

COURSE SYLLABUS

INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

PROFESSOR: Dr. Jason Mallory

EMAIL: **PLEASE EMAIL ME THROUGH CANVAS -- PLEASE AVOID USING ~~JMALLORY@POLK.EDU~~, WHICH DOES NOT TELL ME WHICH COURSE YOU ARE TAKING** (Canvas email is the best means of getting in touch; I usually can respond within 48 hours, not including weekends and school/religious holidays. *I want to hear from you if you have any concerns or problems!*)

PHONE: 863-669-4954, EXT. 6270 (Messages are not checked over the weekends and over school/religious holidays, but I will get back to you ASAP.)

If you leave a message, please state your name, the course number and section number, that the course is online, and which campus you attend. This information will help me respond to you more quickly.

Also, if you leave a message, PLEASE EMAIL ME THROUGH CANVAS, TOO, to make sure I get your message. I want to be able to answer you as quickly as I can, since I know your time is valuable.

OFFICE HOURS: Online Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 12:00-3:00 PM; and by appointment. Please feel free to reach out (email through Canvas is preferred) with any concerns anytime!

WELCOME TO PHILOSOPHY! This course will investigate some of the most important and timeless questions that confront humanity. For example: What value is there in living an examined life? How should I live and relate to others? Do I have a soul? Is there a G-d? Am I free? What can I know for certain? What is social, political, and economic justice? In addition, this course will investigate these types of questions by studying philosophers from a variety of cultures, traditions, backgrounds, and historical time periods. Emphasis will be placed upon developing logical and critical thinking skills to help students become better at thinking clearly and rationally in regards to basic philosophical problems.

BCI INFORMATION: Basic Course Information is available at www.polk.edu/bci.

REQUIRED READING:

Voices of Wisdom: A Multicultural Philosophy Reader, **8th Edition OR 9th Edition**, Gary E. Kessler

This book is available for purchase in the PSC Bookstore and is also available used for greatly reduced price (approximately 40-70 dollars) at www.amazon.com. If you order the book online, please make sure to use express shipping so that it arrives ASAP. If you get the 9th Edition, some readings must be found on Canvas as PDFs.

There are a few online readings for the first few days of class, so that you can have enough time to order the book online, if you wish.

HOW CAN I SUCCEED IN THIS COURSE?

Complete the readings each week—this will take time and self-discipline.

Be willing to slowly re-read difficult articles—this is normal for everyone (Philosophy can be dense, so take your time and don't give up!).

Buy and use a calendar.

Participate actively and courteously every week on the Discussion Boards.

Be respectful when disagreeing with others (it is great to disagree with an argument, but always remember to be polite to the person).

Be willing to fairly consider controversial topics and points of view that, at times, may be deemed wrong. If you find any argument wrong, then it is entirely appropriate in a college course to explain why, so that everyone can learn from your point of view and examine your argument.

Come to this course ready to learn and philosophically grow – not just to have your own views justified.

Never record or film anything, or cut and paste anything, from this course – out of respect for others' privacy rights.

Take advantage of free campus tutoring, writing assistance, and counseling services whenever necessary.

Realize you are already a philosopher and be willing to become an even better one through practice.

Ask for help early in the semester if you are having any trouble at all—your professor wants you to succeed!

GRADING POLICIES:

Discussion Board Postings	25%
8 Minute Quizzes	25%
Term Paper	25%
Final Exam	25%
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Total Grade	100%

NOTE ABOUT QUIZZES: Each Quiz is **8 minutes long**, with only a few True/False or Multiple Choice questions. The goal of the Quizzes is to encourage you to read and study the material ahead of time. You can pass the Quizzes only if you read the assignments carefully beforehand. There will be some Extra Credit at the end of the semester if you wish to make up for any low Quiz grades, but if you are having a difficult time, please let me know, and I can offer you study and reading suggestions to help you do better.

SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS: Students who currently have a documented disability that is relevant to their performance in this class are required to notify Student Services immediately so that appropriate accommodations can be made. Please call 863-297-1010, extension 6110 to speak with a special needs advisor. It is vital that this class be accessible to everyone, so that everyone has the opportunity to succeed.

FIRST NOTE ABOUT PLAGIARISM AND CHEATING (OF ANY KIND): Plagiarism of written or oral work is prohibited and will not be tolerated. This includes but is not limited to: using information or quotations without proper citation, directly copying all or parts of papers, or submitting someone else's work as your own. Cheating is also prohibited and will not be tolerated. This includes but is not limited to: cheating on tests and quizzes, signing anyone's name other than your own for attendance or participation purposes, having someone else other than you complete the assignments for this course, or sharing responses to homework assignments. Penalties for plagiarism or cheating may include an "F" and/or disciplinary action as determined by the college. For more information about the college's cheating and plagiarism policy please consult the current Polk State College Student Handbook and Catalog.

SECOND NOTE ABOUT PLAGIARISM AND CHEATING (OF ANY KIND): Please don't risk it. The college takes it very seriously and will thoroughly investigate every case. You do not want your academic record to be tainted in this way.

NOTE ABOUT DOING THE READINGS: This class requires a great deal of reading and critical thinking. Once again, students who do not commit themselves to doing all of the readings every week will not do well in this class. Philosophy offers many rewards, however, for those who are willing to spend the time to read and think through these tough but interesting issues.

NOTE ABOUT THIS SYLLABUS: The professor reserves the right to modify this syllabus if it is necessary in order to best teach this particular class. Each student is responsible for what is contained in this syllabus, including deadlines and policies. It is also the students' responsibility to note any syllabus modifications.

NOTE ABOUT STUDENT RESPONSIBILITY TO FOLLOW COLLEGE POLICIES: Each student is responsible for knowing and observing all college policies. Please see the Polk State College Student Handbook, Catalog, and other school documents for more information.

NOTE ABOUT WITHDRAWAL DEADLINE: Students are required to withdraw themselves if necessary, but during the "Attendance Confirmation Period," students will be dropped by the college for lack of attendance. **Withdrawing from a course is the student's responsibility**, but the professor reserves the right to withdraw students who have several consecutive zeros for Discussions and/or Quizzes.

If you are thinking of withdrawing due to failing grades, please reach out to me first, so I can tell you if there is room for possible improvement. There may not be room to improve, but if there is, I will encourage you to stay in and do your best. We all want you to succeed and graduate!

NOTE ABOUT PRIVACY: To protect the privacy rights of everyone present and to create a safe space for all concerned, at no time may anything or anyone be recorded using audio/visual devices, or anything cut and pasted and used outside of this class. **Violations of these privacy rights will be taken very seriously.**

NOTE ABOUT CONTROVERSIAL COURSE CONTENT AND THE NEED FOR MUTUAL RESPECT: Given the inherent nature of Philosophy, this course covers highly controversial issues that are likely to evoke strong emotional reactions and viewpoints. This course requires reading and discussing material that, at times, may be deemed wrong and/or offensive; each class should be an opportunity to critically voice any objections to the arguments found in the material or analyzed during class. As such, this class requires each student to have a certain level of maturity and tolerance for politely analyzing different points of view. At the beginning of the semester, each student will sign a form stating that they know this course covers controversial topics and requires maturity as well as respectful treatment towards others.

It is assumed that even during passionate classroom debate on the Discussion Boards, all students will respect each other as persons (even if a particular perspective or argument is not respected). In this discussion-focused Philosophy class, reflective disagreement and dissent are not only inevitable but encouraged. But it remains absolutely essential that mutual respect is observed in this class at all times.

NOTE ABOUT RELIABLE INTERNET USE: This online course requires you to have a reliable internet connection, whether this is at a public library, your home, PSC, or a friend's house. Please save all your Discussion Board questions in a Word document, and only take the Quizzes with a reliable computer/internet connection – please plan ahead so you are prepared in case you accidentally delete your work, or if your electricity stops, or if your internet connection is interrupted, etc. If you do not save your work, and you lose it all, then you get a zero for that assignment and no make-up work is possible. If you do not save your Quiz answers as you go along, or if you lose your internet connection, or if your electricity stops, or if you did not save your work in Word as you are answering your Discussion questions, then you will get a zero for that Quiz or Discussion Board. It is essential for an online course that you have access to a reliable internet connection and a battery back-up on your computer in case of electrical outages.

As with the notes on plagiarism/cheating, privacy rights, and withdrawing yourself from the course, please consider this paragraph (in bold, underlined red ink) to be a crucial message to help you succeed in the course. Please do pay attention to everything in the syllabus, so you can do your best!

NOTE ABOUT ATTENDANCE CONFIRMATION: College policy requires that all professors submit a report of all students who have attended class. Those students who have not participated in this class will be dropped, as required by college policy. It is not possible to sign back in after being dropped for lack of attendance.

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SCHEDULE OF READINGS

(PLEASE NOTE THAT **THE PAGE NUMBERS MAY NOT CORRESPOND TO YOUR BOOK EDITION**; IF SO, PLEASE LOOK UP THE AUTHOR AND TITLE IN YOUR EDITION OR LOOK FOR THE ARTICLE AS A PDF ON CANVAS OR ONLINE.)

SECTION 1 -- The Legacy of Socrates; The Value of Philosophy

“Apology,” Plato. Available online:
<http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/apology.html>

“The Value of Philosophy,” Russell. Available online:
<http://www.skeptdic.com/russell.html>

“Appearance and Reality,” Russell. Available online:
<http://www.ditext.com/russell/rus1.html>

THE REST OF THE SEMESTER’S READING SCHEDULE WILL BE ANNOUNCED...

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IMPORTANT REMINDERS:

1) You will need to complete the readings assigned for that section, preferably a week ahead, if possible. Each Section runs for 7 days.

2) During each SEVEN DAY period, you will have a new section to complete. For the entire seven days of that section, you will have access to the Discussion Board, but you will have access to the Quiz ONLY for the first FIVE days. Please study the articles carefully ahead of time to do well. And please take your time on the Discussion Boards to do your best work – it will take time to watch the videos, study the material, comment to others, etc.

In other words:

For 7 days, you can post on the Discussion Board for that Section.

But the Quiz will only be available in the FIRST 5 DAYS, and will then close.

3) Any Quiz or Discussion Board that was not attempted will be averaged as a **zero**.

Please plan and be prepared every section for a) reading the articles, b) completing the Quiz, and c) posting QUALITY and WELL RESEARCHED responses/answers on the Discussion Board. Each Discussion Board requires you to answer the questions, and then reply in a substantial and meaningful way to AT LEAST THREE other student posts. So that means **AT LEAST FOUR POSTS PER DISCUSSION BOARD**.

4) There will be one Term Paper assigned for this class; complete instructions will be provided ahead of time.

5) There will be an online Final Exam, and Study Suggestions will be provided in preparation.

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HOW THE DISCUSSION BOARDS ARE GRADED:

For each Discussion Board, please a) answer the question being posed in a QUALITY AND WELL RESEARCHED WAY, and b) respond in the same CAREFUL AND REFLECTIVE WAY to at least THREE posts from other students. Again, that is, four posts *at least* are required from each student, per Discussion Board. **More quality work can be posted if desired -- this is highly encouraged if your goal is to get high grades.** It is essential that students respect each other in their posts – all name calling or other disrespectful behavior will not be tolerated and will result in low Discussion Board grades. It is healthy and important to disagree in Philosophy, but this can and must be done in a way that is considerate to other people. Before you respond to someone else, ask yourself “How can I respond in a way that shows the very best ethical standards?” Or you can ask, “How would I like to be treated by someone who disagreed with me?” Remember that **thoughtful disagreement is healthy in Philosophy** (we all have beliefs that are false, so someone disagreeing with us is a chance to see if we should change our beliefs) -- **please just try your absolute best to be polite and respectful to others.**

Each Discussion Board grade is on a scale of 0-10 points:

To earn 9-10 points, a student will need to offer reflective posts, which demonstrate an excellent, “above and beyond” grasp of the readings under consideration, highly thoughtful and meaningful responses to other students, and an overall VERY high level of effort, respectfulness, and care.

To earn 7-8 points, a student will need to offer posts that demonstrate a good grasp of the readings under consideration, somewhat thoughtful and meaningful responses to other students, and show some level of effort, respectfulness, and care.

To earn 5-6 points, a student will need to offer posts that demonstrate a partial grasp of the readings under consideration, partially complete responses to other students, and an incomplete level of effort, respectfulness, and care.

To earn 1-4 points, a student will need to offer one post that demonstrates a partial grasp of the readings under consideration and no or inadequate/irrelevant responses to other students. Very little effort, respectfulness, or care are taken in the responses.

To earn 0 points, a student will need either to not post at all or to be blatantly disrespectful to others.

As the professor, I think the Discussion Boards can be the most interesting part of the class if you take them seriously. I look forward to reading your ideas, your reflections on the articles, and seeing you philosophize with each other.

FINAL REMINDER:

AS STATED PREVIOUSLY, ALL READINGS ARE EITHER IN YOUR BOOK, ON CANVAS (AS A LINK OR PDF), OR ON THE WEBSITES LISTED ABOVE.

*****IF YOU CANNOT FIND THE REQUIRED ARTICLES OR VIDEOS, YOU ARE STILL RESPONSIBLE FOR VIEWING/READING THEM IN TERMS OF THE QUIZ AND OTHER WORK.*****

PLEASE SEARCH FOR ANOTHER COPY ON WWW.GOOGLE.COM AND EMAIL ME WITH ENOUGH TIME TO RESPOND BACK – THANKS!

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YES, YOU WILL WORK HARD THIS SEMESTER,
BUT PLEASE REFLECT ON THIS:

“
*A*CCORDING TO THE EFFORT IS THE
”

REWARD.

-Ben Heh Heh (Ethics of our Fathers, 5:22-23)

LASTLY...

IF YOU NEED ANYTHING DURING THE SEMESTER, PLEASE
EMAIL ME THROUGH CANVAS. I AM HAPPY TO HELP
HOWEVER I CAN! ☺

IT IS BETTER TO KNOW EARLIER RATHER THAN LATER IF
YOU HAVE ANY ISSUES OR PROBLEMS, SO WE WILL HAVE
ENOUGH TIME TO REMEDY THE SITUATION, IF POSSIBLE.

**THANK YOU FOR TAKING THIS CLASS SERIOUSLY, AND
ENJOY BECOMING A BETTER PHILOSOPHER!**

Sincerely,

Dr. Mallory

FYI:

College for the Masses

New York Times

David Leonhardt [@DLeonhardt](#) APRIL 24, 2015

Growing up in Miami in the 1990s, Carlos Escanilla was a lot more interested in hanging out with friends and playing music than in school. The son of immigrants from Chile, he slogged through high school with a C+ average and scored about 900 out of 1,600 on the SAT. “I was convinced I was going to be a famous rock star,” Mr. Escanilla, now 36, said.

When people talk about four-year colleges not being for everyone, the teenage Carlos Escanilla is the sort of student they have in mind. He seemed to be a much better fit for a job, a vocational program or a community college.

Yet on a summer night in 1997, a friend persuaded Mr. Escanilla to try to enroll at nearby Florida International University. The college was growing and might be willing to take a chance on a marginal student. And, Mr. Escanilla began to realize, he didn’t have anything better to do.

“I didn’t have a band, I didn’t have a way to tour,” he says. “I didn’t have any prospects.” Two months later, he was sitting in classes at Florida International.

The fate of students like Mr. Escanilla is crucial to today’s debate over who should go to college: How much money should taxpayers spend subsidizing higher education? How willing should students be to take on college debt? How hard should Washington and state governments push colleges to lift their graduation rates? All of these questions depend on whether a large number of at-risk students are really capable of completing a four-year degree.



“I fell in love with learning,” said Carlos Escanilla, a graduate of Florida International University. Credit Brian Smith for The New York Times

As it happens, two separate — and ambitious — recent academic studies have looked at precisely this issue. The economists and education researchers tracked thousands of people over the last two decades in Florida, Georgia and elsewhere who had fallen on either side of hard admissions cutoffs. Less selective colleges often set such benchmarks: Students who score 840 on the SAT, for example, or maintain a C+ average in high school are admitted. Those who don’t clear the bar are generally rejected, and many don’t attend any four-year college.

Such stark cutoffs provide researchers with a kind of natural experiment. Students who score an 830 on the SAT are nearly identical to those who score an 840. Yet if one group goes to college and the other doesn’t, researchers can make meaningful estimates of the true effects of college.

And the two studies have come to remarkably similar conclusions: Enrolling in a four-year college brings large benefits to marginal students.

Roughly half of the students in Georgia who had cleared the bar went on to earn a bachelor’s degree within six years, compared with only 17 percent of those who missed the cutoff, according to one of the studies, by Joshua S. Goodman of Harvard and Michael Hurwitz and Jonathan Smith of the College Board. The benefits were concentrated among lower-income students, both studies found, and among men, one of them found.

Strikingly, the students who initially enrolled in a four-year college were also about as likely to have earned a two-year degree as the other group was. That is, those who started on the more ambitious track were able to downshift, but most of those who

started in community colleges struggled to make the leap to four-year colleges. That finding is consistent with other research showing that students do better when they stretch themselves and attend the most selective college that admits them, rather than “undermatching.”

Perhaps most important, the data show that the students just above the admissions cutoff earned substantially more by their late 20s than students just below it — 22 percent more on average, according to the Florida study, which was done by Seth D. Zimmerman, a Princeton economist who will soon move to the University of Chicago. “If you give these students a shot, they’re ready to succeed,” said Mr. Zimmerman, adding that he was surprised by the strength of the findings.

The results, said David H. Autor, an oft-cited labor economist at M.I.T.(who was not an author of either study), are “really important.”

In many ways, the conclusions should not be surprising. Earlier research, albeit based on weaker data sets, had similar findings. More broadly, a long line of research has found that education usually pays off — for individuals and societies — in today’s technologically complex, globalized economy.

YET the new findings also challenge a good bit of conventional wisdom about college. There are few surer ways to elicit murmurs of agreement than to claim that “college isn’t for everyone.” On both the political left and right, experts have taken to arguing that higher education is overrated (at least when it comes to other people’s children). Some liberals seem worried that focusing on education distracts from other important economic issues, like Wall Street, the top 1 percent and the weakness of labor unions.

Many policy makers, for their part, prefer to emphasize an expansion of community college rather than four-year college. President Obama has proposed making community college free for most students, as Tennessee and Chicago have done.

Enrolling more students in community colleges may well make economic sense. So, in all likelihood, would creating more and better vocational training, for well-paid jobs like medical technician and electrician, which don’t require a bachelor’s degree. The United States, Mr. Autor says, “massively underinvests” in such training.

Yet the new research is a reminder that the country also underinvests in enrolling students in four-year colleges — and making sure they graduate. Millions of people with the ability to earn a bachelor’s degree are not doing so, and many would benefit greatly from it.

The unemployment rate among college graduates ages 25 to 34 is just 2 percent, even with the many stories you hear about out-of-work college graduates. They’re not generally working in menial jobs, either. The pay gap between college graduates and everyone else is near a record high. It’s large enough, over a lifetime, to cover many times over the almost \$20,000 in student debt that an average graduate has, notes the education researcher Sandy Baum. College graduates are also healthier,

happier, more likely to remain married, more likely to be engaged parents and more likely to vote, research has found.

A question that has always hung over these findings is whether college itself deserves any credit for the patterns. You can imagine a scenario in which college graduates would thrive regardless of whether they went to college, because of their own skills and drives. By this same logic, helping more people become college graduates might not necessarily benefit them. But the new findings are the latest, and maybe strongest, reason to believe that college matters. Much as staying in high school is generally a better life strategy than dropping out, continuing on to college seems like the better plan for a great majority of students.

The skills and knowledge that they gain from more time in school are certainly part of the explanation. Mr. Escanilla thinks that, at 15, he was not mature enough to take school seriously. A few years later, he understood that dreaming of rock stardom wasn't a career plan.

"I fell in love with learning," he recalls. With his parents suffering financial problems, he worked almost full time while in college (mostly as a barista at Starbucks, which gave him health insurance and a free pound of coffee every week). Finishing college took him almost six years, but he graduated with a degree in liberal arts studies. He chose it over more utilitarian majors because he enjoyed studying subjects like literature and psychology.

After a few years of working as a salesman for Bell South, persuading small businesses to buy high-end telecommunications equipment, he realized he wasn't thrilled with his work. He had thought about going to graduate school after college but felt intimidated by it, as a first-generation college graduate. By the time he was a married 28-year-old father of two, he was no longer intimidated, and enrolled in a psychology program while working. Today, he is a psychotherapist at a local high school and also counsels adults as a professional coach.

But book learning isn't anywhere near the full story of Mr. Escanilla's growing up. His path also highlights another benefit that college can bring: Its graduates have managed to complete adulthood's first major obstacle course. Doing so helps them learn how to finish other obstacle courses and gives them the confidence that they can, so long as they stay focused. Learning to navigate college fosters a quality that social scientists have taken to calling grit.

"What I learned in college was kind of how to have this, 'Yes, but how' attitude," Mr. Escanilla said. "You fall, dust yourself off and keep going." He now assigns his high school students to visit the Florida International campus and soak in the atmosphere. "You don't even need to talk to anybody," he tells them. "Just walk around. There is something about that energy on campus that makes you want to be better."

The biggest problem with the colleges that marginal students attend, like Florida International and several state colleges in Georgia, is how many students fall down

and don't figure out a way to keep going. Dropout rates typically hover around 50 percent, which leaves students with the grim combination of debt and no degree. Reducing these rates could bring big economic benefits. Until that happens, some people have been left to wonder whether many teenagers should simply give up on the idea of college.

The answer to that question, however, seems to be a resounding no. Many community colleges have even higher dropout rates than four-year colleges. And most people with no college education are struggling mightily in the 21st-century economy.

Is college for everyone? Surely not. Some students are even less well prepared than Mr. Escanilla and won't thrive as he did. Others would rather not spend four more years in school and can find rewarding, well-paying work as a medical technician, dental hygienist, police officer, plumber or other jobs that require a two-year degree or vocational training.

Yet the United States is in no danger of turning everyone into four-year college graduates. Only about a third of young adults today receive a bachelor's degree. The new research confirms that many more teenagers have the ability to do so — and would benefit from it.

"It's genuinely destructive to give people the message that we're overinvesting in college, that we're in a college-debt bubble, that you'll end up as an unemployed ethnomusicologist with \$200,000 in debt working at Starbucks," Mr. Autor, the M.I.T. economist, said. "That's not a message you would want to give to anyone you know who has kids."

The political scientist Robert D. Putnam named his new book on inequality, "Our Kids," as a lamentation. In past decades, Mr. Putnam argued, the United States made a series of investments that essentially treated children as everyone's children. The best example was the rise of universal high school in the 20th century, an expensive undertaking that did not directly benefit many taxpayers.

Back then, a high school education was the new ticket to the middle class. Today, a college education is. And when it comes to people's own children, there is remarkably little disagreement about the value of college, even when it requires taking on debt. Affluent, middle-class and lower-income parents alike, in overwhelming numbers, aspire for their children to finish college.

Americans agree that "our kids" should go to college. The debate is really about who qualifies as "our kids."

David Leonhardt is the editor of The Upshot, a New York Times politics and policy venture.

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