Phil 110: General Introduction to Philosophy

Cuyamaca College

Spring 2013

Course Syllabus

Instructor: Courtney Hammond

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Office hours: Tuesday/Thursday 8:30-9:30am, 12:15-2:15pm

I will be in my office during these hours, but it is always best to let me know you are coming ahead of time. If you can’t make it to my office hours during these times, **I am also available by appointment**. Please email me to set up a time.

**Course Description** (per catalog):

In this basic orientation the student explores, compares, analyzes, evaluates and discusses a variety of the principle questions addressed in philosophy. Typical questions examined are: What is the purpose of my existence? Can I know anything with certainty? Do I really have a free will? Can we prove that God exists? Why should I be moral? Whose self-interest counts?, etc. Issues covered will encompass relevant philosophical perspectives from Western and other major world cultures, and includes contributions of women and minority cultures to the realm of philosophy.

**Course Objectives**

Students will be able to:

1. Identify and discuss the principle questions of universal concern raised in philosophy, including but not limited to the following: What is knowledge? Is there a meaning to life? Does free will exist? Why should I be moral?
2. Compare and contrast a variety of philosophical positions relating to the issues considered by discussing their main features and proponents
3. Analyze and discuss the relative strengths and weaknesses of the philosophical arguments examined using standard logic
4. Identify, analyze and discuss cross-cultural perspectives relevant to the philosophical issues being considered
5. Use the language, method and concepts of various philosophical traditions to begin to formulate a personal approach to selected philosophical issues

**Required Texts**

Murphy, Courtney H., *Philosophy Matters: Understanding Our Selves and Our World*.

This text is only available to purchase online.

**To reserve or purchase your textbook, please follow the instructions below:**

**Step 1:** Log on to [https://students.universityreaders.com/store/](https://mail.gcccd.edu/exchweb/bin/redir.asp?URL=https://students.universityreaders.com/store/" \t "_blank).

**Step 2:** Create an account or log in if you have an existing account to purchase.

**Step 3:** Easy-to-follow instructions will guide you through the process of reserving your textbook or, if it is ready for purchase, the rest of the ordering process. Payment can be made by all major credit cards or with an electronic check.

COURSE: **Phil 110 | Introduction to Philosophy**

INSTRUCTOR(S): **Dr. Courtney H. Hammond**

Additional material may be made available on the Blackboard site and on my website [www.cuyamaca.edu/courtneyhammond](http://www.cuyamaca.edu/courtneyhammond). A computer with Adobe Reader will be necessary to download certain materials, and such computers can be found in the Cuyamaca College computer labs.

**Course Requirements**

1. **5** **reading quizzes**—may be short answer, essay, and/or multiple choice (10% each)
2. **A 3-5 page essay** (20%), and
3. **Homework/ Participation** (30%).

**How to Succeed in a Philosophy Class**

Have you thought about what it would mean to do well in this class? What do you hope to get out of a philosophy class? I’m here to teach you the material, but what must *you* contribute to the learning experience? You will only get out of this class what you put into it, so the following list is to help you know what sorts of things you’ll need to do in order to make this a truly fun and enlightening experience.

1. Print out this syllabus and have it in the front of your notebook for easy access. Take a look at it throughout the semester to refresh your memory on requirements, grade percentages, office hour times/location, etc. (I spent a lot of time working on it, so I’d love you to actually read it!)
2. Become familiar with the course outline so you know what we’re doing, when we’re doing it, and where to find it.
3. Familiarize yourself with quiz and paper due dates so that you don’t miss them. If you know in advance you won’t be able to attend class on the day of a quiz or when a paper is due, make plans to turn it in early. If you are ill, or otherwise indisposed, contact me to make arrangements.
4. Some readings (if not all) will require that you read them *several* times before they make sense. This is normal in philosophy—it is also the only way to really understand and begin to formulate questions and arguments pertaining to them. Don’t expect to read quickly through these readings and have anything to say about them—that’s just not the way it works. It will get easier—but it will always take time to make your way through some of these texts. Don’t cheat yourself out of this kind of learning—it is truly rewarding!!!
5. After doing the readings, try to think of a question you have about it. It may be a “What the heck did that mean?” kind of question, and that’s fine. But try to find a way to articulate your confusion—what *exactly* are you confused about? This is not easy to do, but with practice it will get easier, and it will make you a sharper, more critical thinker in everything you do.
6. We live in the internet age—so make use of this valuable research tool. Often you can find information that will help you understand the class material, whether it’s the background to a specific author or time, a posted lecture, a radio broadcast, interview, etc. Some of the most helpful sites are these:

www.kpbs.org

www.plato.stanford/edu

http://www.utm.edu/research/iep/

http://www.uky.edu/Subject/philosophy.html

http://www.philosophypages.com/

www.dictionary.com

http://arts.anu.edu.au/Philosophyandfilm/videodata/

I’ll also post additional web resources on my homepage, so check there as well.

1. Participating in class will help you immensely. The more you contribute to the discussion, the more comfortable you will feel. Don’t worry about saying or asking something “wrong” or “silly”. I do it all the time! If you are sincerely trying to understand the material, then no question you have will be unhelpful. And chances are there are 5 other people who have the same question but are afraid to ask it. Do it for their sake! 

**Classroom Etiquette:**

In order to make the most of class, a certain learning environment must be maintained. Especially with respect to the discussions, students must be respectful of others’ opinions and views. Discussions should be a place where everyone feels comfortable and free to express themselves in an appropriate way, without the worry that they will be unfairly criticized or ostracized. Therefore, be mindful of your comments, and make sure that your criticisms are expressed in a courteous and fair manner.

Furthermore, only appropriate language will be allowed, i.e. no foul language or hate-speech. The instructor reserves the right to remove students from class if their behavior becomes disruptive. This may result in an “F” for that portion (30%) of the final grade. If such behavior extends to other segments of the class, the instructor reserves the right to take further action, including dropping the student from the class.

To sum it up: Be respectful!!!

**Extra Help:**

Any student needing extra assistance is urged to utilize the tutoring services available at Cuyamaca College. Therefore, to support your efforts to succeed in this class, I refer you to the Supervised Tutoring services that are available. Please refer to the schedule listing in the fall class schedule. All Supervised Tutoring sections are FREE to you. You need only enroll to receive services—no units or grades are given.

**Grading Policy**

A 93-100%

A- 90-92%

B+ 87-89%

B 84-86%

B- 80-83%

C+ 77-79%

C 70-76%

D 60-69%

F 0-59%

\*\*In general, late papers will not be accepted. However, with proper documentation of illness or other *extenuating* circumstances, I will consider late assignments. The same policy holds for the quizzes.\*\*

\*\*\*In general, I do not change grades once I’ve given them unless I have made a clerical error. If I have done so, please bring this to my attention. However, if you simply do not agree with the grade I’ve given you, and you wish to challenge it, you must submit a **2 page essay** explaining why you think your grade does not reflect the quality of your work. Only after receiving this 2 page essay will I consider taking another look at your work. This does not necessarily mean that I will give you a higher grade, though. In fact, sometimes upon re-grading an assignment, I have found I was too generous, and the grade was lowered. Therefore, only pursue this if you’re absolutely convinced I’ve missed something.\*\*\*

**Course Outline**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Date** | **Topics To Be Covered** | **Readings /Assignments** |
| **1/29** | **Introduction to Course** |  |
| **1/31** | **What is Philosophy?** | Read: *What is Philosophy?,* *Does Philosophy Bake Bread?,* and *On the Value of Philosophy*, found under the Documents tab on Blackboard |
| **2/05** | **What is Philosophy? Cont’d** | Cont’d. |
| **2/07** | **Philosophy and The Good Life** | Read: Plato’s *The Apology* found under Course Documents tab |
| **2/12** | **“** | Read: Ghandi’s *Belief and Human Welfare*  **Reading Quiz 1** |
| **2/14** | **The Meaning of Life** | Read: Tolstoy’s *My Confession* |
| **2/19** | **“** | Read: Baier’s *The Purpose of Man’s Existence* |
| **2/21** | **“** | Read: Lao Tzu’s *Tao Te Ching*  **Reading Quiz 2** |
| **2/26** | **Metaphysics and Epistemology** | Read: Plato’s *Allegory of the Cave*  Movie: *The Matrix* |
| **2/28** | **“** | *The Matrix* cont’d. |
| **3/05** | **“** | Wrap up discussion |
| **3/07** | **“** | Read: Descartes’ *Meditations on First Philosophy* |
| **3/12** | **“** | Cont’d. |
| **3/14** | **“** | Read: Hume’s *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* |
| **3/19** | **“** | Read: Bhatt and Mehrortra’s *The Buddhist Theory of Knowledge* |
| **3/21** | **“** | Read: Lehrer’s *The Quarterback in the Pocket* |
| **3/26** | **Spring Break** |  |
| **3/28** | **Spring Break** |  |
| **4/02** | **“** | Read: Cole’s *Body, Mind and Gender* |
| **4/04** |  | Wrap Up Discussion  **Reading Quiz 3** |
| **4/09** | **Faith and Reason** | Read: Anselm’s *Proslogium* |
| **4/11** | **“** | Read: Pascal’s *Pensees* |
| **4/16** | **“** | Read: Dalai Lama’s *Role of Religion in Modern Society* |
| **4/18** | **“** | Read: Paley’s *Natural Theology* |
| **4/23** |  | Read: Hume’s *Against Paley’s Design Arguments* |
| **4/25** | **“** | Video: *What Darwin Never Knew* found at  http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/beta/evolution/darwin-never-knew.html |
| **4/30** |  | Video cont’d.  Wrap Up Discussion  **Reading Quiz 4** |
| **5/02** | **Ethics** | Read: J.S. Mill *Utilitarianism* |
| **5/07** | **“** | Mill cont’d. |
| **5/09** | **“** | Read: Kant’s *Transition from Common Rational to Philosophic Moral Cognition* |
| **5/14** |  | Kant Cont’d. |
| **5/16** |  | Read: Gilligan’s *Images of Relationship* |
| **5/21** |  | Movie: *Crimes and Misdemeanors* |
| **5/23** |  | *Crimes and Misdemeanors* cont’d.  **Reading Quiz 5** |

The instructor reserves the right to make changes to this syllabus if necessary.

This course adheres to the academic policies outlined in the 2011-2012 Cuyamaca  
College catalog.