) when final grades are calculated. A fifth absence will result in dismissal from the course, or a grade of 'F' if the withdrawal date is passed.
- Students are *not* required to provide me with a reason for absence, nor are apologies necessary. I assume that absences will only occur under legitimate circumstances.
- Students who miss a class meeting are responsible for obtaining any information or assignments they may have missed.
- Attendance will be taken at the beginning of class on a regular 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 understand that some of the reading will be challenging, and that it may not be fully understood without subsequent in-class

explanation. Nevertheless, I expect that students will read the texts assigned, and will spend time thinking about them before each class meeting.

- 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.
- 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. 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.
- Class discussions will feature small-group work. It is expected that students will participate actively in these groups.
- Cell phones and other electronic devices 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. Text messaging/web-surfing is incompatible with active participation in class activities, and will not be permitted during class time. Students who use electronic devices in class without obtaining prior permission will be asked to leave.

Student Assessment:

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

- Homework journal:
 - In order to promote reading comprehension and improve the quality of class discussions, students will keep a journal documenting responses to all course readings. The details describing the contents of this journal will be available on the course website. It is expected that all students will have this journal with them, *completed and up-to-date*, at the *beginning of every* class meeting. I will collect small groups of journals at random throughout the course to check for completion, and occasionally offer comments on journal entries.
 - Failure to provide an-up-to-date journal available on request will be handled as follows:
 - First instance: Student will be given an opportunity to provide the up-to-date journal at the beginning of the next class meeting
 - Second instance: Student will lose 5 percentage points allotted to "HW Journal" in the calculation of the final grade
 - Third instance: Student will lose the remaining percentage points allotted to "HW Journal" in the calculation of the final grade
 - Fourth instance: Student will be dropped from the course
 - If a student is absent on a date when his/her journal is requested, the journal will be due for submission upon the student's return to class, subject to the policy above
- Paper assignments:
 - All students will submit one short essay, and one longer essay.
 - Essays will be evaluated according to standards provided with assignment prompts. 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. "Re-writes" are not accepted for paper assignments. I am happy to review advance drafts of papers with you **in person**, but not via email.

- Academic honesty is imperative in written work. I will spend time in class discussion plagiarism, and will take measures to help students avoid accidental plagiarism. **Any** plagiarized paper submitted to me will automatically result in a grade of “F” for the course, and will be reported to the Dean of Academics. Students who are unsure about standards for academic honesty should [review this tutorial](#), and 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.**
- Paper 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 at no penalty, but I make no guarantees for a prompt return. I will not accept any papers that are turned in after this time.
- I practice blind grading to ensure impartiality in evaluating student work. Students **should not** write their names on the front of any paper assignment. Rather, the name should be written lightly in pencil on the back of the last page.
- Mid-Term and Final Exams:
 - A make-up exam will only be available under certifiable emergency circumstances, as determined by the instructor. Students who miss either exam for non-emergency reasons will not have the option for a make-up.
 - Students who miss three or fewer classes will automatically keep an “attendance buffer”, which will be used in calculating the final grade. The buffer is lost upon a fourth absence, and will not be restored. Final grades will be calculated as follows

	With attendance buffer	Without attendance buffer
HW Journal	15	15
Short Essay	20	25
Longer Essay	25	30
Midterm Exam	15	15
Final Exam	15	15
Attendance Buffer	10	0

- Argument Paper: 2 pts extra credit (OPTIONAL)
 - Students may earn up to 2 extra percentage points in the course by submitting an argument paper. Argument papers are described in detail on the “Assignments” page of the course website, and will be explained verbally in class. Only one argument paper may be submitted for the course.

GRADE SCALE: A+ (100-97), A (96-93), A- (92-90), B+ (89-87), B (86-83), B- (82-80), C+ (79-77), C (76-73), D+ (73-70), D (69-67), D- (66-63), F (62-0)

Course Reading Schedule

Readings in brackets are recommended, but not required. All other readings are required.

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

Knowledge and Skepticism: What can we know?

- 7/3
 - Introduction to course
- 7/4
 - NO CLASS MEETING
- 7/5
 - Read Descartes, “First Meditation”
 - Read Descartes, “Second Meditation”
 - [Read Chuang Tzu, “Butterfly Dream”]
- 7/10
 - Read Hume, “Sceptical Doubts Concerning the Operations of the Understanding”
- 7/11
 - Read Greene, “You Perceive With Your Mind”
 - Read Moore, “Certainty”
 - [Read Chisholm, “The Problem of the Criterion”](#)
 - [Read Reid, Ch. I Sect. VII and Ch. II Sect. I]
- 7/12
 - In class film: *Abre Los Ojos*
 - [Read Grau, “Three kinds of Skepticism”]
 - **Argument paper date**

Faith and Miracles: When should we believe?

- 7/17
 - Complete [film journal](#) for in-class discussion
- 7/18
 - Read Clifford, “The Ethics of Belief”
 - Read Long, “Religious Pragmatism through the Eyes of Luke Skywalker”
 - Read Korcz, “Coke into Pepsi: The Miracle in *Pulp Fiction*”
 - Midterm review
- 7/19
 - [Read Gracia and Sanford, “The Metaphysics of The Matrix”]
 - Read “[They’re Made of Meat](#)”
 - **Argument paper date**
 - **[Midterm exam](#)**
 - **[First Essay Due](#)**

Metaphysics: What kind of a universe is this, and what kinds of things are we?

- 7/24
 - Read [The Diamond Sutra](#)
 - Read Baur, “The Beatles and Idealistic Monism”
- 7/25
 - Read Searle, “[Is the Brain’s Mind a Computer Program?](#)”
 - Read Chalmers, “The Puzzle of Conscious Experience”
- 7/26
 - In class film: *Blade Runner*
 - Read Jacquette, “Zombie Gladiators”
 - **Argument paper date**

Freedom, Personhood, and Responsibility: Is it ever really your fault?

- 7/31
 - [Read Hauser, “Zombies, Blade Runner, and the Mind-Body Problem”]
 - Complete [film journal](#) for in-class discussion
 - Read Timmons & Shoemaker on [free will](#)
 - Read Pike, “[Divine Omniscience and Voluntary Action](#)”
 - Read [Darrow](#), “[Leopold and Loeb](#)”

- 8/1
 - [Read Frankfurt, “Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility”](#)
 - Read Kinghorn, “Is the Hulk the Same Person as Bruce Banner?”
- 8/2
 - **NO CLASS MEETING**

Searching for the Meaning of Life: What exactly are we looking for, and can we find it?

- 8/7
 - In class film: *Memento*
 - Read Parfit, [“The Unimportance of Identity”](#)
 - [Read Smith, “John Locke, Personal Identity, and Memento]
- 8/8
 - Complete [film journal](#) for in-class discussion
 - [Read Sartre, “The Wall”](#)
 - [Read Camus, “The Myth of Sisyphus”](#)
 - [Read Taylor, “The Meaning of Life”](#)
 - [Read Nagel, “The Absurd”](#)
 - Review for final exam
- 8/9
 - [Read Wallace, “Kenyon College Commencement Address”](#)
(if you prefer to listen to an audio version of this speech, you can find part one [here](#), and part two [here](#))
 - [Final exam](#)
 - [Final essay due](#)

Texts

The sole text required for this course is the PHIL01 Course Reader, available at the De Anza Bookstore. Any additional course readings can be linked above, or will be provided to you in an electronic format

Course Website

Electronic copies of course materials, announcements, and other course resources are available at

<http://www.deanza.edu/faculty/ramireztono/phil01>