

Introduction to Philosophy

PHIL 1301-P1 CID 4976

Fall 2009

Mark Bernier

O. L. Luther Unit

T 6:30 p.m. – 9:30 p.m.

Course Description

Philosophy 1301: Introduction to Philosophy surveys the perennial problems of philosophy including the fundamental nature of reality, the limits of knowledge, the proof of the existence of God, the problem of evil, the nature of evil, and the difference between right and wrong. Three class hours per week. Three semester hours credit (adapted, Bulletin of Blinn College).

Expanded Course Description

Philosophy 1301 invites the student to approach ideas critically and then to reason about them logically in both private and public contexts. The course urges the student to no longer exist as a passive receptor of what has been and is offered to him or her; the course asks the individual to consider deeply what underlies his or her understanding of the world and to think actively about the important questions underlying everyday existence.

Student Learning Objectives

Philosophy 1301 requires the student both to become familiar with and to understand representative philosophical problems, important philosophical arguments, and the important Western philosophers whose lives and works give us direction in our attempt to understand ourselves and the nature of the universe. Generally, the student will

- become familiar with the purposes, methods, and divisions of philosophy as a field of inquiry;
- explore issues in metaphysics, such as the nature of reality (i.e. Platonic Form, Aristotelian Substance), the Mind-Body Problem, and the Problem of Free Will;
- explore theories in epistemology such as Rationalism and Empiricism;
- explore theories in ethics such as Ethical Relativism and Ethical Absolutism;
- investigate the lives and thoughts of famous philosophers like Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Hume, Kant, and Mill.

Specifically, the student of philosophy at the introductory level will become familiar with and work toward an understanding of

- I. The purpose and method of philosophy
 - A. Philosophy as "love of wisdom"
 - B. The basic areas of philosophical investigation
 1. Metaphysics
 2. Epistemology
 3. Ethics
- II. The problems of and theories in metaphysics and epistemology
 - A. Knowledge of the world beyond our minds
 1. Rationalism
 2. Empiricism
 3. Kantianism
 - B. The relation between mind and brain
 1. Dualism
 2. Idealism
 3. Materialism
 - C. The existence and nature of God
 1. The cosmological arguments
 2. The ontological arguments
 3. The teleological argument
 4. The problem of evil
 - D. The problem of free will
 1. Determinism, hard and soft
 2. Indeterminism
- III. Problems and theories of ethics and ethical claims
 - A. The nature of ethics and ethical claims
 1. Ethical relativism
 2. Ethical absolutism
 - B. Ethical theories
 1. Aristotelian virtue
 2. Kantian ethics
 3. Utilitarianism
 4. Existentialism

Representative Philosophers

Socrates 470-399	John Locke 1632-1704	Jean-Paul Sartre 1905-1980
Plato 427-347	Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz 1646-1716	Simone de Beauvoir 1908-1986
Aristotle 384-322	George Berkeley 1685-1753	Albert Camus 1913-1960
Augustine 354-430	David Hume 1711-1776	Paul Tillich 1886-1965
Anselm of Canterbury 1033-1109	Immanuel Kant 1724-1804	Noam Chomsky 1928-
Thomas Aquinas 1225-1274	Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel 1770-1831	Susan Sontag 1933-2004
Thomas Hobbes 1588-1679	John Stuart Mill 1806-1873	Karen Armstrong 1944-
René Descartes 1596-1650	John Dewey 1859-1952	Susan Neiman 1947-
Benedictus de Spinoza 1632-1677	Bertrand Russell 1872-1970	Cornel West 1953-

Required Texts

Solomon, Robert C. Introducing Philosophy: A Text with Integrated Readings. 7th ed. New York: Oxford UP, 2001.
Standard college-level dictionary. N.B.: a good, not simply adequate, dictionary is required.

Recommended Handbook

Fowler, H. Ramsey, and Jane E. Aaron The Little, Brown Handbook. 8th ed. New York: Longman, 2001. (7th ed. suffices)

Course Requirements

The student is required to bring the Solomon text--and he should bring a college-level dictionary--to every class meeting.

The student is required to bring highlighter(s), pen or pencil, paper, etc. to every class meeting.

The student is required to annotate the textbook while preparing for class.

The student will compose and submit

seven two-three-page (MLA-format) papers (as scheduled), [TDCJ: 500-600 words] and

The student will complete three major examinations (essay and objective) and a final examination (essay and course inventory).

The student should prepare himself for not a few unannounced quizzes.

NB: The researched explication must reflect a sincere effort in order for the student to earn credit for the course.

Grade Determination

unannounced quizzes and participation	10%
three major examinations	30%
seven biweekly essays	45%
final examination (required to earn credit)	15%

Important Dates: Tentative

T 29 September	major examination
T 27 October	major examination
10 Nov – 8 Dec.	major examination essays due
T 15 December	final examination

All written assignments must be submitted in a timely fashion for the student to earn credit for the course. Weekly essays not submitted in a timely fashion will earn a zero.

First essay submitted by	8 September	First take-home exam essay due on	10 November
Second essay submitted by	22 September	Sixth essay submitted by	17 November
Third essay submitted by	6 October	Second take-home exam essay due on	24 November
Fourth essay due by	20 October	Seventh essay submitted by	1 December
Fifth essay submitted by	3 November	Third take-home exam essay due on	8 December

The student should retain for his own folder photocopies of all essays, etc. submitted.

Due Dates

No late work is accepted without severe penalty unless the student and the instructor agree on a different due date well in advance of the original due date. Unless otherwise indicated, all assignments are due at the beginning of the class. Severe penalty means one letter grade off for each calendar day the assignment is late.

Grading Criteria

The **A** paper represents original outstanding work; it shows careful thought, fresh insights, and stylistic maturity. Having practically no mechanical errors to distract the reader, it is free of jargon, clichés, and other empty language. Word choice is marked by a high degree of precision and a varied, advanced vocabulary; sentences are structured in a manner that creates interest and rhetorical power. The tone is appropriate for the designated audience. The reader moves through the **A** paper effortlessly because of its effective transitions, lucid organization, and thorough, purposeful development. Having finished, the reader feels that he has learned something, that he has received some unexpected and welcome illumination. In the **A** paper all research

material is correctly documented, and formatting adheres to current standards of the Modern Language Association. Directly quoted passages are gracefully integrated into the text with appropriate attribution.

The **B** paper is significantly more than competent. Besides being almost free of mechanical errors, the **B** paper delivers substantial information and makes cogent, fresh arguments—that is, in both quality and interest-value. Its specific points are logically ordered, well developed, and supported, and unified around a clear organizing principle that is apparent early in the paper. The **B** paper's relatively few syntactic, usage, and mechanical errors do not seriously distract the reader, but the language, while neither trite nor bureaucratic, probably lacks the candor and the precision of the most memorable writing. Its transitions, while appropriate, emphasize the logical turnings of the writer's mind, making the reader occasionally more aware of the efforts taken to unify and control an idea than of the idea itself. In the **B** paper all research material is correctly documented, and formatting adheres to current standards of the Modern Language Association. Directly quoted passages are integrated into the text with appropriate attribution.

The **C** paper represents average college-level work. It is a competent expression of ordinary thoughts in ordinary language; its **content/focus** is general, commonplace, or trivial, or not adequately related to the assignment; its **development** is vague, incomplete, or inconsistent; its **organization** lacks adequate or appropriate transitions or relation of ideas. The **C** paper, in addition to meeting all the requirements of the assignment, exhibits a **writing style** that is basically correct and is marred by a relatively few syntactic, usage, and mechanical errors. By relying on generalities rather than precise, illustrative details, the writer of a **C** paper leaves the reader feeling not much better informed than when the reader first picked up the essay. In the **C** paper all research material is correctly documented, and formatting adheres to current standards of the Modern Language Association. Directly quoted passages are integrated into the text with appropriate attribution.

The **D** paper has only skeletal development and organization. Its serious mechanical errors, together with the awkwardness and ambiguity of its sentence structure, make the reader feel slighted, as if his time and attention were of little concern to the writer.

NB: A paper exhibiting major weaknesses in any specific area—**content, development, organization, grammar and mechanics, documentation conventions, writing style**—or, indeed, a failure to address the assignment is usually considered, at best, a **D** paper.

As writing that falls below minimal standards for college-level literacy, the **F** paper shows lack of thought and purpose, little or no organization, numerous mechanical errors, and a garbled or immature style. Sometimes inadequacy in one area is enough to fail a paper—the writer, for instance, may not have control of punctuation, producing fragments or comma splices in almost every paragraph; however, serious weaknesses usually occur in several areas of concern.

A paper should earn the grade **zero** if it contains plagiarized content in any form, including the failure to acknowledge the source of any borrowed material (summarized, paraphrased, and directly quoted) and unmarked exact wording (directly quoted from either a primary or a secondary source), whether a specific well-chosen word, a phrase (two or more words), a clause, or full sentence(s). A paper can earn a **zero** if it does not address the assigned topic or if directions have been either ignored or not followed.

Editing symbols and chapter-section references used in the marking of student papers are found on the end sheets in [The Little, Brown Handbook](#).

The following common, inexcusable errors, absent from **A** and **B** papers, occur infrequently in **C** papers and guarantee, when they occur with any frequency, the paper's earning a **D** at best.

agr; s-v; p-a	= error in subject-verb or pronoun-antecedent agreement	Chapter 8a - 8b
ap	= apostrophe needed or misused	23a - 23d
cs	= comma splice	11a - 11b
frag	= sentence fragment	10a - 10d
fs; r-o; ro	= fused sentence; run-on sentence	11c and 21; 22
HUH?	= indecipherable intention, purpose, or meaning	
ref	= error in pronoun reference and/or shift, including the indefinite you	12a - 12f
sp	= misspelled word	34
vb	= error in verb form or verb tense	7a - 7f
ww	= wrong word	31b
wc	= word choice: perhaps a synonym study, not a thesaurus, is the appropriate resource!	
SLN	= see lecture notes	

Class Attendance: Class Attendance and Participation Are Expected

The College District believes that class attendance is essential for student success; therefore, students are required to promptly and regularly attend all their classes. Each class meeting builds the foundation for subsequent class meetings. Without full participation and regular class attendance, students shall find themselves at a severe disadvantage for achieving success in college. Class participation shall constitute at least ten percent of the final course grade. It is the responsibility of each faculty member, in consultation with the division chairperson, to determine how participation is achieved in his or her class. Faculty will require students to regularly attend class and will keep record of attendance from the first day of class or the first day the student's name appears on the roster through the final examination meeting. If a student has one week's worth of unexcused absences during the semester, he or she will be sent an e-mail by the College requiring the student to contact his or her instructor and schedule a conference immediately to discuss his or her attendance issues. If the student subsequently accumulates two weeks' worth of unexcused absences, he or she will be administratively withdrawn from the class. ([2009-2010 Blinn College Catalog 70](#))

NB: The instructor is not responsible for ensuring that the student who elects not to attend class and who chooses not to complete a Change of Registration Card is dropped from this course. It is the student's responsibility to officially drop the class. The student should check the academic calendar for Last Day to Drop dates. The student accruing six hours of absences during the course of a long or short academic term is well on the way to ensuring his or her failing the course.

The student is responsible for all assignments, including those made during any class meeting from which the student has absented himself. Any clarification of directions, etc. for any assigned work will take place during the instructor's conference hours. All assigned work is due before or on the designated day and time. Unless indicated otherwise, all assignments are due at the beginning of class on the day designated. If a student is unable to attend class on the day that an assignment is due, he should nevertheless ensure that the instructor receives the assignment by the designated time. In-class essays and daily quizzes can be made up only if the student's absence is excused in accordance with Blinn attendance policy.

Make-Up Policy

The student is responsible for all assignments, including those made during any class meeting from which the student has absented himself. Any clarification of directions, etc. for any assigned work will take place during the instructor's conference hours. All assigned work is due before or on the designated day and time. Unless indicated otherwise, all assignments are due at the beginning of class on the day designated. If a student is unable to attend class on the day that an assignment is due, he should nevertheless ensure that the instructor receives the assignment by the designated time. In-class essays and daily quizzes can be made up only if the student's absence is excused in accordance with Blinn attendance policy. No late work is accepted without severe penalty unless the student and the instructor agree on a different due date well in advance of the original due date. Unless otherwise indicated, all assignments are due at the beginning of the class. Severe penalty means one letter grade off for each calendar day the assignment is late.

Manuscript Form (TDCJ Limitations Permitting)

All papers should be written in dark ink (TDCJ restrictions are recognized) or typed (dark ribbon, etc.) on standard-size paper—one side only—in accordance with the MLA format as outlined in the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, 6th edition. (See LBH and handouts.) Handwritten papers must exhibit an understanding of the MLA format, including adherence to margin requirements. Papers must be argued from the third-person and in the literary present tense. All essays and papers submitted must have a title that is both appropriate and adequate. Philosophy 1301 is not a course in creative writing; Be certain that the paper's title indicates fully the paper's contents.

----- No staples; use a paper clip. Do not align right. -----

Scholastic Dishonesty

Pride of accomplishment is the boon of any academic achievement. It should be the goal of each student to put forth the best effort possible for each assignment; progression toward better writing is the reward of diligent application to the tasks assigned. The student who demonstrates a lack of integrity by seeking academic gain (good grades, scholarships, etc.) through avenues that circumvent the rigors and rewards of truthful scholarship will be, at some point, thwarted and ill-prepared to work within an honest system.

College policy maintains that it is "the responsibility of instructors to maintain scholastic integrity at Blinn College by refusing to tolerate any form of scholastic dishonesty. [. . .] If there is compelling evidence that a student is involved in cheating or plagiarism, the instructor should assume responsibility and address the infraction" (2009-2010 Blinn College Student Handbook 57-58).

Any degree of plagiarism appearing in any assignment submitted by the student will earn that student a zero for that assignment. Egregious plagiarism may result in the student's failing the course. The 2009-2010 Blinn College Student Handbook states that the following penalty "may be imposed by the instructor and division chairman: an appropriate grade penalty ranging from a grade of zero on the assignment [or the] examination up to and including the imposition of an F for the entire course [for egregious plagiarism]" (60). For clarification of the concept, see Joseph Gibaldi's MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, 6th edition, which is available for in-library use at the circulation desk, and/or The Little, Brown Handbook 10e, chapter 45. And because the numerical equivalent for an F earned for an honest paper is 50, it is better to submit a poor paper than to submit a plagiarized paper. Note that a "student receiving an F in a course because of scholastic dishonesty may not withdraw from that course" (60).

Blinn Board Policy FLB (Local) defines plagiarism as the "appropriating, buying, receiving as a gift, obtaining by any means another's work and the unacknowledged submission or incorporation of it in one's own written work." All students should be aware of the several different types--not levels--of plagiarism, including the failure to properly indicate directly quoted passages, phrasings, or significant wordings as such by the proper use of quotation marks, as well as other failures, including misattribution of cited material, as early as possible in the semester. Students should also be made aware that collusion is considered to be as egregious an offense as plagiarism is. Blinn Board Policy FLB (Local) defines collusion as the "unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing written work for fulfillment of course requirements."

Decorum / Civility Statement / Civility Notification Statement

Members of the Blinn College community, which includes faculty, staff, and students, are expected to act honestly and responsibly in all aspects of campus life. Blinn College holds all members accountable for their actions and words. Therefore, all members should commit themselves to behaving in a manner that recognizes personal respect and demonstrates concern for the personal dignity, rights, and freedoms of every member of the College community, including respect for College property and the physical and intellectual property of others. If a student is asked to leave the classroom because of uncivil behavior, the student may not return to that class until he or she arranges a conference with the instructor; it is the student's responsibility to arrange for this conference.

**Tentative Course Outline
and
Schedule of Readings
Fall 2009**

The student is responsible for understanding the vocabulary found in the readings, the very words (familiar and unfamiliar to the student) that constitute the philosophical concepts and arguments. The student should take notes while preparing for class. Dates listed are dates by which the assigned reading should have been read.

Solomon = Introducing Philosophy: A Text with Integrated Readings 7e

T	1 September	what philosophy is; doing philosophy; course inventory; justice	579-648
T	8 September	Solomon: introduction: Socrates; modern approaches Solomon: logic	1-20 20-41
T	15 September	Solomon: metaphysics: early Greek philosophers Solomon: metaphysics: Plato	45-57 67-80
T	22 September	Solomon: metaphysics: Aristotle Solomon: metaphysics: Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, et alii	80-88 88-117
T	29 September	major examination begin discussion of epistemology	
T	6 October	Solomon: epistemology: Descartes' rationalism; Locke's empiricism Solomon: epistemology: Locke's empiricism	184-206 206-22
T	13 October	Solomon: epistemology: empiricism; Berkeley's excess; Hume's empiricism	222-38
T	20 October	theories of truth Solomon: pragmatism and truth; the Kantian Revolution	248-71 261-71; 271-79
T	27 October	major examination Moyers: <u>Facing Evil</u> : video presentation	
T	3 November	Solomon: religion; reason and faith; faith and irrationality; reasoned attacks Solomon: western conceptualizations of God; intellectual proofs for the existence of a god Solomon: the problem of evil	123-29; 165-81 130-52 152-65
T	10 November	Solomon: self Solomon: self and consciousness; dualism and alternatives to dualism	321-82 383-419
T	17 November	Churchland et al.: <u>Consciousness</u> : video presentation Solomon: freedom determinism, indeterminism, soft determinism	435-67
T	24 November	twentieth-century metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics: interconnectivity: <u>MindWalk</u>	
T	1 November	Solomon: ethics: Aristotelian virtue; Hume and Rousseau; Kantian ethics	504-41
T	8 December	Solomon: utilitarianism; existentialism; Sartre's <u>Huis Clos</u>	541-65
T	15 December	course inventory; final examination	