

Joseph Magee
PH: (936) 294-3694
e-mail: psy_jmm@shsu.edu

PHL 261W.06 – Introduction to Philosophy
MWF 2 – 2:50 pm
AB4 302

Fall 2008
Office: LDB 332 L
Office Hours: MWF 1-2
or by appointment

Course Description: A general examination of the fields and issues of philosophy as discussed by both classical and modern philosophers. Philosophical problems discussed include the existence of God, the nature of knowledge and truth, the issue of human free will, and theories of moral judgment. Instruction will be accomplished through lecture, class discussion and writing assignments.

Course Objectives:

- Introduce the students to the main issues and ideas in the history of Western philosophy.
- Acquire the skills to
 - read texts carefully
 - analyze arguments
 - question assumptions
 - evaluate philosophical positions, especially the student's own
 - express complex ideas with accuracy, both orally and in writing

Required Reading:

W.K.C Guthrie, *The Greek Philosophers*, Harper Perennial, ISBN 0061310085
Nigel Warburton, *Philosophy: Basic Readings*, Routledge, ISBN 0415337984
Nigel Warburton, *Philosophy: The Basics*, 4th Edition, Routledge, ISBN 0415327733
Other material to be made available on Blackboard or on Library Reserve.

Attendance Policy: In accordance with University policy, I expect students to attend class, and will take roll. A student's attendance requires consciousness and attention, not mere physical presence. I will mark absent students not in attendance at the time I take roll. Absences do not directly affect students' grades, but students are responsible for material covered in their absence. I consider unconscious or inattentive students a disturbance and will ask them to leave.

Grades: Final grades will be determined from the average of the grades earned throughout the semester.

Exam I – 20%
Exam II – 20%
Exam III – 20%
Paper – 20% (3-5 page; details to be announced)
Final Exam – 20%

There will be about 10 quizzes throughout the semester, the average of which will be added to the Final Exam grade. I use the grading scale: 90-100 = A, 80-89 = B, 70-79 = C, 60-69 = D, and below 60 = F.

Exams: Exams will consist of multiple choice, short answer and essay questions. The amount of essays will increase as the semester progresses. A study guide from which all exam questions will be taken will be made available to students one week before each exam, and class time will be given for review. Generally make-up exams are not given, and when they are, they are longer and more difficult. Exceptions to this general rule are possible only in **the most extreme** of circumstances, only if notification is received before or on the day of the exam, and only if appropriately documented. Another exam, over-sleeping or simply not being prepared are not acceptable reasons for being granted a make-up exam.

Schedule (subject to change)

Week I – What is Philosophy?

August 20 – Course Introduction (Basics, Introduction)
August 22 – Ancient Greeks: Logos vs. Mythos (Guthrie, Ch. 1)
August 24 – The Problem of Knowledge: Pythagoras (Guthrie Ch. 2)

Week II – The Problem of Knowledge

August 27 – Pythagoras (continued)
August 29 – Heraclitus (Guthrie Ch. 3)
August 31 – Sophists and Socrates (Guthrie, Ch. 4)

Week III – Plato & the Forms

September 3 – Labor Day

September 5 – Plato's Apology (Blackboard Material)

September 7 – Meno - Learning is Recollection (Guthrie, Ch 5)
(Blackboard Material)

Week IV – Plato & the Forms

September 10 – Plato's Forms

September 12 – Republic: Divided Line (Blackboard Material)

September 14 – Republic: Allegory of the Cave (Blackboard Material)

Week V – Knowledge and Senses

September 17 – Aristotle: Physics (Guthrie, Ch 6)

September 19 – Aristotle: Physics (Blackboard Material)

September 21 – Aristotle: Metaphysics (Guthrie, Ch. 7)

Week VI – Modern Epistemology

September 24 – Review

September 26 – Exam I

September 28 –Cartesian Doubt (Basics, Ch. 4)

(Readings §35. Rene Descartes, 'About the things we may doubt')

(Readings §36. Bernard Williams and Bryan Magee, 'Descartes')

Week VII – Modern Epistemology

October 1 – Hume (Readings §38. David Hume, 'Of the origin of ideas')

(Readings §40 Stephen Law, 'Why expect the sun to rise tomorrow')

October 3 – Causal Realism

(Readings §39. Hubert Dreyfus, 'Disembodied Telepresence/Remoteness')

October 5 – Phaedo (Basics, Ch. 6)

(Blackboard Material)

Week VIII – Mind, Soul and Body

October 8 – Dualism (Readings §47. Ludwig Wittgenstein, 'The diary' & 'The beetle in the box')

October 10 – Aristotle (Guthrie, Ch. 8) (Blackboard Material)

October 12 – Material Minds (Readings §48. J.J.C. Smart, 'Sensations and brain processes')(Blackboard Material)

Week IX – Mind, Soul and Body

October 15 – Intentionality (Readings §49. John Searle, 'Minds, brains and programs')

October 17 – Consciousness (Readings §50. Thomas Nagel, 'What is it like to be a bat?)

October 19 – Persons & Death (Readings §51. Daniel Dennet, 'Where am I?')

(Readings §15. Bernard Williams, 'The tedium of immortality'.)

Week X – Proving God's Existence

October 22 – Exam II

October 24 – Anselm (Basics, Ch. 1)(Blackboard Material)

October 26 – Aquinas: 2nd/3rd/5th Way (Readings §8. Martin Gardner, 'Proofs of God')
(Blackboard Material)

Week XI – The Problem of Evil

October 29 – Mackie (Readings §10. J.L.Mackie, 'Evil and omnipotence')

October 31 – Mackie (cont)

November 2 – Theist replies (Readings §11. Richard Swinburne, 'Why God allows evil')

Week XII – Ethics of Character

November 5 – Immanuel Kant (Basics, Ch. 2)

(Readings §17. Immanuel Kant, 'The Categorical Imperative')

November 7 – Kant (Readings §18. Robert Nozick, 'The Experience Machine')

(Readings §21. Jonathan Glover, 'The Solzhenitsyn principle')

November 9 – Exam III

Week XIII – Ethics of Pleasure/Duty

November 12 – J. S. Mill (Readings §19. John Stuart Mill, 'Higher and lower pleasures')

November 14 – Mill (Readings §20. Bernard Williams, 'A critique of utilitarianism')

November 16 – Aristotle (Readings §22. Rosalind Hursthouse, 'Neo-Aristotelianism')

Week XIV – Ethical Critiques

November 19 – Aquinas (Readings §23. Judith Jarvis Thomson, 'A defense of abortion')
(Blackboard Material)

November 21 – Sartre / Moral Relativism (Readings §25. Bernard Williams, 'Relativism')

November 23 – Thanksgiving Break

Week XV – Political Philosophy

November 26 – Paper Due – Hobbes (Basics, Ch. 3)

(Readings §31. Thomas Hobbes, 'Of the natural condition of mankind')

November 28 – Social Contract (Blackboard Material)

November 30 – Liberal Democracy (Readings §29. Isaiah Berlin, 'Two concepts of liberty')

Week XVI – Political Philosophy

December 3 – Natural Law / Natural Rights

(Readings §35. Martin Luther King Jr, 'Letter from Birmingham Jail')(Blackboard Material)

Ethical Pluralism (Readings §34. Peter Singer, 'All animals are equal')

December 5 – Review

Final Exam:

Monday, December 10, 2007, 5 - 7 pm

General Policies

Academic Dishonesty – All students are expected to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is above reproach. Students are expected to maintain complete honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. Any student found guilty of dishonesty in any phase of academic work will be subject to disciplinary action. The University and its official representatives may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a student accused of any form of academic dishonesty including, but not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work which is to be submitted, plagiarism, collusion and the abuse of resource materials.

“Cheating” includes, but is not limited to copying from another student’s test paper, or using other unauthorized materials or devices during the completion of an exam. “Plagiarism” means the inclusion of unacknowledged words or ideas as one’s own work offered for credit. Electronic resources will be employed for the detection of plagiarism. The first instance of academic dishonesty will result in a failing grade for that assignment or exam. A second instance will result in the a failing grade for the course and referral to the University for disciplinary action.

Americans with Disabilities Act – It is the policy of Sam Houston State University that individuals otherwise qualified shall not be excluded, solely by reason of their disability, from participation in any academic program of the university. Further, they shall not be denied the benefits of these programs nor shall they be subjected to discrimination. Students with disabilities that might affect their academic performance are expected to visit with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities located in the Counseling Center. They should then make arrangements with their individual instructors so that appropriate strategies can be considered and helpful procedures can be developed to ensure that participation and achievement opportunities are not impaired.

SHSU adheres to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If a student has a disability that may affect adversely his/her work in this class, then the student is encouraged to register with the SHSU Counseling Center and to talk with the instructor about how best to deal with the situation. All disclosures of disabilities will be kept strictly confidential. NOTE: no accommodation can be made until the student registers with the Counseling Center.

Religious Holidays – Section 51.911(b) of the Texas Education Code requires that an institution of higher education excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. A student whose absence is excused under this subsection may not be penalized for that absence and shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment from which the student is excused within a reasonable time after the absence. “Religious holy day” means a holy day observed by a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation under Section 11.20, Tax Code.

University policy 861001 provides the procedures to be followed by the student and instructor. A student desiring to absent himself/herself from a scheduled class in order to observe (a) religious holy day(s) shall present to each instructor involved a written statement concerning the religious holy day(s). This request must be made in the first fifteen days of the semester or the first seven days of a summer session in which the absence(s) will occur. The instructor will complete a form notifying the student of a reasonable timeframe in which the missed assignments and/or examinations are to be completed

Visitors in the Classroom – Unannounced visitors to class must present a current, official SHSU identification card to be permitted into the classroom. They must not present a disruption to the class by their attendance. If the visitor is not a registered student, it is at the instructor’s discretion whether or not the visitor will be allowed to remain in the classroom.

Instructor Evaluations – Students will be asked to complete a course/instructor evaluation form toward the end of the semester.

Classroom Rules of Conduct – Students are expected to behave in ways conducive to learning. Students failure to abide by The Code of Student Conduct and Discipline or creating a disturbance as defined by Section 5.2.22 will be asked to leave. Students whose electronic devices, including cell phones, are audible, will be asked to leave.