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Course Description, Focus, and Assumptions

The catalogue description for this course is as follows:

"Prerequisite: Developmental Reading 0093 or English as a Second Language (ESOL) 0044 or have met the Texas Success Initiative (TSI) standard in Reading. This course offers an introduction to 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.

Of course, when we "do philosophy," we know that we are undertaking controversial topics -- that is, there are almost no conclusive answers. On the other hand, as humans we must all -- in some way --
address the problems and questions that make up the subject matter of philosophy, "What is the origin of the universe?" "What is it to be human?" "Do we survive death?" "Are my actions really free?" "What can we really know?" "What is the ultimate nature of reality?" "How should we live our lives?" "What is the meaning of my life?"

This course will be conducted primarily as a reading and online discussion class; therefore, your active participation is required for successful completion of the course. We will consider a wide range of issues in philosophy. In addition to our own responses to these critical issues, we will consider the ideas of philosophers, and others who have given their attention to the important problems and issues in philosophy.

Instructors Aspirations for Students

This course should have a direct connection to and influence on your life -- your life as a student, of course; however, even more important to me, your life beyond the walls of the virtual college. My primary aspiration is to help you walk the earth when you complete this course in a way that is at least somewhat different from the day you began. In short, I hope that when we part you are a changed person, that I am a changed person too, and that we both have changed for the better. My aspiration in teaching this course is for us to have a learning adventure together. Students who have curious, active minds and who are eager to engage the topic and material are encouraged to join me in this adventure.

Learning Objectives for the Course

It is important to understand and acknowledge that in courses in the humanities, such as philosophy, some of the most important learning objectives cannot be easily measured or are impossible to measure. For example, some of the learning objectives in Introduction to Philosophy that are difficult or impossible to measure are as follows:

- developing intellectual humility
- developing intellectual courage
- developing intellectual empathy
- developing personal and intellectual integrity
- developing intellectual perseverance
- developing confidence in reason
- developing self knowledge
- developing a sense of wonder

The fundamental course objective that can be measured is that students are introduced to philosophy. In learning the philosophy students will develop further their own capacities in three specific
and interrelated areas: 1) as active participants in doing philosophy; 2) as critical thinkers; and, 3) as students with mastery of particular content.

1. As active participants in doing philosophy students will:

   improve ability to use reason
   recognize the importance of impartiality and fair-mindedness
   develop further appreciation for facts and evidence
   develop skills in listening to reason
   appreciate the importance of revising positions when appropriate
   appreciate questions with no conclusive answers
   appreciate a sense of wonder

2. As critical thinkers in philosophy students will understand that critical thinking:

   has a purpose, objective, or function
   is an attempt to figure out something, settle a question, or solve a problem
   is based on information, evidence, experience, or research
   involves inferences from which we draw conclusions
   recognizes that conclusions are only as sound as the assumptions on which they are based
   is expressed through and shaped by concepts and ideas
   has implications and, when acted upon, has consequences
   occurs within some frame of reference or point of view
   strives to be fair-minded
   strives to distinguish between what one knows and does not know
   is willing to challenge popular beliefs
   requires that one demands the same standards from oneself as one expects others to meet
   requires working through complexities and frustrations without giving up
   recognizes that good reasoning is the key to living a rational life, and to creating a more fair and just world
involves taking responsibility for one’s thinking, beliefs, morals, and values

involves working to overcome native egocentric, ethnocentric, and culture-centric tendencies

involves self-directed, self-monitored learning

involves placing questions at the heart of one’s learning

involves reading carefully, reflecting, and understanding the most important ideas in texts

involves identifying central issues and reasoning well through those issues

involves developing skills in recognizing bias

3. As students with mastery of particular content one must understand:

the value of doing philosophy

ideas regarding the nature of philosophy

the legacy of Socrates

a number of the ideas of numerous philosophers (e.g. Socrates, Russell, Hume, Descartes, Locke, etc.)

some of the classical problems in philosophy (e.g. the existence of God, the problem of evil, life after death, personal identity, mind-body problem, the problem of free will and the case against free will, problems of knowledge, views of the meaning of life, etc.

Learning Activities

Too often, I believe, we limit the way we think about learning. First, real learning is something we all love to do and have loved to do since we were babies. Learning is exciting and fun and that’s part of the reason we love it. We are fortunate to be able to use technology to assist us in our learning together. As for the structured learning experiences that will lead to an evaluation of your work for this course, there are four main learning activities:

a) Writing Protocol/Study papers (each approximately 750 words in length) in response to assigned readings in the course. (The protocol paper assignment can be viewed in "Assignments" -- Unit One. You will also find a sample protocol to give you an idea of what is expected on these papers, which are designed primarily as a way for you to study and learn the material.);

b) Taking four examinations over material covered. The course is made up of 8 separate Units. Each examination covers two course units;

c) Writing a final paper (approximately 5 pages in length);

d) Reading chapters, articles, essays, and course "lectures" on questions and problems in philosophy; and
g) Using the "Discussing Board" to interact with your professor and other students about ideas that emerge from the above activities.

**Evaluation**

Your final course grade will be determined on the following basis: You will earn numerical grades for your performance in each of the above learning activities. The maximum number of points that one could make is 1000

900+ = A  
800-899 = B  
700 - 799 = C  
600 - 699 = D  
Below 600 = F

**a) Protocol Papers** - (6 separate grades) you will be provided with a simple protocol to follow in preparing these short papers as responses to what you have read. You will also be provided with a sample paper before the first assignment is due. There will be six protocol papers assigned and each will be worth a total of 50 points. (Maximum of 300 points)

**b) Examination** - (4 separate grades) you will be given four examinations (including the final examination) during the course. Each examination will be worth a total of 100 points. Examinations are timed. If the time limit is exceeded the grade may be adjusted accordingly. (Maximum of 400 points)

**c) Final Paper** - (1 grade) you will be assigned to write a final paper (approximately 5 pages in length). (Maximum 100 points)

**d) Class Participation** - (4 separate grades) as participation class "discussions" is an essential aspect of success in this course, you will receive a class participation grade that is based upon your contributions to the discussions on the Discussion Board. There will be 4 in-depth discussions during the course, so your participation in each discussion will be worth a maximum of 50 points. (Maximum of 200 points)

**Texts**

*Problems from Philosophy, Third Edition* - James Rachels (ISBN# 007353589-0)
You will be also assigned a variety of readings with various online links to assist you in finding the readings.

**Assignment Schedule**

**Assignment Calendar for Fall, 2012**

Important Semester Dates: Please Note that the Due Dates are the LAST day for accomplishing the assignment. All work is due no later than 12 midnight on the day designated; however, work should be done throughout the period leading to the due date.*

[Important: A student must initiate a withdrawal from a course. Instructors cannot drop students. After this date, students will receive a performance grade.]

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<tr>
<th>WEEK</th>
<th>DUE DATES **</th>
<th>UNIT</th>
<th>ASSIGNMENT</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<td>Monday, August 27</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Read Orientation, Syllabus, Letter to Professor, buy Text</td>
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Monday, December 3

15

Required Readings Unit Eight

0

Read Lecture Material Unit Eight

0

Thursday, December 13

16

Review Study Guide Units Seven and Eight

0

Conclusion of Discussion #4

50

Examination IV

100

Submit Final Paper

100

Total Possible Points

1000

Each of the 4 Discussion Boards are worth 50 points.

Each Protocol Paper is worth 50 points.

Each Examination is worth 100 points.

Final Paper is worth 100 points.

Academic Dishonesty

Scholastic dishonesty is a violation of the Code of Student Conduct. Scholastic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating on a test, plagiarism, and collusion.

As a college student, you are considered a responsible adult. Your enrollment indicates acceptance of the DCCCD Code of Student Conduct published in the DCCCD Catalog. 

https://www1.dcccd.edu/cat0506/ss/code.cfm

Withdrawal Policy

If you are unable to complete this course, it is your responsibility to withdraw formally. The withdrawal request must be received in the Registrar’s Office by the official drop date. Failure to do so will result in your receiving a performance grade, usually an "F." If you drop a class or withdraw from the college before the official drop/withdrawal deadline, you will receive a "W" (Withdraw) in each class dropped. Drop date for this course is November 23, 2010

Stop Before You Drop - 6 Drop Rule
For students who enrolled in college level courses for the first time in the fall of 2007, Texas Education Code 51.907 limits the number of courses a student may drop. You may drop no more than 6 courses during your entire undergraduate career unless the drop qualifies as an exception. Your campus counseling/advising center will give you more information on the allowable exceptions. Remember that once you have accumulated 6 non-exempt drops, you cannot drop any other courses with a "W". Therefore, please exercise caution when dropping courses in any Texas public institution of higher learning, including all seven of the Dallas County Community Colleges. For more information, you may access:

https://www1.dcccd.edu/coursedrops

Repeating the Course, Third Attempt to Enroll in a Course

Effective for Fall Semester 2005, the Dallas County Community Colleges will charge additional tuition to students registering the third or subsequent time for a course. All third and subsequent attempts of the majority of credit and Continuing Education/Workforce Training courses will result in additional tuition to be charged. Developmental Studies and some other courses will not be charged a higher tuition rate. Third attempts include courses taken at any of the Dallas County Community Colleges since the Fall 2002 Semester. Visit www.dcccd.edu/ThirdCourseAttempt for a list of courses and additional information.

Obtaining Final Course Grades Using eConnect

Final Grade Reports are no longer mailed. Convenient access is available online at www.econnect.dcccd.edu or by telephone at 972-613-1818. Use your identification number when you log onto eConnect, an online system developed by the DCCCD to provide you with timely information regarding your college record. Your grades will also be printed on your Student Advising Report, which is available in the Admissions and Student Records Office, T170. At the completion of this course, you should be able to easily know what your assigned grade for the course will be, by checking in the course "grade book" for your total score.

Financial Aid for Distance Learning Classes

If you are receiving Financial Aid grants or loans and are enrolled in a Distance Learning class, you must show participation in this class prior to the certification date by either e-mailing or contacting the instructor or logging on to eCampus. Do not drop or stop attending any class without consulting the Financial Aid Office. Changes in your enrollment level and failing grades may require that you repay financial aid funds. Students who are receiving any form of financial aid should check with the Financial Aid Office prior to withdrawing from classes. Withdrawals may affect your eligibility to receive further aid and could cause you to be in a position of repayment for the current semester. Students who fail to attend or participate after the drop date are also subject to this policy.

ADA (American Disabilities Act) Statement

If you are a student with a disability and/or special needs who requires ADA accommodations, please
contact Richland College Disability Services Office, T-120 at (972) 238-6180.

**Religious Holidays**
As this online course is designed without any particular days or times that a student must be online, then religious holidays should not be a factor. It should be understood, however, that college policy is that absences for observance of a religious holy day are excused. A student whose absence is excused to observe a religious holy day is allowed to take a make-up examination or complete an assignment within a reasonable time after the absence. Students who will be absent from class for the observance of a religious holy day must notify the instructor in advance.

**Competencies for Philosophy 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 Outcomes**

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.

**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.

**Institutional Policies**

These policies may be viewed at the following website
www.richlandcollege.edu/syllabusinfo/syllabiinformation.pdf

**Disclaimer** The instructor reserves the right to amend this syllabus as necessary

**The Richland College Statement on Academic Honesty**

This statement clarifies academic honesty for the Richland College teaching-learning community. It identifies appropriate student behavior and describes teachers' expectations of students.
We—the Richland College faculty, administration, and staff—are committed to honesty and fairness as we work with our students. We also expect our students to be honest and fair in the work they submit to us. This statement on academic honesty describes:

1) what we expect from students.
2) the consequences of their failing to meet those expectations.

Note: As we use the terms "honesty" and "dishonesty," we are referring to actions and behaviors; we are not judging the character of our students.

The Richland College faculty believes only a small minority of students "cheat," However, we believe academically dishonest students cheat the academically honest students. Therefore, we expect students who are aware of cheating to act honorably and report instances of academic dishonesty to the faculty or the appropriate academic dean.

**Expectations**

1. We believe academic honesty is essential, and students should avoid actions that misrepresent academic success. We believe Richland College students are academically honest, and they want to be fair and honest in the assignments they submit.

   These guidelines apply to all testing situations—test administered in the classrooms, tests administered in the Testing Center, and tests administered by someone other than the professor.

2. All forms of cheating on tests are academically dishonest. Students cheat when they:

   participate in any activity that falsely represents their ability to answer test questions.

   copy with or with permission from another student's test.

   use notes (either written or electronically stored in calculators or computers) or any other unauthorized materials.

   request answers or assist other students with answers without authorization.

   obtain test questions prior to the test (soliciting or in any other way obtaining test questions, answers, or portions of tests).

3. Student's presenting another person's work as their own is unacceptable. Often, academic work permits and even encourages students to use another person's words or ideas, but students must document those words and ideas correctly. Therefore, students cheat when they:
Summarize, paraphrase, or quote another person without giving proper credit.

Submit papers written by someone else.

Copy verbatim (word for word) from other sources (books, Internet, and other similar materials).

When they have questions about when and how to credit other sources, students must seek clarification from the faculty. These matters are the student’s responsibility.

4. Unauthorized collaboration on assignments or tests is unacceptable. Richland College supports authorized collaborative, cooperative learning. Therefore, we encourage study groups when students are preparing for tests, but students cheat when they:

Provide other students with answers on homework assignments.

Present work completed by someone else.

If they have a question about the appropriateness of collaboration, students should seek clarification from the faculty. These matters are the student's responsibility.

**Consequences**

1. Faculty determine the appropriate consequences for students who fail to be academically honest. Even if the course syllabus fails to address the matter, students are obliged to be academically honest. By enrolling in a course, students are promising to be academically honest.

2. As consequences for academic dishonesty, faculty may:

   assign a performance grade of "F" for the assignment or test.

   document the incident in the student's Richland College file.

   assign additional work.

   take over appropriate disciplinary actions.

Repeated violations may result in the student's expulsion or suspension from the college. Students must understand that academic dishonesty carries serious consequences. However, if they believe they have received unfair treatment, students can file a grievance as described in the "Student Code of Conduct" in the Richland College Catalog or published in the DCCCD Catalog at http://www1.dcccd.edu/cat0506/ss/code.cfm

The instructor reserves the right to make changes in this syllabus.