

Introduction to Philosophy

PH 101 – 001

Fall Semester, 2012

Classroom: TANG / SOMR
T/Th 9:10am – 11:00am
Credits: 4.0

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I. Course Overview:

This course offers an introduction to the central topics of the discipline of philosophy. It is my aim that, by the end of the semester, you will each have become comfortable with reading and absorbing some basic philosophical texts. This means that you will learn *how* to read texts critically and formulate coherent arguments regarding their content. Additionally, I expect that you will concurrently learn how to think more philosophically – that is, that you will be able to formulate and answer some of your own philosophical questions. Accordingly, you will learn not only how to *think* philosophically, but also how to *write* philosophically – which is to analyze and assess the strengths and weaknesses of ideas and positions presented by philosophers, and offer expositions which present their positions along with reasons or arguments which demonstrate the coherency (or incoherency) of those positions.

It is my belief that a firm foundation in philosophy will serve you well throughout all of your endeavors. You will be a clearer and more critical thinker – one who can articulate thoughts and ideas, and defend them with clear and concise arguments. You will earn the ability to synthesize complex ideas, formulate your own opinion, and convey them to others persuasively. These skills will sharpen the other skills you attain throughout your Skidmore education and will be useful in whichever profession you choose. Or, at the very least, thinking philosophically will make you dramatically more interesting to talk to at the coffee shop.

II. Required Text:

Introduction to Philosophy: Classical and Contemporary Readings (5th Edition) 2009
by Perry, Bratman, and Fischer. ISBN 978-0195390360

There will also be additional readings handed out in class.

III. Course Requirements:

1. **Philosophy Journal: 10%**
2. **Participation, which includes attendance: 10%**
3. **Papers: 3 @ 20% each: 60% of your total grade**
4. **Miscellaneous Pop-Quizzes and Homework Assignments: 20%**

More information on all of the above to follow.

IV. Draconian Class Policies:

1.) Homework Policy:

There will be (potentially several) weekly homework assignments. The homework will be primarily reading and rereading to prepare yourself for class discussion. You *must* read the material *prior* to class, or you will not be able to participate intelligently. This will affect your participation portion of your grade. (And, yes, I will know if you didn't do it.) There will often be short written responses required as well. These will serve as your opportunity to demonstrate to me that you are reading and understanding the material. Your reading will directly relate to the forthcoming paper assignments. *It is therefore crucial that you keep up with the assignments.* Each homework assignment will be graded 10, 5, or 0. A 10 will be earned for assignments which display competency in the material under review and demonstrate strong effort on your part. A 5 will be earned for assignments which are complete and by which it is evident that you have worked hard to do the work – even if the work is wrong. A 0 will be earned for missed assignments or those that are just utterly deficient and display no effort on your part. Late homework will not be accepted.

2.) Late Papers:

I do not accept late papers unless there is an *extreme* circumstance which is *verifiable* by me, **and** you have notified me and received my approval *prior to* the due date of the paper.

3.) Attendance Policy:

YOUR ATTENDANCE IS REQUIRED AT ALL CLASSES. An absence will only be excused via a note from the Student Health Services or the Dean of Studies. I reserve the right to lower your grade by 1/3 of a grade for each and every unexcused absence. (Example: If you earned an "A-," but missed 4 classes, you will receive a "C+.") Please do not arrive late to class. Your tardiness will distract me, distract other students, and is just plain rude. I reserve the right to count your tardiness as an unexcused absence.

4.) Electronic Gizmo Policy:

I have a **zero** tolerance policy pertaining to the use of electronic devices in class. If you are found using electronic devices during class, you will be asked to *leave* class for the day. Your absence will be noted and will count against your grade. I will apply this rule if a) your cell phone rings, b) you are found using a laptop, iPod, or cell phone, c) you are online for *any* reason, and/or d) you are texting during class. This list is not meant to be exhaustive.

5.) Academic Integrity:

Pursuant to the Skidmore College Honor Code, academic dishonesty of any kind, especially plagiarism – but also including cheating on exams or quizzes - will not be tolerated. Note: use of electronic devices during an exam will be considered cheating and treated as a breach of the Honor Code. Academic dishonesty will result in an immediate “F” in the course accompanied by a letter to the Dean, which screw up your chances of ever getting into grad school because it will remain in your Skidmore College Academic Record until you die.

6.) Persons with Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability and believe you will need specific accommodations, you must formally request this from Meg Hegener, the Coordinator for Students with Disabilities. For more information, please call (518) 580-8150, stop by the Office of Student Academic Services on the 4th Floor of Palamountain (note: this office will move back to Starbuck Center later this semester), or visit the following link:

http://cms.skidmore.edu/academic_service

It is the student’s responsibility to discuss with me any accommodations that require my participation (e.g. to deliver an exam in another location, offer extended exam time, and so on). To receive full use of your testing accommodations, you must speak to me *well* in advance (preferably at the very beginning of the semester). You will also need to provide documentation that verifies the existence of a disability and supports your request for specific accommodations.

Please know that I will make every effort to accommodate your request and assist you in whatever way I can to help you succeed.