

Las Positas College  
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## Course Outline for PHIL 1H

### HONORS PHILOSOPHY 1: GOD, NATURE, HUMAN NATURE

Effective: Fall 2014

#### I. CATALOG DESCRIPTION:

PHIL 1H — HONORS PHILOSOPHY 1: GOD, NATURE, HUMAN NATURE — 3.00 units

This is an honors course for philosophy 1. Philosophy 1 is an exploration of the nature and range of philosophical inquiry in relation to everyday problems of humans as individuals, as citizens, as physical creatures, and as creators of spiritual and artistic works. Philosophical texts are analyzed with special attention given to the development of skills in analysis and argumentation. Students in Honors Philosophy 1 course will have assignments in reading, writing, discussion, analysis, and oral presentation at a level of rigor higher than those in Philosophy 1 and consistent with honors program expectations.

NOTE: Philosophy 2 and 4 are also introductory courses and may be taken before Philosophy 1 if a more detailed examination of ethical problems, the theory of knowledge, or political philosophy is desired. A student who has successfully completed PHIL 1 cannot enroll in PHIL 1H

3.00 Units Lecture

#### **Strongly Recommended**

- Eligibility for ENG 1A -

#### **Grading Methods:**

Letter Grade

#### **Discipline:**

	<b>MIN</b>
<b>Lecture Hours:</b>	54.00
<b>Total Hours:</b>	54.00

#### II. NUMBER OF TIMES COURSE MAY BE TAKEN FOR CREDIT: 1

#### III. PREREQUISITE AND/OR ADVISORY SKILLS:

**Before entering this course, it is strongly recommended that the student should be able to:**

A. -Eligibility for ENG 1A

#### IV. MEASURABLE OBJECTIVES:

**Upon completion of this course, the student should be able to:**

1. articulate and discuss the central questions and formative figures of the philosophical tradition;
2. evaluate and critique prominent theories about God, nature and human nature;
3. apply theories discussed in class to problems and questions facing humans in modern times;
4. show connections between the field of philosophy and other fields of inquiry such as humanities, religion, art, sociology, psychology, and the applied arts;
5. synthesize personal experience, individual research, and course information into a cogent and defensible philosophical theory;
6. explain personal philosophical positions to others in both written and spoken form;
7. work with others in a group to problem-solve philosophical issues.
8. compose philosophical essays using rigorous argumentative technique and incorporating responses to ideas found contemporary philosophical writings
9. Prepare and lead organized discussion groups
10. Read complex philosophical literature, and develop a response to that literature using a combination of self-direction and close interaction with the instructor
11. Present original philosophical arguments both orally and in writing

#### V. CONTENT:

- A. Definitions and overview
  1. Definitions of philosophy
  2. Essentials of the philosophical method
- B. Advanced methods of philosophical analysis for honors students
  1. Reading and comprehending complex philosophical arguments
  2. Preparing notes and discussion points on philosophical reading
  3. Leading discussion groups
  4. Presenting and reconstructing arguments

5. Developing targeted responses to specific philosophical arguments
6. Collaborative and self directed development of philosophical theory
7. Composing philosophical essays and presentations
- C. Theories of knowledge
  1. The nature of knowledge
  2. The problem of skepticism
  3. Rationalism and empiricism
  4. The scientific method
  5. Self-knowledge and religious knowledge
  6. Naturalism and constructivism
- D. The Nature of reality
  1. Classical theories of reality
  2. Dualism
  3. Materialism
  4. Idealism
  5. Representative realism
- E. Understanding the self
  1. Classical theories of self
  2. Behaviorism and physicalism
  3. Eastern challenges to self-identity
  4. The self in psychology
  5. Existentialist theories of self
- F. Ethics
  1. Classical ethical theories
  2. Ethics and religion
  3. Relativism
  4. Utilitarianism
  5. Modern deontological theory
  6. Ethical nihilism
- G. Political philosophy
  1. Classical political theory
  2. Rights and responsibilities
  3. Economics and the human condition
  4. Theories of human freedom
  5. Individual and collective identity
- H. Philosophy of Religion
  1. Classical religious philosophy
  2. Arguments for God's existence
  3. The problem of evil
  4. The nature of religious experience
- I. Philosophy of Art
  1. Classical aesthetic theory
  2. Defining art
  3. Debates on the value of art
  4. Understanding artistic experience
- J. Logic and argumentation
  1. Background, premises, and conclusions
  2. Making valid arguments
  3. Basics of formal logic
  4. Avoiding fallacies in reasoning

## VI. METHODS OF INSTRUCTION:

- A. **Lecture** -
- B. **Discussion** -
- C. **Student Presentations** -
- D. Multi-media presentations & analysis
- E. Individual interaction between instructor and student's on philosophical projects
- F. Brief written assignments
- G. Final research and analysis project
- H. Advanced student-led research, discussion and analysis projects
- I. Course text readings

## VII. TYPICAL ASSIGNMENTS:

- A. Group discussion
  1. Read the first section of Plato's *Euthyphro* and diagram the arguments you find there. Come to class prepared to present and discuss the arguments you diagramed.
  2. Review the notes from Descartes' *Meditations*. Formulate class discussion questions with the other honors students in this class, and come to class next time prepared to lead the class in a discussion of the central ideas of the text.
- B. Student presentations
  1. Using Descartes' characterization of God as a response to Plato's challenges to religious ethics
  2. Challenges in contemporary psychology to Descartes' theory of self knowledge
- C. Course text readings
  1. Read Plato's *Euthyphro*, and be prepared to discuss the central arguments in class.
  2. Read Meditation II from Descartes' *Meditations on First Philosophy* and be prepared to discuss his understanding of the nature of the human mind.
- D. Written assignments
  1. Evaluate Plato's arguments about religious ethics in the *Euthyphro*. Identify the argumentative structure behind 3 of Plato's arguments, and respond to specific parts of the argument showing why you find them to be either successful or unsuccessful.
- E. Final research and analysis project
  1. Working closely with the instructor, identify a central contemporary philosophical text that offers a unique argument about one of the central questions in this class. After researching, contextualize this argument both in terms of the historical positions we have covered in this class, and in terms of at least 2 other contemporary thinkers. Finally, you will need to develop a response to the philosophical issues of this contemporary thinker that goes beyond both the historical ideas and the contemporary responses offered by other philosophers. You may be in a position to offer a unique example, extension, or modification, or refutation that has not been offered before. You will work closely with the instructor as you develop each part of your essay as discussed above. Your final project will be a 12 page paper as well as an oral presentation.

## VIII. EVALUATION:

## A. Methods

1. Other:
  - a. Group discussions and analyses include written group accounts and are evaluated according to creativity, critical insight, formation of cogent arguments, and depth of understanding.
  - b. Student presentations and final projects are evaluated according to the quality of research, level of understanding of the philosophical content, and the ability to apply that material to make effective arguments which synthesize abstract philosophical ideas with applied concerns.
  - c. Written assignments are evaluated according to the extent to which they reflect an understanding of the material, an ability to apply that material effectively to personal experience, and an ability to critically evaluate one's own ideas as well as those of the philosophers we have studied.
  - d. Essay and short-answer tests may be used throughout the term to demonstrate knowledge of the key ideas, thinkers, and philosophical methods presented in the course.

## B. Frequency

1. Frequency
  - a. Group discussions will occur weekly throughout the course.
  - b. Student presentations will be given 1-4 times throughout the course.
  - c. Written assignments will occur on average every other week.
  - d. The final research and analysis project will be submitted at the end of the term.
  - e. Essay and short answer tests will be given 1-3 times throughout the course.

## IX. TYPICAL TEXTS:

1. Abel, Donald C (2011). *Fifty Readings in Philosophy* (4th ed.). New York: McGraw Hill.
2. Descartes, Rene (1993). *Meditations on First Philosophy* (3rd ed.). Indianapolis: Hackett.
3. Hume, David (1998). *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (2nd ed.). Indianapolis: Hackett.
4. Kessler, Gary E (2011). *Voices of Wisdom: A Multicultural Philosophy Reader* (8th ed.). Belmont, Ca: Wadsworth.
5. Plato (2002). *Five Dialogues: Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Meno, Phaedo* (2nd ed.). Indianapolis: Hackett.
6. Cahn, Steven M. (2011). *Exploring Philosophy: An Introductory Anthology* (4th ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

## X. OTHER MATERIALS REQUIRED OF STUDENTS: