

Phil 140, 3 credits, Fall 2015, NJCU Harborside.

The Examined Life

Dr. Scott O'Connor

soconnor@njcu.edu

09/01/2015–12/08/2015

Copyright

The materials used in this class, including, but not limited to, lectures, exams, quizzes, and homework assignments are copyright protected works. Any unauthorized copying of the class materials or recording of lectures is a violation of federal law and may result in disciplinary actions being taken against the student. Additionally, the sharing of class materials without the specific, express approval of the instructor may be a violation of the University's Student Honor Code and an act of academic dishonesty, which could result in further disciplinary action. This includes, among other things, uploading class materials to websites for the purpose of sharing those materials with other current or future students.

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 will begin by examining two classic arguments for the existence of God as well as concerns that God's existence is incompatible with the existence of evil. In the second part of the course, we will ask what determines the moral character of our actions. Do the ends justify the means? From there, we will discuss whether we are in control of our own destinies or whether our actions are completely pre-determined by causal factors outside of our control. In the final part of the course, we will discuss the meaning of life, especially why some philosophers have connected a meaningful life with God's existence.

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.

Required Textbook

By 09/08/2015, the following textbook must be purchased or rented:

- [Philosophy Here and Now: Powerful Ideas in Everyday Life](#), by Lewis Vaughn
(Available in the campus book store and online retailers)

Requirements

- *Workload*: Successfully completing this course requires a minimum commitment of 6 hours per week.
- *Attendance*: Roll call will be taken from Week 2. 1 point per class up to a maximum of 10 points. Excludes Week 1 and Week in which you present.
- *8 Reading Quizzes* administered through Blackboard on weeks when no other written assignment is due. Once you open a quiz, you will have 30 minutes to complete it. This is an automatic function performed by Blackboard.
- *2 Short Writing Assignments* submitted through Blackboard.

- *2 Essays* submitted through Blackboard. 1000 and 1500 words respectively.
- *Final Presentation*: One group oral presentation and written submission. Each member must present at least one slide. Groups will grade their member's participation.
- *Grade Distribution*: Attendance—1 point per class (10 total), Quizzes—2 points each (16 total); Short Writing Assignments—7 points each (14 total); Essays—20 points each (40 total); Presentation—10 oral, 10 points written, 10 points peer evaluation (30 points total).
- *Grade Breakdown*:

96–110	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.
- *Late work & Make-up Policy*:
 - All assignments must be submitted through Blackboard by 1:00 pm on the due date (see assignment schedule below).
 - No make-ups or late work accepted under any circumstances. No exceptions.
 - 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: dlsupport@njcu.edu.
- *Attendance*: You are considered absent if you are (i) not present during roll call, or (ii) leave early, or (iii) leave without permission, or (iv) leave for an extended period of time.
- *Electronic devices*: Use of electronic device, including, but not limited, to smartphones, dictaphones, tablets, laptops, is prohibited. Recording a lecture is in

violation of Copyright. Penalties include, but are not limited to, a lost of attendance grade for the day of violation. Repeat offenders will be reported to the Dean of Students.

- *Conduct:* Distracting and disrespectful behavior, including but not limited to eating, leaving your seat, talking out of turn, aggression is prohibited. Penalties include, but are not limited to, a lost of attendance grade for the day of violation. Repeat offenders will be reported to the Dean of Students.
- *Communication:* All communication will be through Blackboard. Messages will be responded to within two days of receiving them.
- *Grading Schedule:* Grades will be available within 1 week of an assignment being submitted.
- *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 www.njcu.edu/Specialized_Services.aspx (listed under Student Resources-Forms). Contact OSS/SI at 201-200-2091 or visit the office in Karnoutsos Hall, Room 102 for additional information.

Plagiarism

- You are bound by [NJCU's Academic Integrity Policy](#)
- Penalty for plagiarism:
 - 1st infraction: 0 for the assignment.
 - 2nd infraction: 0 for the entire course & application for permanent record on student's transcript. (Repeated violations can lead to expulsion from NJCU).

Weekly Course Schedule

Dates refer to the first day of the week:

1. 09/01/2015, Introduction
 - a) Ch.1.1–1.2.
 - b) *Examined Life* documentary

2. 09/08/2015, Critical Thinking: Barriers to Reflection
 - a) 'Orchestrating Impartiality: The Impact of "Blind" Auditions on Female Musicians', Claudia Goldin and Cecilia Rouse (online)
 - b) 'In a Different Voice', Carol Gilligan (online)
3. 09/15/2015, Critical Thinking: Logical Tools
 - a) Ch.1.3
 - b) Handout
4. 09/22/2015, The Meaning of Life: Pessimism
 - a) Ch. 8.
 - b) 'Crimes and Misdemeanors' (movie)?
 - c) 'A Confession', Leo Tolstoy (online)**
5. 09/29/2015, The Meaning of Life: Optimism
 - a) Ch. 8.
 - b) Epicurus, selections (online)
6. 10/06/2015, God: The Design Argument
 - a) Ch.2.1-2.2.
 - b) Short YouTube videos on Natural Selection and Evolution.
 - c) 'Intelligent Design Has No Place in the Science Curriculum', Harold Morowitz, Robert Hazen, and James Trefil (online)
 - d) 'Design for Living', Michael J. Behe (online)
7. 10/13/2015, God: Further Arguments for God's Existence
 - a) Ch.2.2
 - b) Perhaps something about how we currently understand the beginning of the Cosmos
8. 10/20/2015, God: The Problem of Evil
 - a) Ch.2.3.
 - b) Picasso's Guernica (painting) [or some other depiction of evil]
 - c) Some movie or short fiction that illustrates the problem

9. 10/27/2015, Free Will: Psychological Problems

- a) Ch.6
- b) Reading from psychology literature, maybe Stanford Prison Experiments
- c) Movie, fiction, about environments shaping our action

10. 11/03/2015, Free Will: Causal Determinism

- a) Ch.6
- b) Fiction, movie about fate, destiny.

11. 11/10/2015, Ethics: Relativism,

- a) Ch.3.1–3.2.
- b) ‘Anthropology and the Abnormal’, Ruth Benedict (online)

12. 11/17/2015, Ethics: Consequentialism.

- a) Ch.3.3
- b) Sections from the Patriot Act (online)
- c) ‘The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas’, Ursula LeGuin, (textbook)

13. 11/24/2015, Ethics: Deontology and Virtue Ethics

- a) Ch.3.4–3.5
- b) The Walking Dead, (movie clip)

14. 12/01/2015, Applied Ethics: Student Presentations

15. 12/08/2015, Applied Ethics: Student Presentations

Writing Assignment Schedule

Dates refer to the due date. All assignments must be submitted through Blackboard by 1:00pm. No late work accepted. No make-ups. No exceptions.

- 1. 09/08/2015, No Assignment
- 2. 09/15/2015, Quiz 1
- 3. 09/22/2015, Quiz 2

4. 09/29/2015, SW1–Meaning of Life
5. 10/06/2015, Quiz 3
6. 10/13/2015, SW2–God’s Existence.
7. 10/20/2015, Quiz 4
8. 10/27/2015, Essay 1–The Problem of Evil
9. 11/03/2015, Quiz 5
10. 11/10/2015, Quiz 7
11. 11/17/2015, Quiz 8
12. 11/24/2015, Essay 2–Free will
13. 12/01/2015, Presentation–Applied Ethics
14. 12/08/2015, Presentation–Applied Ethics
15. 12/15/2015, Presentation: written submission

Grading Rubric

Rubric	V. Good (10)	Good (9)	OK (8)	Weak (7)	Poor (6)	V. Poor (3)	No Attempt (0)
Grasp of Material (X2)							
Application of logical tools							
Independent thought							
Mechanics							
						Total	