

SYLLABUS: PHIL_OX 100 INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY, SPRING 2010

MWF 11:45 - 12:35 HH 206

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HH 206

Instructor:

Dr. John Kress

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Office Hours:

T 2:00-3:00, W 3:00-4:00, or by appointment

Course Description: The term “philosophy” comes from the Greek philosophia meaning “love of wisdom,” and has for 2500 years been the name of the highest form of intellectual endeavor in the West. In this class, we will undertake to gain a preliminary understanding of the enterprise of philosophy, including the major sub-divisions within the field of philosophy. G.K. Chesterton provides a good, basic definition of philosophy and its value:

“Philosophy is merely thought that has been thought out. It is often difficult. But man has no alternative, except between being influenced by thought that has been thought out or being influenced by thought that has not been thought out Man is always influenced by thought of some kind, his own or somebody else's; that of somebody he trusts or that of somebody he never heard of, thought at first, second or third hand; thought from exploded legends or unverified rumors; but always something with the shadow of a system of values and a reason for preference. A man does test everything by something. The question here is whether he has ever tested the test.”

Course Objectives:

1. To gain a preliminary understanding of what philosophy is.
2. To gain experience recognizing and understanding philosophical arguments.
3. To gain experience in making philosophical arguments.
4. To get a sense of the various sub-disciplines within the field of philosophy.

Required Texts:

Solomon, Robert C., *The Big Questions: A Short Introduction to Philosophy*, 8th Ed.

Various PDF Documents which will be posted on Blackboard. You are required to **PRINT THESE OUT**

and bring the hardcopies with you to class. We will be discussing these texts in class, so you are required to have them in order to be able to discuss them. Not having the text in front of you means you

are only able to partially participate in class, and will therefore count as a half-absence (see below).

Course Assignments and Requirements:

Class Participation: All students are expected to come to class having done the reading carefully and prepared to listen and take part in class discussion of the material. You will find you get a lot more out of class if you have completed the reading. While it is not required that everyone be equally vocal in class, everyone is expected to participate in discussion to some extent.

Essays (2):

900-1200 words (include word count on title page).

Exams (2):

A midterm and a final. They will cover the first half of the course and the second, respectively (i.e. the final is not comprehensive).

Position Cards: Every class, you are to turn in a 3" x 5" note card which should have your name, the name of the author and the reading, and a short reflection on the day's reading. This reflection can be an argument, a question or questions, something the reading made you think about, etc.

The purpose of this is for you to think a little in writing (one side of a note card) about each reading. I recommend you write your position card at the same time you do your reading (as

opposed to right before class). Please write legibly! **YOU ARE REQUIRED TO TURN IN ONE CARD FOR EVERY CLASS.**

Attendance: Regular class attendance is both required and important. Much of our best learning is done in class. Students should attend every class, if possible. Your overall class grade will be adjusted according to the number of unexcused absences you have, as follows: 0 = +3, 1 = +2, 2 = +1, 3 = 0, 4 = -2, 5 = -4, 6 = -7, 7 = -11, 8 = -16, etc. Excused absences will be given for 1. medical or family emergencies, 2. religious observances, and 3. events authorized by the College. For an absence to be excused, you must provide appropriate documentation. Note that the student health center **CANNOT** authorize medical absences.

Tardiness: On a campus the size of Oxford's, with 15 minutes between classes, there is no justification for being late to class. If you are not in class when I call roll, you will be marked absent. If you come in after roll call, I will cancel the absence, but it is your responsibility to let me know (after class) that you were present. If you are late by more than 15 minutes, the absence stands. Every TWO cancelled absences equals 1 absence, and will be reckoned as such in the Attendance adjustment to your final grade.

Syllabus: This document, that you are reading. It is your responsibility not to lose it. You are responsible for reading and knowing it.

Computers: This is a discussion class. As such, your attention is required to be focused on the conversation. Therefore, computers must be closed during class.

Reading: Many of the texts we will be reading are fairly difficult. Be sure to allow yourself enough time to do your reading. 15 pages of Aristotle is equal to 30 pages of many other writers! By the same token, don't expect to completely understand a difficult philosophical text on a first reading. Take your time, read slowly and carefully, think about (and talk about) the reading, and when you can, re-read.

Grading and Evaluation:

Scale: Grading will be according to the standard scale of A, B, C, D & F with + and -.

Breakdown:

Position Cards / Class Participation

20%

Papers

20% each

Exams

20% each

Late Papers: I will accept late papers, but the paper grade will be reduced by one letter grade per class day the paper is late.

Honor Code: As with all classes at Oxford, the Student Honor Code will be taken very seriously in this class. You can find an online copy of the Code here:

http://www.oxford.emory.edu/audiences/current_students/academics/academic_success/honor_code.dot

