

**Dr. Laurence Carlin**

**Philosophy 109: Introduction to Philosophy**

**Fall 2009**

**Office Location:** Polk 62 (basement of library)

**Office Hours:** MWF 4-5pm, and by appointment

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**Course Web Site:** [http://www.uwosh.edu/faculty\\_staff/carlin/introhome.html](http://www.uwosh.edu/faculty_staff/carlin/introhome.html)

Course Text: *Exploring Philosophy: An Introductory Anthology*, Steven M. Cahn, ed. **THIRD EDITION** (Oxford UP, 2009) (EP)

This course is designed to introduce students to a number of philosophical issues that have fascinated humankind for centuries. We will ask such questions as: Is it reasonable to believe in the existence of God? Do human beings have freedom of the will, or are all their actions determined? What makes certain actions right (moral) and others wrong (immoral)? Is the death penalty morally acceptable? We will critically examine answers that have been offered to these, and other questions. Since emphasis is placed on a *critical* examination of these issues, this course is also designed to enhance reading, writing, and reasoning skills. We will take a look at what makes an argument a good/bad one, and apply what we learn to a host of arguments concerning the most intriguing intellectual issues. Careful attention to these issues proves highly rewarding, and this material could very well be the most exciting material you have ever studied!

Course Schedule (Subject to Change)

**Introduction**

Reading: Plato, "Euthyphro," on *E-reserve*

1. **Logic**

Reading: Logic Handout

Wesley Salmon, "The Scope of Logic," EP 43-50

2. **Philosophical Theology**

Reading: Saint Anselm, "Proslogion," EP 265-267

Ernest Nagel, "Does God Exist?," EP 223-230

Antony Flew and Basil Mitchell, "Theology and Falsification," EP 242-245

Richard Swinburne, "Why God Allows Evil," EP 231-241

David Hume, "An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding," EP 270-272

Monroe and Elizabeth Beardsley, "Do Miracles Occur?" EP 245-249

3. **Epistemology**

Reading: René Descartes, "Meditations on First Philosophy," EP 130-134

Plato, "Meno," (selection) EP 126-129

A.J. Ayer, "What is Knowledge?," EP 93-95

Edmund Gettier, "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?," EP 96

4. **Philosophy of Mind**

Reading: René Descartes, “Meditations on First Philosophy,” EP 169-175  
 Richard Taylor, “The Mind as a Function of the Body,” EP 151-158  
 Alan Turing, “Computing Machinery and Intelligence,” EP 162-166  
 John Searle, “Do Computers Think?,” EP 166-168

5. **Freedom and Determinism**

Reading: Thomas Nagel, “Free Will,” EP 179-  
 Steven Cahn, “Free Will or Determinism?,” EP 199-209  
 Harry Frankfurt, “Alternative Possibilities & Moral Responsibility,” EP 210-11

6. **Ethics**

Reading: James Rachels, “The Challenge of Cultural Relativism,” EP 287-297  
 John Stuart Mill, “Utilitarianism,” EP 332-337  
 Immanuel Kant, “Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals,” EP 327-332  
 Steven M. Cahn, “A Supreme Moral Principle?” EP 307-312  
 James Rachels, “Active and Passive Euthanasia,” EP 362-367

7. **Social and Political Philosophy**

Reading: Plato, “Crito,” EP 450-463  
 John Stuart Mill, “On Liberty,” EP 463-465  
 Michael Walzer, “Political Action: The Problem of Dirty Hands,” EP 403-407  
 Affirmative Action and/or Capital Punishment Readings (To be announced)

Grading

3 Tests	20% each (=60%)
Paper	25%
Quizzes	10%
Class Participation	5%

Papers

There will be a major paper assignment. For most of you, this will be your first time writing a philosophical paper. Thus, you are *strongly* encouraged to get an early start. You will receive the paper topic long before the paper is due in order to give you the opportunity to work through rough drafts. Again, I *strongly* encourage you to get started early on your paper.

Unannounced Quizzes

There will be several unannounced quizzes throughout the semester. These are basically designed to test your knowledge of the reading (and, of course, they provide further incentive to *do* the reading). The quizzes will be in a variety of different formats (short answer, multiple choice, etc.). Provided that you stay on top of the reading throughout the semester, you should have no problem with the quizzes. **Students will be permitted to make up a quiz only in the most extreme circumstances.** Except in the most extreme circumstances, if you miss a quiz,

you are assigned a grade of zero. Note that your average quiz grade constitutes 10% of your course grade. This percentage can make the difference between (for example) a grade of B and a grade of C. Thus, you are strongly advised to take advantage of this portion of the course grade by staying on top of the required reading.

### Attendance/Participation

We will be covering a lot of material in any one session. Therefore, attendance is *required*. If you know in advance that you will have to miss a class, please let me know about it. Note that class participation *does* constitute part of your course grade. Note further that it is class *participation* — not mere class attendance — that constitutes part of your course grade. *Rest assured that more than four absences will have an adverse affect on your grade.* Likewise, consistent class participation will undoubtedly increase your course grade by at least a half of a letter grade.

THIS IS A DISCUSSION CLASS! The course will involve lecturing by the instructor, *as well as lively critical discussion in class*. Students are expected to come to class having read *and thought about* the assigned material. You are strongly encouraged to actively participate in class discussions. I am aware that some people are a bit shy when it comes to speaking in class. If you are one of these people, please feel free to ask me questions over e-mail, during office hours, after class, etc. But an integral part of learning philosophy is the *active* exchange of ideas. I guarantee that *active* engagement with the material, and careful attention to the readings, will maximize your enjoyment of this course.

### A Note on the Readings

You cannot read philosophy in the way that you might be used to reading a novel. Reading a philosophical text takes time and patience, and you must be willing to put in the effort. Our reading load for each class period is rather light for this very reason. The authors of the readings are not trying to be obscure. Rather, they are trying to be precise when dealing with matters that are deep and difficult. Reading philosophy is a skill that develops over time, and we will work on developing that skill in this course. I guarantee that for those willing to put in the effort, the rewards will be great.

### The Value of Philosophy in Shaping a Liberal Arts Education, or ... Why Should I Study Philosophy?

Nearly every person who enrolls in this class does so to satisfy a general education requirement. Indeed, this course is designed to contribute to your liberal arts education. The value of such an education could *not* be exaggerated, for it exposes one to a wide range of perspectives on, and ideas about humans and the world in which they live. Moreover, such an education fosters *critical* thinking, clear and effective communication, and the importance of understanding views that conflict with one's own.

The study of philosophy is sometimes said to be “impractical,” or “irrelevant.” But given that it stands at the heart of the liberal arts education described above, such accusations are clearly

false. In this course, we will spend most of our time evaluating our beliefs and desires. We will critically examine opposing beliefs about religion, morality, politics, society, science, and others—a project at the heart of the liberal arts. Such beliefs are the very things you use to confront your experiences. They are what motivate you, and frame your outlook on life's most important matters. Indeed, they are the very things that make *you* the person you are. What could be more practical and relevant than an evaluation of those beliefs?