

2013

290-15B Theory of Knowledge

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Theory of Knowledge
Instructor: Dr. John E. Wolfe
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Office: Hinkle 229
Office Hours: 10:00-11:30 MWF, Saturday 12-12:45
Or by Email or Appointment

Note: I am one of those individuals who constantly has outlook open. Email is the best way to get a hold of me. If you are using a non-Xavier account, make sure you tell me who you are early in the email.

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?

Great scientists, philosophers and theologians have been pondering these, and similar questions, for millennia. This class will introduce you to some of the major participants in this discussion. By engaging in these different voices, my hope is that you will gain tools necessary for personal introspection and pragmatic engagement of the external. In other words, I want you to be able to think about yourself, the world around you, and the different 'sources of knowledge' that exist.

II. Required Texts

Plato. *Meno*. Trans G.M.A Grube. Pub: Hackett ISBN: 0915144247

Augustine. *Earlier Writings*. Trans. J.H.S. Burleigh. Pub: Westminster John Knox
ISBN: 066424162X

Descartes, René. *Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy*.
Trans Donald Cress. Pub: Hackett ISBN: 087220420

Hume, David. *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*. Ed. Eric Steinberg Pub: Hackett
ISBN: 0872202291

Reid, Thomas. *Inquiry and Essays*. Ed. Ronald Beanblossom and Lehrer Pub: Hackett
ISBN: 0915145855

Note: If you have financial restraints concerning the buying/renting of books, please contact me ASAP.

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. Weekly Quizzes 100 Points

Weekly Quizzes 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. 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. There is a very strong possibility that questions from the quiz will make their way onto the exams. Each quiz will be worth 20pts, and I will drop your lowest quiz grade. There will be no quizzes on days in which we have an exam. Because of the nature of this course, you MAY use your texts for the quizzes. **You will NOT be able to use your texts for the exams.**

B. Exams 350 Points

You will NOT be able to use your texts for exams. Prepare accordingly.

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 you with study guides for both exams a week prior to the exam. These guides 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 150 Points

You will have a term paper due on the last day of class. This paper should be 5-7 pages in length. I am looking for a project that minimizes summary and instead focuses on comparison and the presentation of a clear and definitive argument. 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.

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.

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."

Also, I will not check you for plagiarism if you submit to me rough drafts. It is your responsibility to ask me about sources that you use, and how to properly cite them. In other words, just because I give you an 'ok' on a draft does not mean that you're 'in the clear' for plagiarism checks.

D. Class Participation 75 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.** However, I realize that there is life beyond these walls, and you might be forced to miss a class. 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. Unless there is a documented medical emergency forcing you miss classes, you should expect a failing grade after two absences.

Secondly, 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). I have scheduled the class to allow for two short breaks, so you can satisfy whatever technological issue you have.

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 our first class).

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.

Week 1 Plato *Meno* (3-32)

Week 2 Augustine's *De Magistro* (69-101)

Week 3 Descartes's Discourse (1-44) Review for Exam

Week 4 Midterm exam

Week 5 Hume 1-37, 72-77

Week 6 Reid Inquiry 3-12, 35-61

Week 7 Contemporary problems (check for reading online), review for exam

Week 8 Final exam and finishing business, Papers due