

## SYLLABUS

### I. General Information:

Office: Language Hall 205-A; Office hours: 12:00-12:50pm MWF, & by appt  
Phone: (O) 4-8361; (H) (770) 939-3308; (Fax) (770) 784-4660; (770)784-4623  
Classroom: Language 201; Class Hour: 12:50-1:40pm MWF; OPUS# 3728  
Email addresses: [jkiersk@emory.edu](mailto:jkiersk@emory.edu); [JHKiersky@aol.com](mailto:JHKiersky@aol.com); Credit Hours: 4.0  
Classes Begin: 08/29/01; Classes End: 12/11/01; Final Exam: 12/19/01, 2-5pm

### II. Texts:

Plato, *Euthyphro*, *Apology*, *Crito*, *Symposium*  
Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*  
Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*  
Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*  
Mill, John Stuart, *On Liberty*  
Nkrumah, Kwame, *Consciencism and the Ideology for Decolonization*  
Irigaray, Luce, *je, tu, nous: Toward a Culture of Difference*

### III. Course Description and Objectives:

This course introduces the discipline of philosophy by examining some of the classic texts written during the past twenty-five hundred years. A cursory glance at the texts in II above reveals that a number of the thinkers in the history of ideas traditionally studied in such a course will be discussed. However, we will do so in a fairly non-traditional, hopefully more multicultural manner. Among other goals of the course, the student may expect to gain theoretical and practical knowledge of the vocabulary of philosophy as well as acquaintance with the nature, purpose, and methods of philosophy. Moreover, the student may expect to become familiar with the origin and the development of value theory, and with the nature and role of reasoning processes and how these two processes interface.

More specifically, the class may differ from many if not most others you have had or will have in your undergraduate curriculum. Most of these are 'content' courses, teaching you what to think about a particular subject and testing you principally on your ability to memorize. This course, on the other hand, will emphasize 'how' different people think, studying the diversity of ways we actually reason, rationalize, justify, persuade, and so forth. The relevance of this will emerge, hopefully, as we develop our own critical abilities and so become aware of our own capacities and limitations to understand and communicate with others (and with ourselves too!) While this may be a welcome relief from rote memorization, it may prove a bit unsettling at times, perhaps disorienting, uncertain, upsetting, and even productive of a headache or two. As John Dewey put the matter after an entire career as educational reformer and philosopher:

"Let us admit the case of the conservative: if we once start thinking no one can guarantee where we shall come out, except that many objects,

ends and institutions are doomed. Every thinker puts some portion of an apparently stable world in peril and no one can wholly predict what will emerge in its place.”

Hopefully in this class, we will be doing such thinking.

#### **IV. Course Objectives:**

As a survey of philosophy, the course has several interconnected objectives. First, and most obviously, it is intended to introduce the student to the very broad and often misunderstood field of philosophy. It is commonly believed, for example, that “philosophy” is synonymous with “opinion”, as in “well, my philosophy about that is this....” Because this course may be the only formal exposure to philosophy many of you will ever have, it should also be like a smorgasborg of ideas, a “taste of philosophy”, as it were, so that you are introduced to a variety of thinkers and ideas. Should you ever desire to continue in your studies of philosophy, you will have, hopefully, a much better conceptual geography, a sort of intellectual road map of where you might want to go and what you might want to do. Also, because one of the very important features of philosophy is to expose you to the wealth of culturally diverse ideas, we will have to be mindful of the limitations of current means of exploring that rather broad spectrum. Again, take a glance at the rather ambitious list of textbooks for the course. Until the last two readings, one might be tempted to conclude that philosophy must be the study of the history of dead white guys. We are going to have to rectify a lot of misconceptions. There will be difficulties. Some of the material we re to read will seem completely opaque, totally abstract, and irrelevant to any practical part of day to day experience. One of the major objectives then will be to make that material come alive for you so that it can take on some immediate relevance.

#### **V. Course Requirements:**

Let us begin with a disclaimer: course requirements will be developed as the class proceeds, altered in response to the demands of time and subject matter, and definitely on the basis of class and individual needs.

- A. **Papers.** Three short papers (roughly three to five pages in length) and to be detailed in a separate worksheet. (10% each for total of 30%)
- B. **Examinations.** Four examinations; non-cumulative in nature. (10% each)
- C. **Group Project.** One group project in which you will work together with two or three of your classmates to present and explain a reading assignment to the class and defend your ideas. (10% of total grade)
- D. **Quizzes and Journal Entries.** Throughout the semester, you will have several very brief assignments, usually given out one class period in advance, but not always. (10% of total grade)
- E. **Participation.** This is a crucial element in creating a good class. Philosophy is not a spectator sport. For this class to become relevant to you, you will have

F. to get involved. I realize that many of us have a shy side, and passive participation will not be penalized. However, class attendance seems to be a necessary condition for class participation, and so, for each three class periods missed, the final course average will be adjusted downwards. Conversely, contribution to class discussions, raising questions, and opening your mouth to express your own ideas will play an important role in creating an interesting, creative, and dynamic class period and may be used to adjust your final grade upwards. Dialogue is essential to philosophy. So, I will stress again that any and all comments will be appreciated. There are no “stupid questions” (okay, so maybe there are two of them); there are only unasked questions. One of the goals of the class will be to create better active listeners in all of us. (10% of total grade)

The upshot of all of this is that you will have ten different grades for the class: three papers, four exams, a group project, a set of quizzes and journal assignments, and class participation. These will be averaged equally, and as an added incentive, for those who miss two classes or less, the lowest one of these eight grades will be dropped and the rest averaged.

#### VI. Varia:

- Incompletes may be given by the professor only in special hardship cases. Incompletes may not be used merely for extending the time for completion of course requirements.
- The Honor Code is made a part of this Syllabus and this class. All tests, examinations, papers, quizzes and journal entries are accepted as pledged work. If you are unsure about plagiarism, see the professor. A working definition may be found in the Student Survival Guide, but we can also say that plagiarism is the wrongful use and publication as one's own of the ideas, or the expression of the ideas of another person. The extensiveness and the nature of the offense will determine the penalty, although customarily, cases of plagiarism are turned over to the Student Honor Council and a grade of “F” assigned for the course in question. The same will hold true for other forms of cheating.
- Students should consult the general catalog for information about the procedure to be used in requesting a hardship withdrawal. Hopefully, this will not be apposite, but if it is, by all means see me and we will contact the Dean's office.
- Make-up examinations are a privilege, not necessarily a right. If you are going to have to miss an examination, be sure to contact the professor as soon as you discover the situation.
- The last day for schedule changes and course cancellation is September 5th.
- The last day for withdrawal without a WF grade is October 3rd.
- Drop/Add period is August 27<sup>th</sup> through September 5th.
- Mid Semester Break is October 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>.
- Conferences: Office hours are listed in Part I of the Syllabus, and you are encouraged to make use of them. The professor is both willing and eager to discuss any aspect of the course or class with you, so if you find the conference

hours inconvenient or impractical, just call and we can schedule something convenient for both of us. Spontaneity is fine as well.

- I check my email and my voice mail at least a couple of times a day if not more frequently, so you can always contact me that way.
- Feel free to make use of our class conference to raise questions, offer ideas, or otherwise promulgate information pertinent to the class.
- If for some reason you missed the discussion of this Syllabus, you are still responsible for all the material contained herein.
- Be sure to look at the academic calendar before making your Thanksgiving travel plans: this year the Wednesday before Thanksgiving is NOT a holiday!

## **VII. Calendar of Assignments:**

- 08/31: Introduction; Syllabus; Assignment: Read the *Euthyphro*  
09/03: Labor Day, Holiday  
09/05: What is Philosophy? Assignment: Read the *Apology*; Discussions  
09/07: Continue with Socrates; Read the *Crito*  
09/10: Discussions of *Apology* and *Crito*  
09/12: Read the *Symposium*; continued discussions of Socrates and Plato  
09/14: Discussion of the *Symposium*  
09/17: Symposium  
09/19: Symposium  
09/21: Examination #1  
09/24: Aristotle, Nichomachean Ethics  
09/26: Aristotle, Nichomachean Ethics  
09/28: Aristotle, Nichomachean Ethics  
10/01: Aristotle, Nichomachean Ethics  
10/03: Aristotle, Nichomachean Ethics  
10/05: Aristotle, Nichomachean Ethics  
10/08: Descartes, Meditations  
10/10: Descartes, Meditations  
10/12: Mid-Semester Break  
10/15: Descartes, Meditations  
10/17: Descartes, Meditations  
10/19: Descartes, Meditations  
10/22: Descartes, Meditations  
10/24: Examination #2  
10/26: Kant, Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals  
10/29: Kant, Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals  
10/31: Kant, Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals  
11/02: Kant, Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals  
11/05: Mill, On Liberty  
11/07: Mill, On Liberty  
11/09: Mill, On Liberty

**11/12: Mill, On Liberty**  
**11/14: Examination #3**  
**11/16: Nkrumah, Consciencism**  
**11/19: Nkrumah, Consciencism**  
**11/21: Thanksgiving Break**  
**11/26: Nkrumah, Consciencism**  
**11/28: Luce Irigaray; group projects**  
**11/30: Luce Irigaray; group projects**  
**12/03: Luce Irigaray; group projects**  
**12/05: Luce Irigaray; group projects**  
**12/07: Luce Irigaray; last of the group projects and recap**  
**12/10: Last Day of Classes; Course Evaluations**

**Final Examination is also Exam #4 and is currently scheduled for Wed. 19 December 2001 from 2 to 5 pm.**