

Philosophy 109: Introduction to Philosophy (Sections 001C & 002C)
Fall 2012 - Syllabus

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Class times/Location: Section 001C: MWF 11:30; Section 002C: MWF 12:40; Clow 227

Office hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays 4:45-5:45; Wednesdays 2:00-3:00.

Office Location: Clow Faculty Offices 416; **Phone:** 424-7313.

Text: "The Experience of Philosophy" (6th edition), by D. Kolak and R. Martin.

Class content- This class focuses on questions that have puzzled human beings for thousands of years. What principles should guide us when we try to decide what to believe? Can *anything* be known with absolute certainty? If so, what? If not, or if very little can be known with certainty, should this disturb us? Can *logic* help us answer such questions? For instance, can we use logic to decide whether to believe that God exists? Or is logic useless in matters like this? You might think: "Whether I'm logical or not, I'm still free to choose to believe whatever I like!" But what, exactly, do we mean by 'free to choose'? And once we decide what we mean by it, should we believe that we really *are* free in this way? We will discuss these and other intriguing questions from the perspectives of some of the most notable philosophers in history, including Socrates, Anselm, Thomas Aquinas, Blaise Pascal, René Descartes, David Hume, William James, and Jean-Paul Sartre. In the process, we will illustrate the main methods of philosophical analysis and critical reasoning.

This class is meant to contribute to your education in the "liberal arts": a sort of education that gives you a broad background in the events and ideas that have shaped our contemporary lives (for better or worse). It increases your awareness of the complexity of human life and thought – quite literally, it "expands your mind" and your ability to learn. For this reason, while a liberal arts education does not teach you how to do a *particular* sort of job, it develops skills that are important in *any* job. These include the ability to understand difficult readings on unfamiliar subjects, to express your thoughts clearly and persuasively, and to reason critically, creatively, and independently.

Exams- There will be three in-class exams, each worth 25% of your final grade. These will be given throughout the semester at four to five week intervals. **To make up a missed exam, you must have written documentation of a good excuse from a doctor or school official. Make-ups cannot be given after the exam has been discussed in class.**

Quizzes- There will be five or six open-book/open-notes quizzes, worth a total of 25% of your final grade. These will be taken on D2L, and then discussed in class. The lowest quiz score will be discarded and the remaining scores summed up before a letter grade for all quizzes is computed. **Make-up quizzes will not be allowed after each quiz has been discussed in class.**

Alternative Grading Basis- If you wish, you may "opt in" to an alternative to the grading basis outlined above. Instead of the exams and the totality of quizzes each counting for 25% of your grade, each will count for 20%, and the final 20% will be based on a short essay, the topic of which I will post on D2L and discuss in class a couple of weeks before the end of the semester.

Grading Curves- Letter grades for exams and the totality of your quiz scores will be based on the following scale:

% Correct	Letter Grade	Grade points
94-100	A	4.00
90-93	A-	3.67
87-89	B+	3.33
83-86	B	3.00
80-82	B-	2.67
77-79	C+	2.33
73-76	C	2.00
70-72	C-	1.67
67-69	D+	1.33
63-66	D	1.00
60-62	D-	0.67
< 60	F	0

This scale might be “curved” downward a bit by lessening the percentages in the left column in order to better reflect the difficulty of a given exam. However the scale will never be curved upward to limit the number of high grades. In principle, everyone can get an “A” in this class.

Discussing the correctness or incorrectness of an answer- The answers to all of the questions asked in quizzes and exams will be discussed in class. At that time, you will have an opportunity to defend your answer choices. If you selected a wrong answer *for a good reason* (for example, because of ambiguity or vagueness in the question, answer choice, reading or lecture), I will usually give credit for that answer in addition to the one designated as correct. However, be aware that the fact that a question might be a bit "tricky" – that is, require a few steps of reasoning to answer correctly – is not an adequate reason for having given a wrong answer.

PowerPoint Slide Sets- The PowerPoint slide sets used in lectures are available on the D2L website. The slide sets are not complete outlines of the lectures, and there are gaps intentionally left in them that will be filled in during lecture. To be clear: *reading the slide sets is not an adequate substitute for attending the lectures and taking notes*. I *strongly* recommend that you **print out these slide sets, bring them to class to fill in the gaps and take further notes, and use them as study aids for the quizzes and exams.**

Text- The textbook, "The Experience of Philosophy" (6th edition), by D. Kolak and R. Martin, is not a complete, self-contained course. Rather, it is a collection of readings that we will be discussing in class. Do not be overly concerned if you find them difficult to understand the first time you read them. The lectures should clarify their main points. However, you will understand the lectures much better if you do the readings *first*. Then, if you review the readings shortly before an exam, you should find them much easier to understand.

Asking questions- While this is primarily a class in which I'll be lecturing and you'll (hopefully) be taking notes, **you are *strongly encouraged* to ask questions during and after class**. You may even receive **extra credit** for asking thoughtful questions, or for making cogent comments.

The old platitude is true: *there are no stupid questions!* If you are puzzled, probably many others in the class are as well, and your asking a question during lecture is performing a public service.

Office hours- Some of you might feel shy about asking a question during class, or a question might occur to you after class. If so, come see me during office hours (printed above). A key to success in college (and elsewhere) is to seek help when you need it, and I'm here to help!

On Computer and Cell Phone Use In Class- Recently, as more and more students are bringing computers and web-enabled phones to class, it has become increasingly clear to faculty members that too many students are surfing the web and checking their social networking sites in class, rather than attending to lectures or discussions. You might believe that multi-tasking does not effect your ability to learn, but recent studies have strongly suggested otherwise (see, for instance, www.nea.org/home/30584.htm). Finally, you should be aware that most of the time it is *obvious* when a student is web-surfing in class, and it is very distracting to both your professor and other students sitting nearby. So if I notice that your computer or phone is distracting you and/or others in class, I will ask you to either shut it down or leave the classroom.

<u>Unit 1 – Readings</u>	<u>Handouts (on D2L)</u>
Introduction to Philosophy	Slide Set 1a
Bertrand Russell, “The Value of Philosophy”	Slide Set 1b
Plato, “The Trial of Socrates”	Slide Sets 2 & 3
Quiz 1	
René Descartes, “Meditations” 1 & 2.	Slide Set 4
Quiz 2	
W. K. Clifford, “The Ethics of Belief”	Slide Set 5
Exam 1	Exam 1 Study Guide
<u>Unit 2 – Readings</u>	<u>Handouts (on D2L)</u>
Thomas Aquinas, “The Five Ways & the Doctrine of Analogy”	Slide Set 6
Anselm’s “The Ontological Argument”	Slide Set 7
Quiz 3	
Blaise Pascal’s “The Wager”	Slide Set 8
William James’ “The Will To Believe”	Slide Set 9
Quiz 4	
David Hume, “God and Evil”	Slide Set 10
Exam 2	Exam 2 Study Guide
<u>Unit 3 – Readings</u>	<u>Handouts (on D2L)</u>
Baron Holbach, “The Illusion of Free Will”	Slide Set 11
David Hume, “Liberty and Necessity”	Slide Set 12
Quiz 5	
William James, “The Dilemma of Determinism”	Slide Set 13
Richard Taylor, “Freedom and Determinism”	Slide Set 14
Quiz 6	
Jean-Paul Sartre, “Existentialism and Human Freedom”	Slide Set 15
Exam 3	Exam 3 Study Guide