2013

290-02 Theory of Knowledge

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I. Course Description

From the Course Catalogue: The interplay between human knowledge and the world it knows, the possibility of objective knowledge, and the nature and developments of modern science as a theoretical and practical project. Pre-requisite: PHIL 100.

From the Instructor: What is knowledge? How do we ‘get’ it? Is there any limit to our capacity for it? Further, what’s the point in having it? We’ll be looking at these questions over the course of the term by examining a wide swath of great texts spanning over two millennia. We’ll examine philosophy’s connection to excellence, language, science, common sense, and practices in our daily life. To put it bluntly, we want to see how these thinkers address issues you encounter on a regular basis.

II. Required Texts


III. Course Requirements

I have three general goals for this class. I want you to read. I want you to think about the material you read and apply that material, both for this class and the rest of your college experience. I want you to articulate your thoughts about what you have read. Each of the requirements I have established for this class reflects these three goals. I do reserve the right to change these requirements, depending on the progression of the course.
A Note about makeup work: I usually do not allow you to make up quizzes and other missed material, unless it is a documented university sponsored event or you have a documented medical emergency. If you provide said documentation, you will have ONE WEEK from the date you missed said material to make it up.

A. Weekly Quizzes 200 Points

Weekly Quizzes will occur, as the title suggests, once a week. They will be ‘pop’ in that I will not announce them ahead of time. They will occur at the beginning of every class, and are intended to aid you in your reading and preparation for the exam. Each quiz will consist of 5 short answer questions that address the reading for the day (unless explicitly stated in a prior class). In constructing the quiz, I will assume that you have read the text carefully and that you are able to pick out important moments/ideas/characters. Each quiz will be worth twenty points, there will be a total of at least twelve quizzes, and I will take only your top ten scores. There will be no quizzes for weeks in which we have an exam.

B. Exams 450 Points (Midterm 200 points, Final 250)

There will be two exams for this term, a midterm and a final. Both exams will have a similar format, although the final will be longer. I will provide for you a guide to help with these exams. The guide will provide you with the instructions for each section of the exam, a sample question for each section of the exam, and hints to aid in your success. I will not provide you with vocabulary lists or provide any questions that will be on the exam. You should expect passage recognition, short answer, and essay questions on each exam. I do not do multiple guess or True/False on my exams.

C. Paper 250 Points (75 points for the first draft, 175 for the final draft)

You will have a term paper due. This paper should be 6-8 pages in length, and is due on the last day of classes, December 11@ 11:59pm. I am looking for a project that minimizes summary and instead focuses on comparison and analysis of ideas and techniques (both writing and philosophical). Ideally, you should not have to use any outside sources for this project. However, if you do you must cite them properly to avoid plagiarism.

Since I am expecting high quality work from your final draft, I want you to provide a rough draft of the paper by November 15 @ 11:59pm. This rough draft is intended to give you a clear idea of my expectations, as well as provide you with some assistance in your writing. The rough draft should be 5-6 pages long, and contain a complete argument. I will provide you with information about my expectations on the paper. I would STRONGLY suggest that you take advantage of the writing center for both drafts of your project.

A note about plagiarism and other forms of cheating:

From Xavier’s Academic Honesty posting
(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 upon integrity of the written and spoken word. Accordingly, violations of certain
standards of ethical 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 material submitted in reports or admission and registration documents, and the falsification of any academic record 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 full authority to assign the grade for the assignment, test, or course. If disputes of interpretation arise, the student, faculty member, and chair should attempt to resolve the difficulty. If this is unsatisfactory, the dean will rule in the matter. As a final appeal, the academic vice president will call a committee of tenured faculty for the purpose of making a final determination.

From the Instructor:

Don't cheat. If you do, you are wasting your money, and cheapening your degree. If I suspect plagiarism, or any other forms of cheating, I will report you. In a world with Wikipedia and social networking, it may be difficult to understand 'exactly' what plagiarism is. If you copy and paste a document word for word, and don't properly cite the original... that's plagiarism. If you copy/paste a document and then change a few words around, and don't properly cite the original... that's plagiarism. If you use a resource for your research and just use general ideas and concepts gleaned from that external resource in your paper, and don't properly cite it... that's plagiarism. For further assistance concerning plagiarism, please check the library's tutor on the subject: www.xavier.edu/library/xututor/plagiarism

I will NEVER penalize you for using outside sources, as long as you cite those sources properly. Remember this rule of thumb: “When in doubt, cite your source.” That being said, I want most of the paper to be from you. If you’re properly citing a paper that contains 60% of cited material, you should expect a deduction. Further, while I am happy (and actually encourage you) to give me early drafts of the paper to review, do not consider my comments or ‘ok’ to be a plagiarism check for you. If you have questions about your effort, CONTACT ME.

D. Class Participation  100 points

For the purposes of this class, the participation portion of your final grade will be composed of 3 major elements. First, and most basic, is class attendance. You need to be here for every class. I understand this class is early, but you will need to be on time to receive full credit for you attendance. If you have to miss a class, it is best for you to contact me via email ASAP. This will allow us to set up some way for you to get the information you missed. After five absences, you will notice a significant reduction in your class participation grade.

Second, class participation is based on attentiveness. This means listening to lecture and questions from other students. It also means not doing anything that would distract you from class (IE don’t try to text,
do homework from other classes, or anything of the sort). If I have to stop you from texting, or friendfacetweeting, I will deduct class participation points, and may ask you to leave the classroom.

Finally, is general class participation. This means responding articulately and clearly to questions I, or you classmates, may ask you. If I have to pull teeth to get a response to a question, this section of class participation will suffer. To be articulate, it generally helps to look over the material ahead of time.

Grading Scale:

100-93: A
92.9-90: A-
89.9-87.9: B+
87.8-83: B
82.9-80: B-
79.9-77.9: C+
77.8-73: C
72.9-70: C-
69.9-67.9: D+
67.8-63: D
62.9-60: D-
59.9 and Below: F

Course Schedule: This course syllabus is subject to revision as needed.

The reading in the text of the appropriate section should be read before coming to class (IE read Plato before coming to class on August 29).

Also, a note about inclement weather and/or instructor illness: Please pay attention to the XU alert system and your email accounts. Xavier does an ‘amazing’ (annoyingly so) job of letting you know of every problem that weather is giving us on campus. In case of an instructor illness or emergency, I will email you using your Xavier accounts. In case of a class needing to be canceled, I will post on BB how we will handle the missed class.

Course Dates

Week 1 (August 26-30):

Monday: Class Introduction
Wednesday: Introduction to Plato
Friday: Plato Meno (3-12)
Week 2 (September 2-6):
   Monday: (No Class, Labor Day)
   Wednesday: Meno 12-23
   Friday: Meno 24-33

Week 3 (September 9-13):
   Monday: Introduction to Augustine
   Wednesday: The Teacher (69-83)
   Friday: The Teacher (83-93)

Week 4 (September 16-20):
   Monday: The Teacher (93-101)
   Wednesday: The Usefulness of Belief (291-302)
   Friday: Descartes Discourse on Method (1-13)

Week 5 (September 23-27):
   Monday: Descartes Discourse on Method (13-18)
   Wednesday: Descartes Discourse on Method (18-22)
   Friday: Descartes Meditations (59-63)

Week 6 (September 30-Oct 4):
   Monday: Descartes Meditations (70-81)
   Wednesday: Descartes Discourse on Method (23-33)
   Friday: Introduction to Hume

Week 7 (October 7-11):
   Monday: Fall break, no class
   Wednesday: Review for Exam
   Friday: Midterm exam

Week 8 (October 14-18):
   Monday: Hume Enquiry (1-15)
   Wednesday: Hume Enquiry (15-25)
   Friday: Hume Enquiry (25-37)
Week 9 (October 21-25):

Monday: Hume *Enquiry* (37-48)
Wednesday: Hume *Enquiry* (72-90)
Friday: Hume *Enquiry* (72-90) (Not a typo. We’re spending two days here)

Week 10 (Oct 28-Nov 1):

Monday: Introduction to Reid
Wednesday: Reid *Inquiry* 3-12
Friday: Reid Inquiry (12-35)

Week 11 (November 3-8):

Monday: Reid Inquiry (49-61)
Wednesday: Reid Inquiry (61-83)
Friday: Reid Inquiry (83-103)

Week 12 (November 11-15):

Monday: Reid Essays, 206-216
Wednesday: Contemporary Questions (All of the following readings will be on BB)
Friday: Gettier “Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?”

Week 13 (November 18-22):

Monday: Introduction to Responses to Gettier
Wednesday: Sturgeon “The Gettier Problem”
Friday: Bloomfield “Virtue Epistemology and the Epistemology of Virtue”

Week 14 (November 25-27):

Monday: Meet with instructor to discuss papers
Wednesday: No class, Thanksgiving
Friday: No class, Thanksgiving

Week 15 (December 2-6):

Monday: Bloomfield “Virtue Epistemology and the Epistemology of Virtue”
Wednesday: Jay Wood, Epistemology, (54-66)
Friday: Jay Wood, Epistemology (175-189)
Week 16 (December 9-13):

- Monday: Make up day, just in case
- Wednesday: Last day of classes, Final Paper Due
- Friday: No Class

When is the Final? Monday, December 16 at 8 am.