Phil 140 (7044), 3 credits, Summer III 2021, Online

The Examined Life

Dr. Scott O'Connor

7/26/2020–08/26/2020

Disclaimer

This syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the faculty. Students will be notified of such changes ahead of time via Blackboard.

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Catalog Description

This course teaches students to identify and evaluate those beliefs that guide their thoughts and actions. Reflecting on different sources, students identify those philosophical beliefs that play a role in their own lives. By developing their critical thinking skills, they learn how to clarify, systematize, and assess these beliefs.

Course Description

Does God exist? Are you free? Why live? What should you do with your life? In this course, we'll be asking some of these deep philosophical questions. We begin by discussing the meaning of life, especially why some philosophers have connected a meaningful life with God's existence. This raises the question as to whether God exists. We will examine some classic arguments for the existence of God as well as concerns that God's existence is incompatible with the existence of evil. Many respond to the problem of evil by claiming that evil is a by-product of our free-will, a gift endowed by God to use as we see fit. But are we free? We will discuss why some think our actions are completely pre-determined by causal factors outside of our control. If they are right, free-will is a mere illusion. This raises deep questions about the nature of moral responsibility; can you be held responsible for an action that was out of your control? In the final part of the course, we will ask what determines the moral character of our actions. Do the ends justify the means? After studying the main ethical theories, you will get a chance to work in groups to apply them to a current controversy of your choosing, e.g., the death penalty, euthanasia, abortion, etc.

Learning Objectives

Upon completing this course, students will be able to (i) read philosophical texts, (ii) clearly and charitably explain viewpoints that are not their own, (iii) think critically and philosophically, (iv) write well-structured prose in which they clearly state a thesis and persuasively defend it, (v) demonstrate an understanding of several core philosophical topics, (vi) manage their studies in a responsible and timely manner.

General Education Information

Successfully completing this course satisfies one Tier 1 Language, Literary, and Cultural Studies requirement. It teaches the following two University-wide Learning Goals: (1) Critical Thinking and Problem Solving, (2) Written Communication. For further information about the General Education Program see https://www.njcu.edu/department/general-education.

Required Textbook

· 'Philosophy Here and Now: Powerful Ideas in Everyday Life', 3rd Edition, by Lewis Vaughn (Available to rent and purchase online.)

Course Website

There is both a Blackboard site and website for this course (link on first page). Clicking the first link on the left panel within the Blackboard site will bring you to the course website. All assignments will be submitted through Blackboard. Readings, notes, etc. will be posted on the course website. Note that Blackboard difficulties are rare and automatically reported to instructors. Under no circumstance will a student's report of

a Blackboard difficulty be reason for an extension. It is your responsibility to contact Blackboard support for help.

Requirements

- *Workload:* Expect to spend an average of three hours per day completing the readings and assignments. NJCU abides by the Federal and State definitions of a credit hour and adopts a policy consistent with the Carnegie Unit. A three-credit class represents 112.5 hours total of work. See here for more details.

- *5 problem sets* administered through Blackboard. These comprise two parts. The first has 20 multiple choice questions on the assigned reading. The second has 2-3 short answer questions. Extra credit questions are offered in some weeks.

- *Grade distribution:* 20 points per problem set.

- *Grade Breakdown:*

96–100	A		77–79	C+
90–95	A-		73–76	C
87-89	B+		70–72	C-
83–86	B		60–69	D
80–82	B -		0–59	F

Policies

- **Student Responsibility:** This syllabus outlines the required text, assignments, requirements, and policies for this course. By taking this course, you agree to read this syllabus and be bound by those requirements and policies.

- *Academic Integrity:* All the work you turn in (including papers, drafts, and discussion board posts) must be written by you specifically for this course. It must originate with you in form and content with all contributory sources fully and specifically acknowledged. Being a student at NJCU requires you to follow NJCU's Academic Integrity Policy. Penalties for violations are as follows: 1st infraction will result in a 0 for the assignment. 2nd infraction will result in a 0 for the entire course & application for permanent record on student's transcript. (Repeated violations can lead to expulsion from NJCU).

- *Communication:* To comply with Federal Privacy Laws (FERPA) and NJCU policies, all communication will be through Blackboard and/or official NJCU e-mail. Check Blackboard daily. For further information see http://scottoconnor.org/contact/.

- *Format for Written Work:* Submit work to Blackboard as either a MS Word file or pdf. Blackboard will not allow any other format. All work must be typed and neatly presented. Note that NJCU students have free access to MS Word through Office 365 Online.

· *General Education Program Assessment:* General Education courses participate in programmatic assessment of the six University-wide student learning goals. They include instruction in, and assessment of, at least two of these learning goals. Signature assignments, which may include document, picture, sound, or video files, are scored using approved program rubrics. Results are aggregated to provide information about the Gen Ed program as a whole. Your name will not be included in any programmatic assessment data.

· *Grading:* Grades will be available within one week of an assignment being submitted. See: http://scottoconnor.org/resources/grading for further information.

· *Late work & Make-up Policy:* See the assignment schedule below. The total score possible for late assignments will be reduced by 20% per day, e.g., you can earn only sixteen points maximum towards your final grade if you submit a problem set one day late, twelve points if you submit it two days late, eight if you submit three days late, and four if you submit it four days late. The final assignment can be submitted no more than two days late. No exceptions under any imaginable circumstances.

· *Statement for students with disabilities:* If you are a student with a disability and wish to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, please register with the Office of Specialized Services and Supplemental Instruction (OSS/SI). To begin this process, complete the registration form available on the OSS/SI website at http://www.njcu.edu/oss (listed under Student Resources-Forms). Contact OSS/SI at 201-200-2091 or visit the office in Karnoutsos Hall, Room 102 for additional information.

· *SafeAssign:* Students agree that by taking this course all assignments are subject to submission for textual similarity review through Blackboard SafeAssign. Assignments submitted to SafeAssign will be included as source documents in SafeAssign's restricted access database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism in such documents.

Weekly Course Schedule

Readings marked with a '**' can be found on the course website. All other listed readings can be found in the required textbook. Changes to the syllabus will be announced through Blackboard. Listed dates indicate the start of a module. All assignments must be submitted at 11:59pm one week after a module opens, e.g., module 2 opens on 7/30 and assignment 2 is due on 8/06 at 11:59pm.

Table 1: Course Schedule

Week	Assignments	Reading
[1.] The Examined Life (7/26)	Assign. 1	Ch.1
[2.] A Meaningful Life (7/29)	Assign. 2	Ch.9; Ch.2.6. pp.109–116
[3.] A Religious Life (8/05)	Assign. 3	Ch.2.1–2.3 'The Star', Clarke, pp.131–133
[4.] A free life (8/12)	Assign. 4	Ch.5
[5.] An Ethical Life (8/19)	Assign. 5	Ch.3 **'A Horseman in the Sky', Pierce