290-01 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


ISBN: 0872202291


ISBN: 0915145855

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.

If you find yourself struggling with the quizzes, it’s a good idea to contact me early. I can make suggestions to help with your reading, and develop a plan of attack with you.

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 use 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, May 2@ 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 April 11@ 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.

A Note for all Grades:

I try to keep your standing in class visible and transparent to you at all times. Your grades are recorded in the grades section of Canvas. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

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 Jan 17).

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 Canvas how we will handle the missed class.
Course Calendar

Week 1 (Jan 13-17)
Monday: Introduction to Course
Wednesday: Introduction to Plato
Friday: Plato *Meno* (3-12)

Week 2 (Jan 20-24)
Monday: MLK Day, No class
Wednesday: Meno 12-23
Friday: Meno 24-33

Week 3 (Jan 27-31)
Monday: Introduction to Augustine
Wednesday: Augustine, The Teacher (69-83)
Friday: Augustine, The Teacher (83-93)

Week 4 (Feb 3-7)
Monday: Augustine, The Teacher (93-101)
Wednesday: Augustine, The Usefulness of Belief (291-302)
Friday: Descartes Discourse on Method (1-13)

Week 5 (Feb 10-14)
Monday: Descartes Discourse on Method (13-18)
Wednesday: Descartes Discourse on Method (18-22)
Friday: Descartes Meditations (59-63)
Week 6 (Feb 17-21)
Monday: Descartes Meditations 63-69
Wednesday: Descartes Discourse (23-36)
Friday: Introduction to Hume

Week 7 (Feb 24-28)
Monday: Review for Exam
Wednesday: Exam
Friday: Hume Enquiry (1-15)

Week 8 (March 3-7)
No Class, Spring Break

Week 9 (March 10-14)
Monday: Hume Enquiry (15-25)
Wednesday: Hume Enquiry (25-37)
Friday: Hume Enquiry (37-48)

Week 10 (March 17-21)
Monday: Hume Enquiry (72-90)
Wednesday: Hume Enquiry (72-90) (Not a typo. Two Days here)
Friday: Introduction to Reid
Week 11 (March 24-28)
Monday: Reid Inquiry (3-12)
Wednesday: Reid Inquiry (12-35)
Friday: Reid Inquiry (35-49)

Week 12 (March 31- April 4)
Monday: Reid Inquiry (49-61)
Wednesday: Reid Inquiry (61-83)
Friday: Reid, Inquiry, 83-103

Week 13 (April 7-11)
Monday: Introduction to Contemporary Questions
Wednesday: Gettier “Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?”
Friday: Reactions to Gettier (rough Draft Due)

Week 14 (April 14-18)
Monday: Sturgeon “The Gettier Problem”
Wednesday: Bloomfield “Virtue Epistemology and the Epistemology of Virtue”
Friday: No Class, Easter Break

Week 15 (April 21-25)
Monday: No Class, Easter Break
Wednesday: Bloomfield, “Virtue Epistemology and the Epistemology of Virtue”
Friday: Jay Wood, Epistemology (54-66)
Week 16 (April 28- May 2)

Monday: Jay Wood, Epistemology 175-189

Wednesday: Make Up Day, just in Case

Friday: Last Day of Class (Paper Due)

When is the Final?

Wednesday May 7, 8am