2014

290-13-17 Theory of Knowledge

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745-3035 (office), 325-7031 (cell; before 6pm M-F)                Office Hours: M 4:30-6pm, T 12-12:45 or by appt.
Section 13 (8:30-9:45): Cintas 202  
Section 17 (1-2:15): Logan 100

Course Syllabus:
PHIL 290 Spring 2014:
Theory of Knowledge

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 does the modern conception of disenchantment of the world imply about our conception of nature? The objectives of the course are to gain some sophistication in thinking about these questions and to acquire the critical reasoning, oral and writing skills needed to do philosophical work both inside and outside the classroom.

Required Books: (these editions only)


Course Requirements:
20% Participation
15% Quizzes (in-class or take-home, about 5-6)—lowest quiz grade dropped
10% Protocol assignment
10% Paper #1
15% Paper #2
30% Final Exam (Paper #3)

Reading: You must read each text at least twice.

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, see: [http://www.xavier.edu/writingcenter/](http://www.xavier.edu/writingcenter/)

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. All cases of plagiarism will be reported to the Dean of your College and a written statement will be put in your student file. 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](http://www.xavier.edu/library/xututor/plagiarism/index.cfm). TurnItIn will be used for all papers.

**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:** No quizzes may be made up; the lowest quiz will be dropped.

**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 (subject to change)

Week 1: Max Weber, “Science as a Vocation” (pdf)

January
T 14
Th 16

Week 2: Max Weber, “Science as a Vocation” (Cont.)
T 21
Th 23

Week 3: Max Weber, “Science as a Vocation” (Cont.)
T 28
Th 30

February

Week 4: Plato, *Euthyphro*
T 4
Th 6 Paper 1 due

Week 5: Plato, *Apology*
T 11
Th 13

Week 6: Plato, *Apology*
T 18
Th 20

Week 7: Plato, *Meno*
T 25
Th 28

March
Spring Break

Week 8: Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, Part 6
T 11
Th 13 Paper 2 due

Week 9: Descartes, *Discourse*, Parts 1-2
T 18
Week 10: Meditations on First Philosophy 1-2
T  25
Th  27

Week 11: Descartes, Discourse on Method, Parts 4-5
April
T  1
Th  3

Week 12: Merleau-Ponty, The World of Perception, chs. 1-3
T  8
Th  10

Week 13: Merleau-Ponty, The World of Perception, chs. 4-7
T  15
Th  17  Holy Thursday

Week 14: Merleau-Ponty, “The Primacy of Perception” (pdf)
T  22
Th  24

Week 15: Prospects for the Re-enchantment of the World (reading TBA)
T  29
May
Th  1

Final Exam = Paper 3
due 10:30am, Tues May 6 for the 8:30 class
due 12:30, Thurs May 8 for the 1pm class