CORE 200-10 Philosophical Perspectives: Models of Knowledge as Action

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Xavier University

Fall 2015

PHIL 200 10 3 Credits

TR 11:30-12:45

Alter Hall 106

Office Hours: TR 1:00-2:00 and by apt.

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Philosophical Perspectives: Models of Knowledge as Action

(i) Texts

Required: René Descartes, Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy, tr. D.A. Cress, Hackett

Additional required texts posted on Canvas

Recommended: Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy:

http://plato.stanford.edu/contents.html

Notes and other supporting material will be posted on Canvas regularly and as the discussion evolves

(ii) Description

The course is a survey of how significant philosophers, responding to problems of their times, raised and answered questions about knowledge:

• can we know (nature of authority/certainty)?
• what do we know (objects of knowledge)?
• how do we know (procedure(s); operation(s) of the human mind)?

Divergent views on knowledge aside, philosophers tend to agree that the way one conceives of knowledge shapes the way one conducts oneself in the world, i.e., one’s mode of action. The link most philosophers draw between searching for knowledge and leading an excellent (virtuous) life is the main idea students will be called to reflect upon and appraise.

In addition to Xavier core learning objectives (see next section), this course includes these other key learning objectives:

• Students recognize and articulate concisely the content and context of major theories about knowledge.
• Students analyze and evaluate shortcomings and merits of major theories of knowledge.
• Students reasonably and comprehensively argue about what human knowledge is and is not.

(iii) Philosophical Perspectives: The course role in Xavier’s Core

In this course, students will further pursue fundamental human questions about topics such as knowledge, morals, and politics by investigating how great philosophers have addressed these questions. They will have the chance to read, discuss, and critique classic works of philosophy. In this way, students will be invited into a long tradition of reflection on the meaning of our shared humanity, of the world, and of our relation to it.

This course is part of the Xavier Core Curriculum, which aims to develop people of learning and reflection, integrity and achievement, in solidarity for and with others. The course addresses the following core learning objective at an intermediate level:

1a: Students recognize and cogently discuss significant questions in the humanities, arts, and the natural and social sciences.

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1 Also Phil 290 for Transition Core
2 From http://www.xavier.edu/core-transition/Vision.cfm; don’t neglect to click on how are these goals expressed in core learning objectives? Or see directly: http://www.xavier.edu/core-transition/Core-Goals-and-Objectives.cfm
2a: Students find, evaluate, and logically convey information and ideas in written and oral presentations.
3a: Students identify and critically assess multiple dimensions of an ethical issue in an attempt to reach a conclusion.
3b: Students examine the nature of beauty, truth, and virtue as means of gaining a sense of the divine.
5b: Students examine the interconnections between humans and the natural environment.

(v) Course Requirements and Evaluation of Learning Objectives

- Attendance, participation in class activities, and reflection journal (25%)^4
- Three take-home exams (25% each), one of which will be the final exam

Grading Scale:

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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Value</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>3.67</td>
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<td>B+</td>
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<td>B</td>
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<td>B-</td>
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The following Xavier resources are available to facilitate student success:

1. Learning Assistance Center (LAC)
   The Learning Assistance Center (LAC) provides support services to facilitate learning. The LAC has two main purposes: tutoring and disability services. Our tutoring services include subject specific tutoring, study skills assistance, study groups, and Supplemental Instruction (SI). For students with documented disabilities, our disability services provides accommodations such as extended time on exams, reduced distraction testing environment, note-taking assistance, and assistive technology. We provide these services in a positive and encouraging environment which promotes appreciation for diversity and Cura Personalis.
   Location: Conaton Learning Commons, Suite 514.
   Phone: (513) 745-3280
   http://www.xavier.edu/learning-assistance-center/index.cfm

2. James A. Glenn Writing Center
   The James A. Glenn Writing Center provides free services to all members of the Xavier community--undergraduate and graduate students, staff and faculty. The tutors in the center can help at any stage of the writing process: understanding an assignment, generating ideas, drafting, organizing, revising, editing (addressing sentence structure, grammar, and punctuation concerns), and documenting sources. Writers can also receive assistance in refining cover letters and résumés, and other such non-class-related writing projects.
   Location: Conaton Learning Commons, Suite 400
   Phone: (513) 745-2875
   Email: writingcenter@xavier.edu
   http://www.xavier.edu/writingcenter/

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3 Regular class attendance is the single most important factor for student success. Class notes will be posted on Canvas regularly but the notes will not be self-explanatory and without following the class discussions notes will not be sufficient to understand the course material.
4 Instructions on reflection journals will be posted on Canvas after the introductory module of the course is completed.
3. Office of Student Success
The Staff in the Office of Student Success is available to assist students to make the most of their Xavier experience. Personal staff consultations, success coaching, referrals to on-campus Solution Centers, and guiding students to effectively navigate their college experience are central to our work. Please visit www.xavier.edu/student-success to learn more or visit us in the Conaton Learning Commons.
Location: Conaton Learning Commons, Suite 514
Phone: 513-745-3036
Email: studentretention@xavier.edu

(vi) Meetings and Assignments
Introduction: The Ancient Greek Background or THE AUTHORITY OF LOGOS
Week 1: August 25/27
Week 2: September 1/3

RELATIVISM VS UNIVERSAL KNOWLEDGE
Plato, Meno, 70a-86c: “How will you aim to search for something [form of virtue] you do not know at all?” and Friedrich Nietzsche, On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense
Week 3: September 8/10
Week 4: September 15/17

EPISTEMIC STANDARDS OR JUSTIFICATION (the structure of knowledge)
Week 5: September 22/24
Week 6: September 29/October 1
Week 7: October 6
Week 8: October 13/14

PSYCHOLOGICAL CONDITIONS OF KNOWLEDGE
Week 10: October 27/October 29
Week 11: November 3/5

FAITH AND REASON
Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica, Part I, Question 1 (In Ten Articles): Articles of Faith and Indemonstrable Principles
Week 12: November 10/12
Week 13: November 17/19
Week 14: November 24

November 26 Thanksgiving Holiday

The syllabus is subject to change. It the responsibility of the student to familiarize him/herself with the full text of the University Policies included in the most recent Undergraduate Catalogue and especially with the Academic Honesty policy.
THE TURN TO THE ‘I’
Rene Descartes, Discourse on Method (In Six Parts): Certainty as Scientific Foundation

Week 15: December 1/3
Week 16: December 8/10
Week 17: Final Examinations