CORE 105-02 First Year Seminar: Introduction to Xavier for Transfer Students: Justice from Athens to LA II

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CORE105 02 – INTRO TO XAVIER FOR TRANSFER STUDENTS: JUSTICE FROM ATHENS TO LA (II)

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Office Hours: Tuesday, 10-11:15AM, Thursday, 11:30AM-12:45PM, or by appointment
Class Meeting Time: Tuesday, 6-8:30PM, Alter 206

Note: Please include the course and section number in the subject line of any email correspondence.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

The central aim of this portion of the course is to understand what makes a human life good. We shall ask which lives are worth living and why, and whether leading a good life requires asking these questions in the first place.

The point of departure for our inquiry into the human good will be Plato’s *Republic*. In the *Republic*, Socrates argues that the good life is one that is lived in accordance with the demands of justice, and we will investigate, in some detail, Socrates’ arguments for this important claim. We shall contrast, in a preliminary way, Socrates’s account of what makes a life just with competing accounts from Immanuel Kant and John Stuart Mill. We shall focus specifically on questions concerning the role that justice plays in constituting the good life for human beings.

**FIRST-YEAR SEMINAR**

This course is a first-year seminar (FYS). FYS is part of Xavier’s Core Curriculum. It is also part of the First-Year Experience at Xavier that includes both academic elements and non-academic elements (including Manresa, the First-Year Co-Curricular Program, and peer mentoring).

All FYS courses address the idea of “the greater good.” This course considers the greater good by asking about the importance of morality to the lives of individuals and societies.

FYS courses are *interdisciplinary*. This portion of the course, which will focus on central philosophical questions, in particular those of ethics, is intended to complement the other portion, which concerns important questions in theology. Students are encouraged to draw on their own backgrounds, academic and otherwise, in considering and establishing connections with these sources, and to draw on the sources in reflecting on their own endeavors, both personal and academic.

This course is a *seminar*. Unlike a lecture course, the primary driver for inquiry in a seminar is student participation and discussion. Students are expected to learn by inquiring together, and taking responsibility for apprehending, understanding, and reflecting on the course subject matter. Seminar courses are small, in order to encourage and make possible the sort of shared intellectual activity that this inquiry requires. As with all FYS courses, this course will be centered around the reading of challenging and important texts, which shall be our primary guides in inquiry. While Prof. Brownlee will occasionally serve as guide, providing relevant background or other information, students are responsible for completing the readings and coming to class prepared to discuss them.

Finally, the FYS is to address issues connected to individual vocation. We shall treat vocation not simply as a matter of deciding on a major or a career, but as a question about the ultimate ends of education, formation, and human life more broadly. We will address individual vocation both through student-professor conferences, and relevant readings.

**COURSE GOALS AND STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:**

**GOALS:** Students will…
Become engaged in intellectually challenging and interesting questions and problems.
Develop strong mentoring relationships with faculty in and out of the classroom.
Join the community of scholars at Xavier University.
Establish a solid foundation on which subsequent Core Curriculum courses will build.
Engage with a common theme across all semesters: The Greater Good

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES: Students will…
Core 1b: Apply the approaches of multiple disciplines to a significant issue.
Core 6b: Articulate the evolution of their vocation and aspirations to contribute to the world.
Core 3a: Identify and critically assess multiple dimensions of an ethical issue in an attempt to reach a conclusion. In FYS, this includes: Interpreting challenging readings; Employing effective library research and information literacy skills; Constructing arguments supported with evidence.

REQUIRED TEXTS
The following book is on order at the University book store. Please acquire a hard copy of this book, in the prescribed edition.


Other readings, from Bernard Williams, Immanuel Kant, John Stuart Mill, Christine Korsgaard, Peter Singer, and Jennifer Rubenstein, will be available by other means.

GRADE BREAKDOWN
Students’ final grades for this portion of the course will be determined by means of the following assignments:
Interpretive paper (I)  10%
Interpretive paper (II) 10%
Quizzes and other small assignments  5%
Participation  10%
Midterm examination 15%

BRIEF ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTIONS
*Interpretive papers*
Students will be required to write two papers. The interpretive papers (3-4 pp.) will be based on students’ readings of Plato’s *Republic*. Students will choose a question from a set distributed one week before the assignment due date and compose a response.

Each writing assignment will be based in close reading of relevant primary sources.
Students are discouraged from consulting secondary sources.

Students must complete both papers in order to receive a passing grade in the class. Any student who fails to submit one or more of the papers will receive an “F” as their final grade in the course.

Written assignments must be submitted at the start of class on the prescribed due date. Late work will not be accepted. Students should write the paper due dates in their planners now, and plan to leave appropriate amounts of time throughout the semester in order to meet them.
Exceptions to this policy will be made on a case-by-case basis, and then only if students contact Prof. Brownlee no less than three days before the required due date. Prof. Brownlee reserves the right to refuse extensions, so it is wise not to count on receiving one.

Students will receive more detailed descriptions of each assignment over the course of the semester.

*Quizzes and other small assignments*
Students will be responsible for completing weekly online quizzes. Quizzes will be due at 11:59PM on Monday evenings. The quizzes will be based on materials covered in the readings and class for the prior week, and on the readings to be discussed the following Tuesday during class. Success on the quizzes requires that students keep up to date with the readings. Make sure to complete Tuesday’s readings before writing the quiz by Monday night.

Prof. Brownlee will also assign a few more minor assignments over the course of the semester.

*Participation*

This portion of your grade will be based on the frequency with which you provide valuable contributions to class discussion, which includes asking relevant or cogent questions, as well as your general attentiveness and engagement with the course material. *Since much of the class will proceed by discussion of specific passages in the course texts it is imperative that you bring the week’s readings to class with you.*

*COURSE SCHEDULE*

The schedule provided in this document constitutes a rough outline of the specific schedule. Students are required to consult the “Modules” page of course website for detailed breakdowns of the week’s readings. These breakdowns will be updated weekly and will include suggested study questions.

- **Materials listed in the following schedule that do not appear on the required texts list will be available on the course website.**

  **Week 10**: Republic, Book I
  **Week 11**: Republic, Book II; Bernard Williams, “The Amoralist”; *First paper questions distributed Tuesday, November 1*
  **Week 12**: Republic, Books II, III; *First paper due Tuesday, November 8*
  **Week 13**: Republic, Book III; Immanuel Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals* (selections); Christine Korsgaard, “What’s wrong with lying?”
  **Week 14**: Republic, Book IV; Mill, *Utilitarianism* (selections); Peter Singer, “The Logic of effective altruism”; Jennifer Rubenstein, “Reply”; *Second paper questions distributed Tuesday, November 22; Class does not meet Thursday, November 24*
  **Week 15**: Republic, Book IV; *Second paper due Thursday, December 1*
  **Week 16**: Republic, Book IV
  **Week 17**: *Final exam, Tuesday, December 13, 6:00PM*

**ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES**

*ERS Lecture Series*: Students are encouraged to attend events in the Ethics, Religion, and Society lecture series. Prof. Brownlee will remind students of relevant events throughout the semester. Students can find the series schedule here: [http://www.xavier.edu/ers/Lecture-Series.cfm](http://www.xavier.edu/ers/Lecture-Series.cfm). Students may be offered extra credit toward their “Quiz” grade for completing small assignments based on these events.

**COURSE POLICIES**

**ATTENDANCE**

Attendance in class is mandatory. Students are expected to arrive promptly at the start of class, prepared actively to engage with the course material.

Students are permitted up to two (2) absences during this half of the course. *Every two times a student is late to class, they will have one absence counted against this total.* After the second absence, each successive class missed will result in a final grade reduction of 0.15 grade
points. For example, a student who has earned the grade of B but missed 4 classes would receive a B-, one who has missed 6 classes would receive a C+, and so on.

Any classes missed due to otherwise-sanctioned university activity, minor illness, or any other reason will count against this total of four absences. Students who anticipate missing a number of classes for any of these reasons should take special care to attend otherwise. Exceptions will be issued only in order to observe a religious holiday.

In the event of extreme illness, it is imperative that students make arrangements to meet with the professor to discuss their ability to complete the minimum requirements of the course. While I am willing to make arrangements to enable students to complete the course successfully, in the event that the student has missed a significant portion of the class, it may be impossible for them to complete the course. Concerned students should contact the professor as soon as possible.

A special note for student athletes: Each class missed by a student athlete to participate in a sanctioned athletic event will count as an absence. Student athletes will have the number of permitted absences raised above four if it is necessary to accommodate their scheduled events. However, this entails that they need to be especially careful not to miss additional, unnecessary classes. Frequent attendance is absolutely essential for student athletes to keep up with the remainder of the class.

Equally importantly, student athletes should, in no way, go out of their way to inform the instructor of their performance issues in other classes, or indicate what grade they “need” from this course in order to continue playing the sport in which they choose to participate. The instructor is aware of the university policies regulating student athlete academic performance, and regards any efforts to influence his assessment of student performance in the course as highly inappropriate.

CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE
Students are expected to arrive for class on time and prepared to contribute actively to the class discussion. Timely arrival and preparedness include addressing bodily needs (such as snacking and restroom use) prior to the start of class.

Use of electronic devices of any kind in class is prohibited, except in cases of documented need.

Obviously unacceptable in-class behaviors include: internet viewing, text-messaging, napping, and conversation of issues not related to the class discussion.

STUDENTS WHO VIOLATE THIS POLICY WILL RECEIVE AN “F” FOR THE PARTICIPATION PORTION OF THEIR GRADE, reducing their FINAL GRADE for the class by up to a full letter grade.

ACADEMIC HONESTY
The Xavier University Catalog states (http://www.xavier.edu/registrar/ugrd_policies.html#Academic_honesty): “The pursuit of truth demands high standards of personal honesty. Academic and professional life requires a trust based on integrity of the written and spoken word. Accordingly, violations of certain standards of behavior will not be tolerated at Xavier University. These include theft, cheating, plagiarism, unauthorized assistance in assignments and tests, unauthorized copying of computer software, the falsification of results and materials submitted in reports or admission and registration documents, and the falsification of any academic records including letters of recommendation.

“All work submitted for academic evaluation must be the student’s own. Certainly, the activities of other scholars will influence all students. However, the direct and unattributed use of another’s efforts is prohibited as is the use of any work untruthfully submitted as one’s own.

“Penalties for violations of this policy may include one or more of the following: a zero for that assignment or test, an ‘F’ in the course, and expulsion from the University. The dean of the college in which the student is enrolled is to be informed in writing of all such incidents, though the teacher has the full authority to assign the grade for the assignment, test, or course.”
Plagiarism of any kind will not be tolerated. The instructor requires that students submit their written work both in hard copy to the instructor on the due date and to TURNITIN (http://www.turnitin.com).

All students must complete the plagiarism tutorial on the library web site in advance of the due date for their first paper. Links to this tutorial can be found on the course web site in the first week of class.

CRITERIA FOR ASSESSMENT OF WRITTEN WORK

The Philosophy Department has adopted the following standards for the evaluation of all forms of written work:

A = Work that not merely fully and accurately reproduces class discussion, the main thread in the argument or the major philosophical significance under discussion, but which goes beyond these and indicates a contribution of the student, giving evidence of a deeper understanding of the material in question.

B = Work that shows a more or less complete and exact understanding of the issues, texts and/or arguments as explained in class, clearly and logically formulated, but without advancing beyond these explanations.

C = Work that shows a basic understanding of the material but with errors, omissions and confusions of either a formal or contextual nature.

D = Work that shows a minimal acquaintance with the material, or serious logical or conceptual flaws in formulating responses to the question raised, the argument at issue, or the philosophical text under discussion.

F = Work that indicates inadequate acquaintance with texts, issues, or ideas with little or no valid argumentation; or the work is handed in beyond the point of acceptance or else plagiarized. Cases of plagiarism, which involves the use of published work or other written material without proper citation, must be given a ‘0’.

Grading Scale:

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<th>Grade</th>
<th>Score Range</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94-100</td>
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<td>A-</td>
<td>92-93</td>
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<td>90-91</td>
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<td>B</td>
<td>87-89</td>
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<td>84-86</td>
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