CASPER COLLEGE COURSE SYLLABUS
PHILOSOPHY 1000, INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

Spring 2016   Lecture Hours: 3   Lab Hours: 0   Credit Hours: 3

Class Time: TUESDAY, THURSDAY 11:00AM - 12:15PM

Room: UU, Student Union UW/CC, Room 415

Instructor’s Name: Robert Barnes, MA Theology

Instructor's Contact: email robertbarnes@caspercollege.edu and Moodle email

Communication: The class Moodle email is the preferred mode of communication. Casper College email and the class Moodle email are the official methods of communication.

Information: This course will utilize both classroom and online learning methods.

Course Description: An introduction to some of the main problems confronting the philosophical thinker, including those concerning truth, knowledge, language, morality, the existence of God, the nature of reality, freedom, and the meaning of life. Possible solutions to these problems will be considered.

Statement of Prerequisites: ENGL 1010

Goals: This course is a general introduction to philosophical thinking. It is designed to provide a general introduction to and understanding of philosophical views, issues, and arguments. By the end of the semester, I wish for you to know the following general things about philosophy:

1. Philosophy is useful and valuable.
2. Philosophy is diverse.
3. There is such a thing as a good and a bad argument, whether or not you agree with its conclusion.
4. Your argument is only as good or sound as your consideration and/or answers to good objections against it. (If your premise is wrong, your conclusion is wrong.)
5. There are many answers that have been given to the major philosophical questions, and every such answer is not equally as plausible as every other answer. Your “job” is to seek the most plausible answer.

Outcomes: If the student does the work assigned for this course, they will be able to:

1. Identify, define, and employ key philosophical terms, theories, and figures in Philosophy.
2. Apply logical and critical thinking methods and evidentiary criteria of philosophy to determine and critique the ways through which philosophers address basic philosophical issues.
3. Distinguish between and understand the basic issues of the major subfields of philosophy, primarily those of the history of philosophy, epistemology, ethics, aesthetics, existentialism, logic, philosophy of religion, political philosophy, and others.

4. Interpret, summarize, and paraphrase arguments as expressed in philosophical and popular writing through developing critical thinking and writing skills.

5. Present and support their own views on philosophical issues clearly, logically, concisely, and coherently.

6. Demonstrate effective information sharing through written and verbal communication.

7. Solve problems using critical thinking and creativity.

8. Use appropriate technology and information to conduct research.

Course Objectives: The main objectives of this course are:
1. to become familiar with major philosophical problems and the methods of dealing them
2. to learn how to read and interpret philosophical texts
3. to acquire an initial command of philosophical language
4. to demonstrate what it means to adopt "philosophical attitude" as an elevated form of human curiosity

Methodology: This course will use several means of study. The student will be presented with a general overview and introduction to basic philosophical disciplines and their methods, doctrines, concepts, and leading ideas. We shall examine examples illustrating how classical and modern thinkers formulate their questions and how they grapple with their issues, as well as on some specific concepts philosophers use to articulate their experience and the world as they see it. In addition, the course will provide an orientation to the notion of philosophical argument, its various forms, and the ways arguments should be structured and/or analyzed. We shall focus on questions, identify reasons for studying philosophy, and distinguish between the major fields of philosophy and their central concerns.

To disseminate the required amount of information, a lecture/discussion format will be the primary means of classroom study. Students are required to contribute to class discussions and participate in classroom deliberations. There may also be exercises. Students will be asked to view PowerPoint presentations, videos and other electronic media, and interact with guest lecturers.

This introductory course will provide students with a framework to reflect upon their own experiences and prepare them for further academic or personal exploration and study. This course is developed and structured to assist students in acquiring the fundamental skill of philosophical questioning, arguing, and exploration of topics, such as “Is knowledge possible”? Does it come from reason or from experience? What is the ultimate substance of the world? Is it material or ideal? Are human actions free or determined? Why is there evil? Are moral norms relative or absolute?

Engage with the material, class, discussions, and assignments. Research shows that students who exert more psychological and emotional energy towards academics have higher satisfaction and grades in college. Plus, it makes class a lot more fun for all of us. Your feedback is valuable as the instructor uses course evaluations in determining course methodology.

Required Text, Readings, and Materials:

Handouts as provided; websites as directed; supplementary reading as required

Recommended Reading


Textbook Student Companion site:

Reading: Reading philosophical texts is very different from reading a novel or a newspaper article. Quickness and quantity in reading are not valued in philosophy as much as proper understanding of the problems, good insight into the questions, and an acute awareness of different interpretive possibilities. It is important that you read the material thoroughly. Careful reading takes time. If carried out properly, reading requires doing extensive annotations, formulating questions, providing terminological explanations and developing making argumentative structures. Students need to do all assigned readings as indicated by the syllabus. We shall spend class time endeavoring to penetrate the ideas and arguments as deeply as possible.

Philosophical Language: The complex language used by philosophers is one of the foremost and most persistent difficulties in any encounter with philosophy. The language of philosophy tends to be more terminological and conceptual than the language of ordinary communication or literature. Students will face a variety of hurdles and tasks while pursuing the goal of correct interpretation. We cannot fully grasp the text because we are not familiar with its terms.

The first step in dealing with this problem is to clarify the meaning of all the words. The next step is to develop a working capacity to understand and correctly apply fundamental philosophical concepts. Finally, students need to learn how to recognize and evaluate arguments by assessing their logical status and the weight of the supporting evidence. Students are expected to regularly look up the meanings of the terms in philosophical and other dictionaries and make necessary excerpts. Students should develop philosophical lexicons covering the terminology from the readings. They are also urged to make brief sketches of argumentative patterns.

Evaluation Criteria: A variety of opportunities are provided for students to earn the grade of their choice.
1. Weekly Reading Review Questions (Moodle) Assignments: 35 points each (455 total points)
2. Philosophy articles and short papers: 100 points each (total points TBD)
3. Paper on Philosopher or Philosophy Field: 400 points
4. Philosophy Presentation: 300 points
5. Quizzes or Class Projects: 50 points each (Total points TBD)
6. Attendance/Participation: 15 points per class (450 points total)
Grading Scale:
1935 total points available (dependent upon number of short papers)
A= 90-100%, B=80-89%, C=70-79%, D=60-69%, F=59% and below

Casper College may collect samples of student work demonstrating achievement of the above outcomes. Any personally identifying information will be removed from student work.

Weekly Reading Review Questions (Moodle) Assignments: 455 points (35 points each, 13 assignments)
Each week you will have assigned readings from the texts or other assigned material. Reading review questions will be posted on Moodle and are due each week through the class Moodle. Each weekly unit is worth 35 points. The week begins on Monday morning and ends the following Sunday at 11:55 pm. Late assignments, forums posts, quizzes, and class work will not be awarded points.

Do all the required reading before submitting your weekly unit assignment. You are required to post thoughtful and substantive responses to each question. Responses must reflect depth of thought as well as evidence of reading the assigned material. Take time to formulate your response before submitting it. Grammar will be graded. College level work is the standard.

Professional and collegial behavior is expected and required. Use each other as resources—if you have experience in one of the areas we are learning about, share your experience.

Philosophy Articles and Short Papers: 100 points each (total points to be determined)
Students are required to read assigned articles, view assigned videos, research or expand on topics discussed in class and write short papers responding to or elucidating their thoughts on the topic. These papers will be between two and three (2–3) pages in length, not including the cover and reference pages. Papers should be written in the MLA style, doubled spaced, Times New Roman 12 point font, and with proper grammar and punctuation. These are college level papers and should reflect college level work and thought. Please see the class Moodle page for a sample MLA paper.

Provide a minimum of two (2) reputable references from either books, book chapters, or peer-reviewed journal articles that support your position or reflect your experience. For these short papers only, popular magazines, newspapers, Wikipedia, etc. will be acceptable references. Submit these short papers through Moodle. Topics and due dates will be as assigned.

The purpose of these short papers is to provide practice in writing and exercise of philosophical thought. Be prepared to discuss your paper in class.

Paper on Philosopher or Philosophy Field: 400 points
Students are required to submit a substantial paper examining a particular philosopher, school of philosophy, or philosophical field of study. Philosophy Papers will be between seven and eight (7–8) pages in length, not including the cover and reference pages. They should be written in MLA style, doubled spaced, Times New Roman 12 point font, and with proper grammar and punctuation. See the example provided on the Moodle page. The topic for this paper must be reflective of a legitimate, published, recognized philosopher or acknowledged field of study in philosophy. The instructor must approve your topic for this assignment in order to receive points for the paper.

Provide a minimum of four (4) reputable references from either books, book chapters, or peer-reviewed journal articles. Popular magazines, newspapers, Wikipedia, etc. are NOT acceptable references. Philosophy Papers are to be submitted through Moodle and are due on Sunday, April 24, 11:55 pm.
Philosophy Presentation: aka “Bumper Stickers, Bad Slogans, and Hillbilly Lyrics” 300 points

Each student is required to provide a 10-12 minute oral presentation on a philosophical topic of his or her choosing. Students will be creative in their presentation, using PowerPoint, Prezi, or other engaging teaching technique. The presentation will be graded on its application to philosophy, clarity, preparedness, depth of thought, and content. It is due on the assigned day during the last weeks of class. We will determine the presentation schedule as the date gets closer.

This assignment is intended to be fun, entertaining, and educational. This is an opportunity for students to demonstrate their learning by applying philosophical thought to events, circumstances, and observations of their everyday lives. More guidance will be provided as the semester progresses.

Quizzes or Class Projects: 200 points (total points TBD)

Throughout the semester I will assign a short quiz, in-class project, or discussion topic for you to complete. More guidance will be provided as the semester progresses.

Attendance and Participation: 15 points per class (450 points total)

All students are expected to attend and participate in class activities. Research shows there is a strong relationship between students attending class and grade performance. Students who attend class, on average, do better. Attendance will be taken at the start of each class. Points are awarded for arriving on time and participation (not just for attending class). Each class attended is worth 15 points for a total of 450. You are responsible for all the assigned readings and all materials and lectures covered in class. All materials and assigned readings are testable. While many of the topics from the book will be covered in class, not all concepts from the readings will be discussed.

Absences/Attendance: You are expected to be in class. Regular attendance, completing the reading assignment on time, and being present for class lectures are indispensable for being successful in this course. What counts most, however, is not mere physical presence, but productive and reasoned participation in answering questions and taking part in class discussions. Ultimately, what matters is what you say and how you say it, not the sheer fact that you are saying something. Class discussion is not a battlefield wherein everyone fights everyone to establish personal superiority. Our objective is not to defeat others but to collaboratively find the right interpretation, correct argument, and possibly the true explanation of the problem. Therefore, everybody's contribution should be phrased in accordance with that objective.

Students do not need to call/contact the instructor or bring an excuse when they are absent. It is assumed that when a student is absent there is a valid reason.

Writing Standards: College level writing is expected at all times. Grammar, punctuation, and spelling are graded in every written assignment, including Moodle Forum posts. Please read the Addendum to the Syllabus - Writing Standards posted on the course Moodle page.

Addenda to the Syllabus: Any addenda to the syllabus are considered as part of the syllabus. Addenda will be posted on the course Moodle page.

Class Policies: Last Date to Change to Audit Status or to Withdraw with a W Grade: Please refer to the Casper College Academic Calendar, the Casper College catalogue, or the Casper College
Student Handbook for all student related policies, procedures, and important dates (such as drop, add, withdrawal, and financial aid deadlines).

**January 2016**
19 Spring semester classes begin

**February 2016**
1 Census Date / Payment deadline / Last day for 100% refund
15 President’s Day – campus closed

**March 2016**
7-11 Midterm Week
14-18 Spring Break – no classes
25 – Spring Holiday – no classes

**April 2016**
8 Advising
14 Withdrawal Deadline

**May 2016**
9-12 Final exams
13 Commencement

**Student Rights and Responsibilities:** Please refer to the Casper College Student Conduct and Judicial Code for information concerning your rights and responsibilities as a Casper College student. You are responsible for all of the assigned material. **All assigned readings are testable.** While many of the topics from the book will be covered, not all concepts from the readings will be discussed. Respect your peers and the instructor and do not be disruptive during class. Perpetual disruptive behavior may result in you being asked to leave the class and removed from the course. Unless you need a specific type of communication device (e.g. recorder) during class, turn off cell phones and all other communication devices. If you are expecting an emergency contact during class, please let me know and we will discuss a suitable arrangement for you to be contacted with minimal class disruption.

**Chain of Command:** If you have any problems during the class, you should first contact the instructor to attempt to solve the problem. If you are not satisfied with the solution offered by the instructor, you should then take the matter through the appropriate chain of command starting with the Department Head/Program Director, the Dean, and lastly the Vice President for Academic Affairs.

**Academic Dishonesty:** (Cheating & Plagiarism) Casper College demands intellectual honesty. Proven plagiarism or any form of dishonesty associated with the academic process can result in the offender failing the course or expulsion from school. See the Casper College Student Code of Conduct for more information on this topic.

**Plagiarism:** Do not attempt to plagiarize in writing your papers. Plagiarism is taking any idea or writing that is not your own and including it in your paper/work product without citing your source. Refer to this website: **Plagiarism 101** (http://www.plagiarism.org/plagiarism-101/what-is-
plagiarism). For example, if you go to a website and take information or sentences from that website and do not cite that website in your paper, you are plagiarizing. You cannot have someone else write your paper. You also cannot just cite a website and then turn in a whole paper from a website that is not your work. The paper has to be your original work. This includes quoting from your textbook or describing a philosopher's view and not citing the page from which you took the information.

**Official Means of Communication:** Casper College faculty and staff will employ the student's assigned Casper College email account and the course Moodle page as official methods of communication. Students are responsible for checking their email account and course Moodle page regularly. This is where you will find course evaluation links.

**ADA Accommodations Policy:** If you need academic accommodations because of a disability, please inform me as soon as possible. See me privately after class or during my office hours. To request academic accommodations, students must first consult with the college’s Disability Services Counselor located in the Gateway Building, Room 344, (307) 268-2557, bheuer@caspercollege.edu. The Disability Services Counselor is responsible for reviewing documentation provided by students requesting accommodations, determining eligibility for accommodations, and helping students request and use appropriate accommodations.

**Calendar or schedule indicating course content:** Please refer to the course Moodle page for topics, assignments, due dates, and topics. See the PDF "Course Schedule" posted on the course Moodle page for a draft overview of the class schedule, weekly assignments, and dates your work is due. The Moodle page for this course is the primary location to learn about the class, assignments, and due dates. Adjustments will be made as necessary. The course calendar and syllabus are subject to change at the instructor’s discretion.

**Course Calendar/Schedule Spring, 2016:** Please refer to Moodle for due dates, updates, and topics. The course calendar and syllabus are subject to change at the instructor’s discretion.