Introduction to Philosophy 1301

Spring 2018

Department of Political Science and Philosophy

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Class Times and Rooms: MW, 2:00-3:15, Rassman 239


This text is absolutely necessary and students should purchase a copy before semester begins. Buying the text after week 2 or 3 will leave you insufficiently prepared for the first test.

Course Description

This course serves as a general introduction to philosophy. It has been said that there is something childlike about philosophy since philosophy asks questions that we often take for granted as adults. How can we know something? What is ‘experience?’ Questions such as why are we here and who are we? We are apparently the sum total of our minds and bodies, but what is ‘mind’ and how does it relate to body? Freedom and determinism: why should we be held responsible for our actions? Could we have acted otherwise given our background, our biological and psychological constitutions? Can we prove the existence of God by means of rational argument? What is the good life? Is a good life a meaningful life? What do we mean by meaningful? Philosophy also asks questions about itself, it is self-reflexive? So philosophers ask why philosophy is relevant. How should we do philosophy? Is there a philosophical method? Is philosophy an art? If so should it be beautiful like other arts and what is beauty in any case? In the course of this semester we will approach these questions through lectures, discussions, readings, writing, and thoughtful inquiry.

The Class
Because Introduction to Philosophy is part of the core curriculum it often has 40 to 50 students so this is primarily a lecture course, it is too large for informal discussions or a seminar type setup. On the other hand, lectures are a far from perfect way in which to learn philosophy so normally I will introduce a topic, lecture on that topic, and discuss and explain an assigned reading or text for 40 or 45 minutes. I will try to finish up ten to fifteen minutes before the end of class to leave room for questions and discussion.

Class Attendance Policy
Class attendance at ASU is mandatory and a class roll will be taken twice. If you miss three consecutive classes the ASU registrar will be informed. If you miss more than five classes during the semester you may receive a fail for the course overall (depending on the circumstances). The only legitimate reasons
for missing classes or leaving classes early are sickness or medical appointments, or a domestic emergency (i.e. ‘car trouble’ is not a domestic emergency). Exceptions to this will be reviewed on a case by case basis.

**Class Preparation**
- Bring your textbook to class
- Bring a notebook and pencil to class
- Do your reading assignment before class
- Be prepared to answer questions
- If it helps, *record the class*

**Class Prohibitions** (*unless I am presented with an accommodation)*
- NO SLEEPING (if you are too tired to stay awake in class you probably shouldn’t be in class)
- NO PHONES
- NO EAR BUDS
- NO DIPPING
- NO VAPING
- *NO LAPTOPS
- NO HOT FOOD
- PLEASE DON’T PASS MESSAGES
- DO NOT LEAVE CLASS AFTER SIGNING IN WITHOUT PERMISSION
- DO NOT ENGAGE IN DISTRACTING BEHAVIOUR

**Multiple Choice Tests**
You will take THREE multiple choice tests. These tests will be on the subject matter of the previous three or four weeks of class, these are not cumulative. Each test is usually 30 multiple choice and true/false questions, and you will have 30 mins to take the test. This test is NOT designed to be open book. It is assumed that you have completed the reading assignments and attended class before taking the test. The test will be taken in class with a scantron sheet.

**Final In-class Blue Book Exam**
The final class exam is NOT open book. A detailed rubric of how these papers are assessed is posted on Blackboard. You will be expected to write an answer of about 1000-1200 words (roughly four or five sides of the Blue Book). You will be given an exam paper with several optional questions based upon the last weeks of the course. In my experience the main reason why students under-perform with regard to finals is that they do not engage with course material. Papers often tend towards ‘streams of consciousness’ with few references to what has been studied. It is expected in a philosophy class, even an intro class, that you have learned some of the philosophers names and can accurately point to what ideas are associated with these philosophers and how to deploy these ideas in a coherent fashion. Higher grades will be awarded to those who can do some of this.

**The Angelo State University Honor Code**
Angelo State University expects its students to maintain complete honesty and integrity in their academic pursuits. Students are responsible for understanding the Academic Honor Code, which is contained in both print and web versions of the Student Handbook.

In other words, when you submit your work, you claim that the work is yours. If someone else wrote it for you or you got it from someone else (internet, other student’s class…), then you are not the author and thus will get a zero for that assignment. Any idea that is not yours should be properly referenced.
**Disabilities**
Please let me know if you have any special need due to any learning disability. Persons with disabilities which may warrant academic accommodations must contact the Student Life Office, in order to request such accommodations prior to any accommodations being implemented. You are encouraged to make this request early in the semester so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

**Assessment**
ASU Student Learning Objectives

**Critical Thinking Skills (CT)**
CT1. Gather, analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information relevant to a question or issue.

CT2. Develop and demonstrate a logical position (i.e. perspective, thesis, hypothesis) that acknowledges ambiguities or contradictions.

**Communication Skills (CS)**
CS1. Develop, interpret, and express ideas through effective written communication.

CS2. Develop, interpret, and express ideas through effective oral communication.

**Social Responsibility (SR)**
SR1. Demonstrate intercultural competence.

SR2. Demonstrate knowledge of civic responsibility.

SR3. Demonstrate the ability to engage effectively in the campus, regional, national or global communities.

**Personal Responsibility (PR)**
PR1. Demonstrate the ability to evaluate choices, actions and consequences as related to ethical decision-making.

**ASU Mission Statement**
Angelo State University, a member of the Texas Tech University System, delivers undergraduate and graduate programs in the liberal arts, sciences, and professional disciplines. In a learning-centered environment distinguished by its integration of teaching, research, creative endeavor, service, and co-curricular experiences, ASU prepares students to be responsible citizens and to have productive careers.
*Grading Scale*
A-90% Outstanding
B-80% Very good
C-70% Satisfactory
D-60% Minimum required
F-less than 60%

*All course work must be completed for a final grade.

**The Course**

(I reserve the right to make course changes from time to time when necessary)

**Week 1**
*Lecture Topic: What is Philosophy?*
The Classical Model
**Reading Assignments:** Plato, *The Euthyphro*, (PDF, Blackboard)
Plato, *The Apology*, (PDF, Blackboard)

**Weeks 2 & 3**
*Lecture topic: Ancient and Medieval Ethics*
Ethical Systems: Virtue Ethics
Stoicism
Natural Law
Deontological Ethics
Egoism
Utilitarianism

Marcus Aurelius, *The Meditations*, p. 82.

**Weeks 4 & 5**
*Lecture Topic: Modern Ethics*
**Reading Assignments:** Benedict Spinoza, *Ethics*, p. 129

**First Multiple Choice Quiz**
Weeks 6, 7 & 8

Lecture Topic: The Philosophy of Knowledge (epistemology)

Different Traditions:
- Skepticism
- Empiricism
- Rationalism
- Naturalism
- Idealism
- Phenomenology
- Language

Reading Assignments:
- René Descartes, Meditations on First Philosophy, p. 355.
- David Hume, An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding, p. 379.

Second Multiple Choice Quiz

Weeks 9, 10 & 11

Lecture Topic: Metaphysics

The Metaphysical Problems:
- Universals
- God
- Particulars
- Causality
- Time
- Self

Reading Assignments:
- Plato, Phaedrus, p. 585.
- Benedict Spinoza, Ethics, p. 703.
- G.W. Von Leibniz, Monadology, p. 725.
- David Hume, An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding, (PDF, Blackboard)
- J. E. McTaggart, The Unreality of Time, (PDF, Blackboard)

Third Multiple Choice Quiz

Weeks 12, 13, 14

Lecture Topic: Modern Political Philosophy

Issues:
- Legitimacy
- Freedom v. Security
- Social Contract
Rights
Political Violence

Reading Assignments: Plato, *The Republic*, p. 1113

Final In-Class Blue Book Exam
Monday, May 7, 3:30-5:30 pm