

# THE STORY OF PHILOSOPHY

REL P 2500 FALL 2012 1:00 – 1:50 MWF ADM 303

**Dr. Seth Holtzman**

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## Course summary:

This survey course in the history of philosophy is required for all RELP majors. Through the study of the history of philosophy, we will confront the major philosophical eras, thinkers, and ideas. Through them, we will discover what philosophy is, how it works, and how philosophical commitments are unavoidably located in the broader culture. Class format will be lecture and some discussion.

<u>Expected learning outcome</u> <i>Successful students will demonstrate:</i>	<u>Means of Assessment</u> <i>By successful work on:</i>
understanding of philosophical history and its relevance to now	Short essays, midterm, final, paper
awareness that a culture has philosophical assumptions and beliefs	Short essays, midterm, final
understanding of the discipline of philosophy	Short essays, midterm, paper, final
understanding that disciplined philosophical thought is essential to cultural health and that we need to think philosophically	Short essays, midterm, final
Clear and cogent reading, writing, and speaking in a manner appropriate to various audiences and purposes.	Presentation/discussion, paper, short essays

## Requirements and grading:

**1)** Attendance is required. During a lecture, I may elicit some material from you. So you must keep up with the readings, that day's class, and the ongoing course. You should be mentally active and prepared. Class participation can raise your final grade by up to 1/3 of a grade.

**2)** Occasional assignments on the readings, usually one page essays. These essays help you wrestle with the readings, typically before we cover them, and help me gauge your understanding. You may work on readings with classmates; but for essays, separate and reach your own thoughts before writing. I will drop your lowest essay grade. Late writing assignments are not accepted; a missed one counts as "F". Together, they count **10% of your grade**.

**3)** A cumulative take-home midterm exam, tentatively handed given on Friday, Oct. 12<sup>th</sup> and due Friday, Oct. 19<sup>th</sup>, testing your understanding of the readings, issues and problems from the course. If you miss the exam, you must contact me immediately. If you know you'll miss it, contact me beforehand ASAP. I do not guarantee you a make-up exam. **25% of your grade**.

**4)** An oral presentation of about 10-15 minutes on a limited set of material about one philosopher or philosophical movement. You will explicate the ideas and issues for the class, clarifying and explaining as needed. Then you will motivate and lead a discussion/question-and-answer about that material for at least another 10 minutes and no more than 20 minutes. **15% of your grade**

**5)** A 5 page analytical paper on or related to a philosophical issue we have read about. Clear the topic with me in advance. Due Nov 19<sup>th</sup>. Late papers have their grades lowered. Papers will be graded on the basis of both writing ability and analytical reading ability. **25% of your grade**.

6) A final exam testing your overall grasp of the course, not your memory of specific facts. I might pass out a list of study questions one or two weeks in advance. Blue book required; write in pen. Date: Wednesday, Dec. 5, 3:00-6:00pm. **25% of your grade.**

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### **Criteria for Evaluating Writing:**

**Content:** Writing should reflect a sufficient understanding of the subject. It should make good use of the relevant concepts, distinctions, positions, and reasons included in course readings or brought out in lecture or discussion. Writing should use precise words and concepts.

**Argumentation:** Writing should be organized so ideas are arranged logically and clearly. Main points should be backed by substantial and relevant details. Your work should be backed by good reasons. Your claims and reasons should be consistent with each other. Anticipate and respond to any reasonable objections.

**Mechanics and Style:** Writing should adhere to conventions of grammar, capitalization, spelling, punctuation, word usage, and style. Writing style should be appropriate to the academy. Your work should be clearly written, its claims precise, its structure clear, with an explicit overall direction. It should be intelligible to an interested student.

**Citations and Documentation:** Writers must clearly differentiate their own material from source material. When writers use material that is not their own or not common knowledge, they must document the source of the information using a standardized (i.e., either MLA or APA) method.

Other requirements: on time, typed, paginated, tidy (stapled or bound), standard margins & fonts, and dark print. Failure to meet these will hurt your grade. Your paper should have a cover page with your name, course name and number, date, my name, and a title.

The Writing Center provides free, one-on-one consultations to students by intensely trained tutors. Tutors will not rewrite students' papers for them but will give feedback and encouragement at all stages of the writing process (brainstorming, drafting, revising, polishing). Students using the Writing Center should be ready to discuss the assignment they are working on and to begin making revisions, with the tutor's guidance, during the session. **All** students are encouraged to use the Writing Center, open afternoons (in ADM 211) and evenings (in the Library, Study Room #5). Walk-ins are welcome, but the Writing Center honors appointments first. For more info or to make an appointment, call 704-645-4819 or stop by ADM 211.

### **Criteria for Evaluating Oral Presentation:**

1. **Content:** Mastery of relevant subject matter
2. **Structure:** Clear and meaningful order within the assigned time frame
3. **Style:** Clear and appropriate; good use of language
4. **Delivery:** Speed; Diction; Volume; Expressions; Eye Contact

### **Criteria for Evaluating Discussion:**

1. **Knowledge:** Level of understanding of material and resources is enough to prompt class with meaningful discussion questions.
2. **Structure:** Ensures that discussion proceeds on topic in organized fashion.
3. **Participation:** Encourages & values everyone's contributions.
4. **Time:** Manages time well.

### **Criteria for Evaluating Analytical Reading:**

1. **Clear understanding of the author's thesis**
2. **Clear understanding of the author's argumentation**
3. **Determination of the author's viewpoint**

Grading:	"A"	Superior mastery
	"B"	Good mastery
	"C"	Satisfactory achievement
	"D"	Less than satisfactory achievement
	"F"	Unsatisfactory achievement; Failure to achieve minimum competency

I use +/- grades, though A+ is not a possible final course grade.

A+	97-100	B+	87-89	C+	77-79	D+	67-69
A	93-96	B	83-86	C	73-76	D	63-66
A-	90-92	B-	80-82	C-	70-72	D-	60-62

Grades can and should measure achievement only.

### **Text:**

- 1) The Great Conversation, by Norman Melchert, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition, Oxford Univ Press
- 2) handouts

### **Reading and taking notes:**

Read assigned passages carefully. Some material is easy and accessible on your first try. Other assignments are quite taxing and may well require multiple readings. I suggest the following strategy for a difficult reading: quickly read it once simply to get the gist; then read it carefully for details, ignoring the overall picture; then read it normally, fitting the details into the overall picture.

I advise you to take at least some notes on what you read, since I will lecture on only those parts that I consider essential for us to cover in class. You will be responsible for everything in the assigned readings, whether or not it is discussed in class. Lectures can cover material not in the readings; this is another reason to attend.

Most students take sketchy notes. Maybe they think they cannot both take notes and listen; maybe they do not grasp the value of taking notes. Learn to write as you listen; it can be done, and it usually enhances your grasp of what is said. Take as many notes as you can, without losing too much of what is said. Your notes are invaluable for understanding the course and for the final exam.

### **Absences and violations:**

To take attendance--and to learn names--I will institute a seating chart in a few days. Pick your permanent seat; notify me to change it. I will check attendance from the chart at the start of class. If late, you might be counted absent; if late enough, you do count as absent. Avoid tardiness; if often late (without good reason), you will be counted absent. Sleeping and other forms of mental disconnect count as an absence. When absent, you are responsible for missed assignments and classroom material. Get notes from a classmate. If you still have questions, contact me.

No absences are excused. After 3 penalty-free absences, which you needn't explain to me, further ones lower your final grade: minus 1/3 grade for 4-5 total absences, 2/3 for 6-8, minus 1 grade for 9-10. Over 10 absences for other than an emergency is automatic grounds for an "F" (or an "I"), regardless of your grades. Missing the class immediately before or after a vacation counts double.

Respect the people and ideas in our class. I don't care if you bring a drink or sport a hat or wear rags. I care that you pay attention to me and to others (so, no cell phones or activated pagers/beepers/watches), that you are on time and ready to work, that you bring a positive attitude to class even if you are struggling, and that you contribute positively to class.

Cheating, working with others to complete assignments (unless this is allowed), and falsifying an emergency to skip class or an assignment, all violate the Honor Code. So does plagiarism, employing a writer's ideas (and words) without giving due credit. See me for help about borrowing someone's ideas or words for your use. No electronic devices are allowed during an exam, except for simple watches, computers (if specifically allowed), and any needed medical devices. Specifically, cell phones and any devices that allow for texting are prohibited. Violation of this policy can result in an "F" for that exam.

# SCHEDULE OF TOPICS

## I. Introduction

- a. What is philosophy
- b. Human thought before philosophy arises
- c. Humanistic worldview

## II. Pre-Socratic Philosophy

- a. The pre-Socratics
- b. The Sophists

## III. Ancient Philosophy

- a. Socrates
- b. Plato
- c. Aristotle
- d. Transition to medieval thought

## IV. Medieval Philosophy

- a. Augustine
- b. Aquinas
- c. Ockham and skeptical doubts
- d. Transition to modern thought

## V. Modern Philosophy to 1800

- a. Descartes
- b. Hobbes
- c. Locke
- d. Berkeley
- e. Hume
- f. Kant