Phil 140-1 (3042), 3 credits, Fall 2016, ROOM

The Examined Life

Dr. Scott O'Connor
Office hours: http://scoconno.github.io/Contact/Office/

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Copyright

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 http://www.njcu.edu/cas/general-education/.

Required Textbook

· 'Philosophy Here and Now: Powerful Ideas in Everyday Life', 2nd Edition, by Lewis Vaughn (Available in the campus book store and online retailers)

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

Late work & make-up Policy: No make-ups or late work accepted under any imaginable circumstances. No exceptions. This policy will be applied equally and fairly to all students. *Requests for special treatment will be ignored.*

- *Workload:* Expect to spend an average of 6 hours per week 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.

- *Attendance:* Roll call will be taken. 0.5 point will be awarded per class up to a maximum of 10 points. Points will not be awarded during weeks 1 & 2.

- *Reading quizzes* administered through Blackboard. 6 will be assigned. You must complete 4. If you complete more than 5, the lowest grades will be dropped.

- *Essays (500–750 words)* submitted through Blackboard. 6 will be assigned. You must complete 4. If you complete more than 5, the lowest grades will be dropped.

- *Final group project* submitted through TK20 site consisting of an oral presentation and a written submission in two drafts. Each member must present at least one slide. Groups will grade their members' participation to ensure equal participation.

- *Course evaluations* completed online. 5 points extra credit for successful completion.

- *Grade distribution:* Attendance–0.5 points per class (10 maximum); Quizzes—6 points each (24 total); Essays—10 points each (40 total); Final Project—26 points (6 points presentation, 5 points for participation, 5 points for draft 1, 10 points for final draft).

- *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).

· *Attendance:* You are considered absent if you are (i) not present during roll call, (ii) leave early, (iii) leave without permission, or (iv) leave for an extended period of time. No excuses. No exceptions.

· *Communication:* To comply with Federal Privacy Laws (FERPA) and NJCU policies, all communication will be through Blackboard and/or official NJCU e-mail. Check both your NJCU e-mail and Blackboard daily. For further information see http://scoconno.github.io/Contact/.

· *Conduct:* Distracting and disrespectful behaviors, including but not limited to eating, leaving your seat, talking out of turn, and aggression are prohibited. Penalties include, but are not limited to, a loss of attendance points for the day of violation. Repeat offenders will be reported to the Dean of Students.

· *Electronic devices:* Use of electronic device, including, but not limited, to smartphones, dictaphones, tablets, and laptops, is prohibited. Recording a lecture is in violation of Copyright. Penalties include, but are not limited to, a loss of attendance points for the day of violation. Repeat offenders will be reported to the Dean of Students.

· *Format for Written Work:* Submit work to Blackboard either as a rich text or Microsoft Word file. All work must be typed. Your papers should be in 12-point Times New Roman font, double-spaced with margins set to one inch on all sides. If hard copies are requested, please staple or paperclip copies of papers and drafts.

· *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 uploaded to a secure server for anonymous distribution to the NJCU assessment team, which scores them using approved program rubrics. While instructors also grade their own students' signature assignments, which count toward the course grade, assessment team 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 1–2 weeks of an assignment being submitted. See: http://scoconno.github.io/Teaching/Grading for further information.

· *Late work & Make-up Policy:* See the assignment schedule below. No make-ups or late work accepted under any imaginable circumstances. No exceptions. This policy will be applied equally and fairly to all students. *Requests for special treatment will be ignored.*

· *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.

· *Turnitin:* Students agree that by taking this course all assignments are subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com. Assignments submitted to Turnitin.com will be included as source documents in Turnitin.com's restricted access database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism in such documents. The terms that apply to the University's use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com web site. For further information about Turnitin, please visit: http://www.turnitin.com

Weekly Course Schedule

Dates refer to the first day of the week. 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 and *via* your NJCU email address.

Late work & make-up Policy: No make-ups or late work accepted under any imaginable circumstances. No exceptions. This policy will be applied equally and fairly to all students. *Requests for special treatment will be ignored.*

Week 1: What is Philosophy?

1. 'The Trial and Death of Socrates', Plato, pp.44-53
2. Ch.1.1–1.2.

Week 2: Thinking Philosophically

1. Ch.1.3
2. **Worksheet

Week 3: The Meaning of Life–Pessimism

1. 'The Good Brahmin', Voltaire, pp.408–409
2. Ch.9.1–9.2
3. **'A Confession', Leo Tolstoy (optional)

Week 4: The Meaning of Life–Optimism

1. Ch.9.3
2. Ch.2.6, pp.106–112
3. **'A Confession', Leo Tolstoy (optional)

Week 5: The Existence of God-The Design Argument

1. 'The Star', Arthur C. Clarke, pp.126–128
2. **'Intelligent Design Has No Place in the Science Curriculum', Harold Morowitz, Robert Hazen, and James Trefil
3. **'Design for Living', Michael J. Behe
4. Ch.2.1-2.2.

Week 6: Further Arguments for God's Existence

1. Extra reading
2. Ch.2.2

Week 7: The Problem of Evil

1. Extra reading
2. 'A Little Omniscience Goes a Long Way', Thomas Davis, pp.258–261
3. Ch.2.3

Week 8: Free Will and Determinism

1. Extra reading
2. Ch.5.1, 5.2, and 5.4.

Week 9: Compatibilism

1. Extra reading
2. 'Science and Free Will', p.244
3. Ch.5.3

Week 10: Cultural Relativism

1. **'Kirinyaga', Mike Resnik, ch.1
2. Ch.3.1–3.2

Week 11 Consequentialism

1. 'The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas', Ursula Le Guin, pp.191–194
2. Ch.3.3

Week 12 Deontology & Virtue Ethics

1. **'A Horseman in the Sky', Ambrose Pierce
2. Ch.3.4–3.5

Week 13 Group Projects

1. Sundry

Week 14 Group Project

1. Prep on Mon
2. Presentations on Wed

Week 15 Group Project

1. Presentations on Mon
2. Project due exam day

Assignment Schedule

Dates refer to the due date. All assignments must be submitted through Blackboard by 11:59pm. No late work accepted. No exceptions. You must complete 5 quizzes, 3 short essays, and the final independent project. If you complete more than the required number, the lowest grades will be dropped.

- *9/12/2016,* Essay
- *9/19/2016,* Quiz CT
- *9/26/2016,* Quiz MOL
- *10/03/2016,* Essay MOL
- *10/10/2016,* Essay God
- *10/17/2016,* Quiz GOD
- *10/24/2016,* Essay GOD
- *10/31/2016,* Quiz GOD
- *11/7/2016,* Essay FW
- *11/14/2016,* Essay CR
- *11/21/2016,* Quiz Conseq
- *11/28/2016,* Quiz Deont and Virtual
- *12/05/2016,* Projects
- *12/12/2016,* Project