200-10 Philosophical Perspectives: Models of Knowledge as Action

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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)?
• how do we know (procedure(s); operation(s) of the human mind)?
• what do we know (objects of knowledge)?
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.
2a: Students find, evaluate, and logically convey information and ideas in written and oral presentations.

1 http://www.xavier.edu/core/core-classes.cfm
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\(^2\) and participation in class activities (10%); Attendance policy: allowed two absences after which every unexcused absence will lower your attendance/participation score by two points
- Reflection journal (15\%)\(^3\)
- Three in-class exams (25% each), one of which will be the final exam

Grading Scale:
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\begin{array}{ccc}
A & = & 4.00 \\
A- & = & 3.67 \\
B+ & = & 3.33 \\
B & = & 3.00 \\
B- & = & 2.67 \\
C+ & = & 2.33 \\
C & = & 2.00 \\
C- & = & 1.67 \\
D+ & = & 1.33 \\
D & = & 1.00 \\
D- & = & 0.67 \\
F & = & 0.00
\end{array}
\]

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/

\(^2\) 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.
\(^3\) 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 23/25
Week 2: August 30/September 1

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 6/8
Week 4: September 13/15
Week 5: September 20/22

EPISTEMIC STANDARDS OR JUSTIFICATION (the structure of knowledge)
Week 6: September 27/29
Week 7: October 4
Week 8: October 11/13

Fall Holiday

Aristotle, Metaphysics, Bk. I, ch. 1-3: The range and unity of sciences
Week 9: October 18/20

FAITH AND REASON
Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica, Part I, Question 1 (In Ten Articles): Articles of Faith and Indemonstrable Principles
Week 10: October 25/October 27
Week 11: November 1/3

THE TURN TO THE ‘I’
Rene Descartes, Discourse on Method (In Six Parts): Certainty as Scientific Foundation
Week 12: November 8/10
Week 13: November 15/17
Week 14: November 22

November 24 Thanksgiving Holiday

(See next page)

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4 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.
PSYCHOLOGICAL CONDITIONS OF KNOWLEDGE
   Week 15: November 29/December 1
   Week 16: December 6/8

Week 17: Final Examinations