HUMANITIES 220

INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

Instructor: Paul Semm

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**Text:**

Lavine, T.Z. From Socrates to Sartre: The Philosophical Quest

Short selections

**Films:**

*Antigone Never Cry Wolf*

*Clockwatchers Paha Sapa*

*Cool Hand Luke 2001: Space Odyssey*

*The Graduate Wannsee Conference*

**Course Description**

In this course we are going to analyze ourselves and the culture in which we live from a philosophical point of view. The focus of our analysis will be the three central "idols" of our world view: individualism, progress, and reason. These idols emerged during the Enlightenment, a period of immense social change and optimism in Western society. Although these "idols" have undergone radical transformations that would make them unrecognizable to Enlightenment thinkers, they are still, even in their distorted form, foundational elements for our self-understanding and for our cultural world view.

One of the essential elements of the philosophical point of view is that of critique. In Plato's classical Greek thought, in Kant's Enlightenment philosophy, and in Foucault's postmodern thought, philosophy is given the role of examining the taken-for-granted and demystifying cultural idols and illusions. The difficulty in this undertaking, among other things, is that "idols" appear to be reality; to members of most cultures their worldviews appear to be natural, true, and good. Two ways, which I will use in trying to reveal the "idols" of our worldview as culturally relative, will be through analyzing historical discontinuities and transformations in Western society. And in comparing our world view and its assumptions to other cultures and their world views.

**Evaluation Process**:

There will be a total of one hundred (100) points. There will be two take-home essay/exams each worth thirty (30) points. Each student will also keep a philosophical journal that will be worth thirty (30) points. There will also be ten (10) points for class participation.

The essay exams will consist of two (15 points each) or three (10 points each) questions based on the lectures, readings, films, and journal assignments.

The philosophical journal can be a spiral notebook or computer generated. It should consist of three separate and clearly defined parts. Part 1 will consist of the answer to questions that I will give out during most class periods. Part II will consist of notes, analyses, and evaluations of films (and readings. And Part III will consists of philosophical reflections, personal reflection on questions raised in class.

**Class Schedule**:

Date Topic Assignment Due

Tue 10 30 Introduction: "Enlightenment?"

Thu 11/1 Individual: Classical Conception of Read: " A Revolution

the Self in Thought"pp 186-198,

View: *Antigone* and "Plato" pp. 9-30.

Tue 11/6 Individual: Modern Conception of Read: "Descartes" pp 68-

the Self: Alienation 91, "Sartre" pp322- 334

View: *The Graduate*

Thu 11/8 Philosophy of Literature and Read: "Sartre" pp335-364

Film: Rebellion

View: *Cool Hand Luke*

**Journal due**

Sat 11/10 Postmodernism: The Death of

the Individual

**Hand out essay/exam**

Tue 11/13 Philosophy and the Political Economy Read: "Marx" pp 261-301

View: *Children in America's Schools*

**Essay/exam due**

Thu 11/15 Philosophy of the Environment and Read: "Descartes" pp 110-

Environmental Ethics 120.

View: *Never Cry Wolf* and *Paha Sapa*

Sat 11/17 Philosophy of Technology

View: *2001: A Space Odyssey*

**Hand out essay/exam**

Tue 11/20 Reason, Utopias, and Final Solutions Read: "Plato" pp 54-67,

View: *Wannsee Conference* "Marx" 302-321.

Sat 11/24  **Essay/exam and notebook due**

I reserve the right to change the movies or use class time for discussion rather than viewing.

Essay/Exam #1

The essay/exam should be typewritten, double-spaced and at least four pages in length. Answer two of the following questions.

The answer to each question must be in essay form and demonstrate an understanding of both lecture material and assigned readings.

1. The basis of our society's understanding of the self/individual lies in the Enlightenment concept of the self. Explain the Enlightenment concept of the self and how postmodern philosophy challenges this concept.

2. Compare and contrast Sartre's existential philosophy with Descartes' Enlightenment rationalism.

3. Analyze the three films we have viewed from the point of view of existential philosophy. Describe the characteristics of existentialism and then apply them to each of the movies.

Essay/Exam #2

Answer **two** of the following questions (1 thru 3). Your exam should consist of two separate essays, a minimum of four full pages, double-spaced, and typewritten. The essay/exam is due on Saturday before 12pm.

There will be a journal assignment at the end of Thursday's

class that will be worth five (5) of the journal's thirty (30) points.

1. Explain class conflict in Marx's thought. How does the film *Children in America's Schools* support a class analysis of American society (Give concrete examples from the film)?

2. Explain the three philosophies of technology that were presented in class. Give concrete examples, i.e., television, guns, computers, etc.

3. Explain the religious, philosophical, and scientific foundations for our society's relationship to the environment. How does Aldo Leopold's thought challenge this understanding?