Introduction to philosophy

1301

Professor: Liesl McQuillan
Cell phone: 214-315-3656
Email: LMcQuillan@dcccd.edu
Office hours: By request

This class is designed to give you an overview of philosophy and philosophical questions. You will learn to defend a line of reasoning and you will learn to think efficiently and practically about the larger philosophical issues in life. You will have every opportunity to stretch your mind and learn to apply philosophical thinking to your everyday life. Class will be conducted in a discussion, or “dialectic” mode. That is, I will lecture briefly at the beginning of class and then we, as a class, will discuss the reading.

You will be assigned three -5 page papers. There are 20 pop quizzes throughout the semester that represent the only traditional “tests” you will have in this class. You will be graded on class participation. You will be assigned five journal topics that must be at least two pages, but you may write as much as you choose. You may earn a total of 350 points.

There are several opportunities for extra credit in this class. There will be community garden work days, possible tree plantings, and a discussion book. The book is Tomatoland: How Modern Industrial Agriculture Destroyed Our Most Alluring Fruit, by Barry Estabrook. There will be a discussion and a test on the book. You may not take the test if you do not attend the discussion.

The breakdown of points is as follows:

Each 5 page paper: 50 points, 50% (total)
Class Journal: 50 points, 12.5%
Class participation: 70 points, 17.5%
Pop quizzes: 100 points, 25%

A: 350-315 points
B: 314-280 points
C: 279-245 points
D: 244-210 points
F: 209-0 points
I will grade your 5 page papers and give them back to you; you will then have a week to redo the papers, if you so choose, and turn them in for a better grade. You may rewrite your papers as many times as you choose, until you get the grade you desire. However, each time you are handed back a paper, you have a week to rewrite it. You may write on anything we have read for the class BEFORE THE PAPER IS DUE and you must choose your own topic. Each 5 page paper has its own section of material; after your first paper you may write on anything we’ve read since the last paper was due. You may not write on the same subject twice.

A note on class participation: This class is a discussion class which means that how you participate in class is very important to your final grade. A discussion class is a conversation about the material we read for that class period. Please follow the conversation and do not simply string together random comments. You will be surprised at how much fun it is to challenge your thinking through conversation; it does get easier as the semester progresses.

My attendance policy is one of action rather than presence: I won't penalize you with lost points if you are absent, but if you are absent you will miss quizzes and participation points. This is what we would call a "de facto" attendance policy. I also really like Latin phrases (hint for quizzes).

My penalty for plagiarism is non-negotiable and is as follows: If you cheat on a paper you will receive a 0 for that paper. You may not rewrite it and it guarantees your inability to earn anything higher than a B in the class. If you cheat on a journal, you will lose all of your journal points for the semester, also guaranteeing that you will not receive higher than a B in the class.

Basic Class Rules:

1. Showing respect for your classmates and professor is the surest way to have a happy, productive semester. Please try to remember that we all come into the classroom with tremendous diversity in our experiences. We may need a little extra space to negotiate our relationships with the multitude of experience we're bringing with us, so allow each other your eccentricities. The benefit of doubt is something we could all use and give to others with carefree abandon.

2. No one likes to be interrupted. Interrupting is annoying and rude and shouldn't be a habit in your classroom behavior. However, we should forgive each other and ourselves if we become impassioned and unintentionally interrupt. We're not just people who possess reason; we are also people who possess emotion. It isn't unheard of for a person in class to become emotional
about a subject; there's nothing wrong with that and it may provide us all with the example for why the topic we're discussing is so important to our lives. One proviso: I may interrupt you when you are speaking if you have made your point and are repeating yourself or if I think you're going in a direction that is not productive.

3. What we are doing in class is important enough to warrant your full attention; if you wouldn't think of doing something when your boss is talking to you, don't do it in class, either. In particular: no cell phones, headphones, recording devices, or board games should be used in class. No lap top computers allowed, unless prescribed by Disability Services. After your first warning for using one of these devices in class I will ask you to leave class for the day. If it is a repeated problem I will exercise my right to drop you from the class.

4. This is especially important: No side conversations while someone is speaking. That's just rude and shows contempt for the class, for me and for the person speaking.

5. People are funny: we like to think we're right always, forever, amen, the end. Here's the thing: we will all be wrong more than once in our lives. Because we are fallible human beings it is extremely important, especially in a philosophy class, to attempt to remain open to new ideas and new knowledge.

6. Conversations should have pauses. We've all had those friends who wait for you to finish what you're saying so that they can leap in with what they think; that's not a conversation but a string of statements by two people. If you watch political "debates" you can see this sort of thing on grand display. Think before you leap into the conversation.

7. Remember that the person you are conversing with is more than the positions they are offering. Try your best not to put people into the boxes you think define them; chances are good that box wouldn't be big enough for the diversity of thought that exists in each of us.

8. Remember that your idea of what a person means may not be what the person actually means. How many times have you had a fight with someone based on a misunderstanding? Remember that when you think someone has just said something you find objectionable. Don't be afraid to ask for clarification.

9. I don't have a problem with food and drinks in class as long as you follow a few basic rules:
No peanut butter. If you want to know why, ask.

No durian fruit. If you know what it is, you know why.

No chewing and talking at the same time.

Try to eat quietly.

Clean up after yourselves. If you spill something, go to the bathroom and get some wet or dry paper towels to clean it up.

10. Finally, you should never, never, never use a pejorative term or tell someone to shut up in class. This is also true of language that attempts to degrade others, e.g.: "stupid," "dumb," "retarded."

I believe it is very important for you to learn how to think and reason on your own so I will never give you an “answer” to a philosophical question. For example, when we discuss the difference between absolute ethics and ethical relativism, I will give you the thinking on the subject and require you to make up your own mind about the competing ideas. I have yet to have a student who could not do this or could not do well in this class. It is entirely your choice. I am always available for help with assignments, readings, or problems in class/school/life. Please feel free to call or email me if you need help.

District syllabus:

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<tr>
<th>General Information</th>
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<tr>
<td>College Name: Richland College</td>
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<tr>
<td>Div. Name &amp; Contact Info.: School of Humanities, Fine and Performing Arts Fannin Hall 171, 972-238-6250</td>
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<th>Semester/Term &amp; Year</th>
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<tr>
<th>Instructor Information</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name: Liesl McQuillan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Telephone: 972-238-6140 (school); 214-890-4442 (Home)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-mail Address or Fax: E-mail: <a href="mailto:LMcQuillan@dcccd.edu">LMcQuillan@dcccd.edu</a></td>
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| Office Number: None |
| Office Hours: By request |

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<tr>
<th>Course Information</th>
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<tr>
<td>Course Number: PHIL 1301</td>
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<td>Section Number: 8004</td>
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<td>Credit Hours: 3</td>
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| Course Description | PHIL 1301  Introduction to Philosophy (3)  
This is a Texas Common Course Number.  
Prerequisite: Developmental Reading 0093 or English as a Second Language (ESOL) 0044 or have met the Texas Success Initiative (TSI) standard in Reading.  
An introduction to the ideas about such things as the good life, reality, God, the acquisition and characteristics of knowledge, and the nature of humans. Students will evaluate both ancient and modern theories about these issues in terms of their logic, historical significance, and meaning in everyday life, as they practice the methods for doing philosophy. (3 Lec.)  
Coordinating Board Academic Approval Number 3801015112 |
| Course Prerequisites | Developmental Reading 0093 or English as a Second Language (ESOL) 0044 or have met the Texas Success Initiative (TSI) standard in Reading. |
| Course Objectives/ Learning Outcomes | This class is designed to give you an overview of philosophy and philosophical questions. You will learn to defend a line of reasoning and you will learn to think efficiently and practically about the larger philosophical issues in life. You will have every opportunity to stretch your mind and learn to apply philosophical thinking to your everyday life. |
| Core Courses | COMPETENCIES FOR PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION COURSES |
| Reading: | Students will be asked to read from philosophy and religion textbooks written for students reading at the 12th grade level or above. Students may be asked to read some short passages from primary sources. Student achievement will be measured by such methods as exams, quizzes, and in-class discussion of the material. |
| Writing: | Students will be given opportunities to write essays and papers about philosophical and religious issues. The student’s progress in improving academic writing will be communicated by such methods as instructor remarks written on papers and individual student conferences. |
| Speaking: | Students are expected to participate in such speaking activities as class discussions, small group discussions, and class presentations. The instructor will evaluate their speaking skills. |
| Listening: | Students will enhance their listening skills by practicing speaking one at a time and attending to the speaker. Students may be asked to summarize or repeat an argument they have just heard. |
| Critical Thinking: | Students’ writing and class participation will be evaluated continually by such criteria as clarity, consistency, coherence, comprehensiveness, compatibility, and fairness in thought and expression. |
Scope and Variety in Philosophy and Religion: By studying a wide range of ideas, purported by different historical periods, ages, and cultures, the student will demonstrate through written and spoken work an awareness of the scope and variety of issues and ideas studied in philosophy and religion. Some non-western ideas may be presented and discussed.

Expressions of Individual and Human Values within a Social and Historical Context: In class ideas will generally be presented within a historical, cultural, and social context, so students can understand why and how the ideas emerged. Students will be encouraged, in class discussions and in written work, to relate the ideas studied in philosophy and religion to ideas studied in other courses (e.g., literature, psychology, history, etc.).

Critical Response: Students will practice, in speech and writing, giving reasoned, critical responses to the ideas and theories presented. Unsupported statements of likes or dislikes will be treated as seminal material by the instructor for the development of a reasoned, critical response to a theory, idea, or religion.

Informed Personal Reaction: Students will be encouraged by the instructor to personalize the material studied and to react to it. The instructor, however, may ask students to support reactions by such means as the use of logic, reason, and bibliographical research.

Influence of Philosophy/Religion on Intellectual Experiences: Through such means as written papers and exams, class participation and discussions, oral presentations, and small group activities, students will relate the ideas and theories studied in religion and philosophy to various related intellectual experiences.

EXEMPLARY EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

1. To demonstrate awareness of the scope and variety of works in the arts and humanities.
2. To understand those works as expressions of individual and human values within an historical and social context.
3. To articulate an informed personal reaction to works in the arts and humanities.
4. To demonstrate knowledge of the influence of literature, philosophy, and/or the arts on intercultural experiences.

THE DEPARTMENT MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Philosophy/Religion Department at Richland College is to provide to students and teachers alike interactive and cooperative learning environments in which they may examine ideas related to their cultural, philosophical, and religious heritages. The Department further strives to develop skills in analysis and evaluation of
arguments and the ability to write and to speak clearly about philosophic and religious issues, which pertain to values, knowledge, reality, human nature, and God. The Department aims at translating these skills into considered actions in the lives of those involved and into reasoned interactions with the greater global community.

- **SCHEDULE:**

  8/28 first class
  8/30 Plato: Euthyphro
  9/4 FIRST JOURNAL DUE. Russell: The Principles of Philosophy
  9/6 Peirce: The Fixation of Belief
  
  Epistemology
  9/11 Descartes: Meditation I and II
  9/13 Kant: Critique of Pure Reason
  9/18 Russell: The Problems of Philosophy
  9/20 James: Pragmatism
  9/25 FIRST PAPER DUE
  
  Metaphysics
  9/27 Parmenides: Poem fragments
  10/2 Plato: The Republic
  
  Philosophy of Religion
  10/4 SECOND JOURNAL DUE. Anselm: Proslogium
  10/9 Thomas: Summa Theologica
  10/11 Pascal: Pensees
  10/16 Kierkegaard: Philosophical Fragments
  10/18 Aristotle: Nicomachean Ethics
  10/23 Kant: Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Morals
  10/25 THIRD JOURNAL DUE. Holbach: The System of Nature
  
  Ethics
  10/30 Rachels: Moral Problems
  11/1 Nietzsche: Beyond Good and Evil
  11/6 SECOND PAPER DUE
  11/8 Sartre: Existentialism
  
  Social and Political Philosophy
  11/13 Hobbes: Leviathan
  11/15 FOURTH JOURNAL DUE. Locke: Second Treatise of Government
  11/20 Mill: On Liberty
  11/22 NO CLASS
  11/27 King: Love, Law and Civil Disobedience
  11/29 THIRD PAPER DUE
  12/4 Marx: The Communist Manifesto
12/6  TBD
12/11  NO CLASS
12/13  FIFTH JOURNAL DUE, FINAL CLASS