

PHILOSOPHY & CULTURE Syllabus

PHIL 1050 FALL 2013 MWF 10:00-10:50 ADM 218

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Course summary:

This course is an introduction to the discipline of philosophy for non-majors and for minors. (some RELP majors must take PHIL 2050, Principles of Philosophy.) Our course examines the nature of philosophy both explicitly and through the study of some important philosophical problems.

Our questions include these: What is philosophy and how does it arise? Is philosophy important or even inevitable? What is the relationship between philosophy and the culture? Does one need to know about philosophy and need to be able to think philosophically? What are philosophical problems, and what are some examples?

Class format will be mostly lecture, Socratic questioning, and some guided 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 the discipline of philosophy	Quizzes, short essays, midterm, final
awareness that culture has philosophical assumptions/beliefs	Quizzes, short essays, midterm, final
awareness that we learn our culture's philosophical commitments	Quizzes, short essays, midterm, final
understanding that philosophical ideas come from ordinary beliefs	Quizzes, short essays, midterm, final
understanding that disciplined philosophical thought is essential	Midterm and final
awareness that everyone needs to know how to think philosophically	Midterm and final
understanding of some examples of philosophical issues from history and of the relevance of that history to our own civilization	Short essays, exams
understanding of some philosophical problems affecting us	Short essays, exams

Requirements and grading:

1) Attendance is required; you cannot learn the course on your own. In class I will sometimes elicit your grasp of the readings, lecture, and course. Your participation through questions and discussion is important, too. You need to be present, mentally active and prepared. Class participation can raise your final grade by up to 1/3 of a grade.

2) Occasional assignments: quizzes, exercises, and usually short ½ page or 1 page essays on the class topics and/or on the readings. These help you wrestle with the material and help me gauge your understanding. You may work on readings with classmates; but for written assignments, separate and come to your own thoughts before doing any writing. I will drop your lowest essay grade. Late essays are not accepted; a missed one counts as "F". Together, these quizzes, exercises, and essays will count **25% of your grade.**

3) Two take-home exams, testing your grasp of the course readings, issues and problems: the first given Mon. Sept. 30th & due Mon. Oct. 7th, the second given Mon. Oct. 28th & due Mon. Nov 4th. If you miss an exam, you must contact me immediately. If you know you'll miss it, contact me beforehand ASAP. No make-up exams are guaranteed. **Each is 25% = 50% of your grade.**

4) The mostly essay final exam will test your overall grasp of the course, not your memory of specific facts. I might pass out a list of study questions a week or two in advance. Blue/green book required; write in pen. Date: *Wednesday, Dec. 11th, 11:30am--2:30pm.* **25% of your grade.**

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.

Catawba College's Writing Center offers free, one-on-one consultations to all Catawba students. Tutors have been intensely trained. They won't rewrite students' papers, but will encourage and help students at all stages of the writing process (brainstorming, drafting, revising, polishing). Be prepared to discuss your assignment and to begin making revisions, with the tutor's guidance, during your 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 we honor appointments first. For more information or to make an appointment, schedule online at www.catawba.edu/writingcenter. "Like" our Facebook page at facebook.com/catawbawriting.

"A" Superior mastery	A+ 97-100	A 93-96	A- 90-92
"B" Good mastery	B+ 87-89	B 83-86	B- 80-82
"C" Satisfactory achievement	C+ 77-79	C 73-76	C- 70-72
"D" Less than satisfactory achievement	D+ 67-69	D 63-66	D- 60-62
"F" Unsatisfactory achievement			

A+ is not a possible final course grade. Grades can and should measure achievement only.

Text:

- What Does it All Mean?, by Thomas Nagel (in the bookstore)
- A coursepack

Reading and taking notes:

I expect you to do all readings; to do well in the course, you will need to. Some of the material is easy and accessible on your first attempt. Other assignments are quite taxing and will probably require multiple readings. I suggest the following strategy for any difficult reading: read it once quickly simply to get the gist; then read it carefully for details, not worrying about the overall picture; then read it normally, fitting the details into the overall picture.

Lectures might track the readings but also range far afield; read before you come to class. You are responsible for all readings; the final exam will be a problem if you have not grasped them. Since lectures cover material not in the readings, this is another reason to attend each class.

Most students take very sketchy notes. Perhaps they think that they cannot both take notes and listen; perhaps they do not know the value of taking notes. Learn to write while you listen; it enhances your grasp of what is being said. Take as many notes as you can, without losing too much of what is said. You cannot get by with writing down only key terms and definitions. Your notes are an invaluable resource for understanding the course and for the final exam.

Absences and violations:

To keep attendance--and to learn names--I will start a seating chart on the 3rd class. Choose a permanent seat; see me to change it. I will use the chart to take attendance promptly at the start of class. If late, you might be counted absent; if late enough, you do count as absent. Avoid tardiness; if you are often late (without good reason), I will choose to count you as absent. Sleeping in class and other forms of mental absence count as an absence. When absent, you are responsible for assignments and notes. 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 absences lower your final grade: for 4-5 total absences, minus 1/3 grade; for 6-8, minus 2/3 grade; for 9-10, minus 1 grade. Missing the class right before or after a vacation counts double. Over 10 absences for other than an emergency is automatic grounds for an "F" (or an "I" in some cases), regardless of your grades. Tell me if you have to miss class due to an emergency.

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 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 individual 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 the writer 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, phones and any devices that allow for texting are prohibited. Violation of this policy can result in an "F" for that exam.

COURSE TOPICS

INTRO: syllabus QUIZ #1

I. THE PROBLEM WITH PHILOSOPHY

1. The culture and its view on philosophy and intellectual life
 - a) lack of background about philosophy
 - b) implications for our course

QUIZ #2

II. CULTURE AND JUDGMENTS

READING: Lawrence: "Snake"
Adams: "Cultural Slavery or Freedom?"

2. Culture/education versus our own judgments

- a) culture provides and/or shapes our judgments
- b) the culture's judgments can be confirmed by or in conflict with our own
- c) all judgments stand in need of critical appraisal

ESSAY #1 on poem

ESSAY #2 on Adams

READING: "Logical Relationships"
"Truth Claims"
Plato: excerpt from "Meno"

3. Judgments

- a) formed from epistemic encounters with reality
 - i) which kinds are epistemic?
 - ii) even these need to meet further criteria before we may reliably accept them
- b) derived from other judgments

arguments: premises (reasons) and conclusions

EXERCISE #1: Multiple reasons and conclusions

- c) logical relationships

EXERCISE #2: Exercises on logical relationships

- d) contingent versus necessary; empirical vs. non-empirical
- e) dialectical movement from judgments we do accept to judgments we must accept
- f) logically more basic judgments function as "boundary commitments"

ESSAYS #3 and #4 on the Meno

III. INTELLECTUALLY ULTIMATE BOUNDARY COMMITMENTS

READING: Broad: "Philosophy and Science"

4. Fundamental boundary commitments are basic concepts and principles

- a) logically necessary as presuppositions
 - ESSAY #5 on Broad
- b) logically inescapable because necessarily presupposed by human activities (action, reason, knowledge, experience, thought)

READING: "Kinds of Problems, the Index card case and sniper case"
"Long Island house story"
"Parmenides: Only the One"

5. Fundamental boundary commitments organize and govern our judgments

- a) separating and defining different schools of thought within a discipline
- b) separating and defining different disciplines
- c) defining the culture's view of reality, its worldview
 - i) what is in the world versus what is the necessary structure of the world
 - ii) dividing what we take to be possible/impossible, thus meaningful/meaningless in action, thought, experience, reasoning, knowledge

ESSAY #6 on Long Island house story

ESSAY #7 on Parmenides

READING: “Philosophical Education as Cultural Criticism”
Plato: Allegory of the Cave

6. Fundamental boundary commitments are philosophical commitments

- a) philosophical commitments constantly shape up a world for us
we necessarily have philosophical beliefs, assumptions and presuppositions
- b) need to recognize what they are and how they govern our thought, feelings, actions, lives
- c) need to realize how much they stand in need of critical appraisal
 - i) questions, confusions, problems about boundary commitments
 - ii) falsehood can cause a way or thought, discipline, or entire culture to be out of touch
with some basic aspect(s) of reality

ESSAY #8 on “Philosophical Education as Cultural Criticism”

ESSAY #9 on Allegory of the Cave

IV. THE NATURE OF PHILOSOPHY

7. Philosophy as a metadiscipline

- a) locates, critically examines, and defends or corrects fundamental boundary commitments
- b) Philosophy as the only discipline that addresses these kinds of issues

READING: “The Story of the Sponion”

8. Ordinary questions vs. philosophical questions that get at those boundaries

- a) can we know what we seem to know? → what MUST be known/knowable?
- b) can there be what seems to be? → what MUST be real?
- c) can we mean what we seem to mean? → what MUST be meaningful?

9. Three branches of philosophy:

- a) Metaphysics: What could possibly be real? What must we take to be real?
- b) Epistemology: What can possibly be known? (Is knowledge possible? What powers of knowledge must we admit?)
- c) Philosophy of Culture: What areas of discourse, ways of thinking and speaking, can possibly make sense? What must we take to be meaningful?

READING: “What Philosophy Is”
“Analysis of the concept of property”

10. Defining characteristics of Philosophy

- a) about *a priori* knowledge, about how we must think, like math and logic
- b) about the world, but unlike all the empirical disciplines
- c) dialectical *ad hominem* method, instead of *ad rem* method
- d) categories and categorial analysis
- e) cultural criticism and cultural therapy

11. Need integrated set of categories for a comprehensive, coherent worldview

- a) need one unified, integrated world, in order to have one unified, integrated self

12. All philosophical commitments are philosophically contested

- a) no neutral commitments as rational basis to reach agreement and to resolve disagreement
 - i) even what philosophy is and how it works

V. PHILOSOPHY IN PRACTICE

READING: Nagel (book)

13. Various philosophical problems

ESSAYS on Nagel