2013

290-09-13 Theory of Knowledge

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Introduction

This course is an introduction to epistemology, or theory of knowledge. We will read the works of four significant philosophers who have shaped the way we think about the nature of knowledge, method, science, the mind and body, perception, and the philosophical life in general. We will address perennial philosophical questions: What is knowledge? Is there some method we should use to know what is true? Is knowledge relative? What role does perception play in our knowing the world? Is the body necessary to have knowledge? Can appearances be trustworthy? What is the relation between ordinary, natural experience and idealizing, scientific theory? What kind of leisure is necessary for the reflective life? The objectives of the course are to gain some sophistication in thinking about these questions and to acquire the critical reasoning and writing skills needed to do philosophical work both inside and outside the classroom.

Required Books: (these editions only)


Online Resources: There are few reliable online resources for philosophy, but I do recommend the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (http://plato.stanford.edu/contents.html), which is reliable, clear, and scholarly. Another useful online encyclopedia is *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (http://www.iep.utm.edu/). If you do reference or quote an online source in a paper, it must be cited appropriately.

Course Requirements:

20% Participation

15% Quizzes/writing assignments (in-class or take-home, about 5)—lowest quiz grade dropped

10% Protocol assignment

10% Paper #1

15% Paper #2

30% Final Exam (Paper #3)

Writing Center: Everyone needs help with his or her writing. Even great authors need an editor or second pair of eyes. I strongly suggest that you visit the writing center before you turn in each paper. Your grammar will improve, your prose will become crisper, and your argument stronger. Overall, your writing skills and course grade will very
likely increase. There is really nothing to lose, and everything to gain. For more information: http://www.xavier.edu/writing_center. Where: CLC 5th Floor / Phone: 745-2875 / When: Monday-Thursday: 9:30 a.m. - 8:30 p.m. Friday: 9:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. Sunday 1:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

I will be happy to work with you on drafts, but only if we go over them in office hours, with hard copies (one for you, one for me), with you taking notes on my suggestions. No drafts will be looked at if sent as attachments or within 48 hours before the due date. This policy is meant to encourage you to organize your ideas as early as possible.

**Plagiarism:** Plagiarism will result in the failing of the assignment, and it may result in the failing of the course. The following statement on plagiarism is from Xavier University’s website on plagiarism, where you can take a tutorial about how to avoid plagiarism: http://www.xavier.edu/library/xututor/plagiarism/index.cfm

- Plagiarism is using the work of another as if it were your own, without enclosing the words of others in quotations—this is also the case for paraphrasing lecture notes!
- Plagiarism is copying from the Internet, from a web page, or from another person without giving credit.
- Plagiarism is using ideas which are not your own without citing those ideas.
- Plagiarism can be applied to ideas, research, art, music, graphs, diagrams, websites, data, books, newspapers, magazines, plays, movies, photos, and speeches.

**Participation:** Participation is required. Participation can take place in a number of ways: asking questions, responding to questions, raising objections, and making points. I do recognize that for some students talking in class and discussing philosophy can be intimidating. Discussing the philosophical content of the readings or class discussion by email or during office hours will count toward your participation grade. **Socratic method** will be practiced during class time (calling on students at random in a brainstorming fashion), but I don’t want to put anyone on the spot, so you always have the option of saying “pass” without any shame.

**Quizzes:** If you miss a quiz because of an unexcused absence, you may not make it up. If the absence is excused, then I will assign you a writing assignment that will be graded and carry the same weight as the missed quiz. Unannounced reading quizzes are always a possibility.

**Protocol:** Please see forthcoming sheet for information about 2-person team protocols, which are 2-page summaries of a particular week’s content.

**Papers:** You will write three papers. For each paper I will provide a handout detailing the assignment and my expectations. A late paper will be lowered a full grade for each class it is late.

**Attendance:** You are allowed three unexcused absences. More than three unexcused absences will have a serious effect on your grade. Each unexcused absences after three will result in a lowering of your final grade by a full grade. If your final grade is an A- and you have 4 absences, then your grade for the course will be a B-. This policy will be strictly followed. Excused absences require an official note from a doctor or student affairs. If you have more than 7 absences then you will fail the course. If you do miss a class you must (a) get notes from another student, (b) ask me for handouts I might have distributed and (c) ask for instructions for the next class. If you are absent, do not assume that you know where we are in the readings.

**Students must keep their cell phones off during class, not on vibrate or silence. Please: no eating during class. Anyone using a computer or tablet reader MUST sit in the first or second row.**
Syllabus of Readings (tentative; subject to change)

**August**

**Week 1: The Disenchantment (Entzauberung) of the World**

T 27    Schiller, “Gods of Greece” poem (handout)

Th 29    Principe, excerpts from *The Scientific Revolution* (pdf)

**September**

**Week 2: Weber, “Science as a Vocation” (pdf)**

T 3

Th 5

**Week 3: Descartes, Discourse 5-6**

T 10

Th 12

**Week 4: Descartes, Meditations 1-2 (Bernstein on wax pdf)**

T 17    First Paper (3pp.) due at beginning of class

Th 18

**Week 5: Descartes, Descartes, Discourse 1-2, 4**

T 24

Th 26

**October**

**Week 6: Descartes, TBA**

T 1

Th 3

*Fall Holiday; no classes T/Th*

**Week 7: Husserl, “The Vienna Lecture,” in The Crisis, pp.269-top 276**

T 15

Th 17
Week 8: Husserl, “The Vienna Lecture,” in *The Crisis*, bot.276-99

T   22
Th  24

Week 9: Husserl, *The Crisis*, Sections 8, 9(b)(c)(h)(l)

T   29  Paper 2 due (4pp.)
Th  31

November

Week 10: Husserl, *The Crisis*, Sections 10, 12, 15, 17-20, 26

T   5
Th  7

Week 11: Husserl, *The Crisis*, Sections 33, 34, 36, 38, 41, 50

T   12
Th  14


T   19  Paper 2 due at beginning of class
Th  21


T   26

Th   28  Thanksgiving; no class


T   3

Th   5

Week 15: Excerpts from Descartes’ *Passions of the Soul* (pdf)

T   10

Th   12