



University of New Haven

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

Program of Philosophy

PHIL 1101, Section 01
Introduction to Philosophy
Fall 2018
M/W from 10:50 to 12:05
103 Charger Plaza
3 Credit Hours

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Office Hours: Tuesdays from 10:00 to 3:00

Undergraduate Course Syllabus

Course Description:

The nature of reality and how it may be known, according to the great thinkers of the Occident and the Orient.

Extended Course Description:

The father of Western philosophy, Socrates once said that “the unexamined life is not worth living.” Many years later, the British philosopher Bertrand Russell commented that “many people would rather die than think – in fact, they do!”

At its heart, philosophy is about examining life and thinking critically about ourselves and the world we live in. When we do this, according to many philosophers, we use the one quality that makes us distinct as human beings – namely, *reason*. Of course, most philosophical questions cannot be answered with absolute certainty, and this could become an annoying theme for you as we proceed through the readings. Do not get too frustrated. Just remember that philosophy is best understood as a *journey*, not as a *destination*. Consider the following passage – again, from Bertrand Russell:

“Philosophy is to be studied, not for the sake of any definite answers to its questions, since no definite answers can, as a rule, be known to be true, but rather for the sake of the questions themselves; because these questions enlarge our conception of what is possible, enrich our intellectual imagination and *diminish the dogmatic assurance which closes the mind against speculation*; but above all because, through the greatness of the universe which philosophy contemplates, the mind also is rendered great, and becomes capable of that union with the universe which constitutes its highest good.”

In the first part of this course, we will look at four of Plato's dialogues: *Euthyphro*, *Apology*, *Crito*, and *Phaedo*. These dialogues depict the last days of Socrates, who was sentenced to death for, among other things, corrupting the youth of Athens, and they will illustrate not only what philosophy is, but also how philosophy is done. Holiness, justice, duty, immortality – we will explore these topics and more.

In the second part of this course, we will read René Descartes' *Meditations on First Philosophy*, one of the founding texts of modern philosophy. You have probably heard the famous sentence, “I think, therefore I am.” This is from Descartes, and we will work to understand exactly what it

means. Be prepared to doubt everything – from your body to your memory, from God to the external world.

In the third part of this course, we will consider one of the most important texts in the history of ethical theory: Immanuel Kant's *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*. This challenging text is about nothing less than the Moral Law and our absolute duty to it. For Kant, what is morally right is morally right, regardless of circumstances, from which it follows that there are no exceptions to it. Ask yourself: Is it ever okay to lie?

In the fourth part of this course, we will consider another important text on ethical theory: John Stuart Mill's *Utilitarianism*. Unlike Kant, who disregards consequences, Mill bases his approach to ethical theory entirely on consequences. You have probably heard people say that “the ends justify the means.” Well, that is a utilitarian argument, and it is an incredibly influential way to make decisions, both personal and political.

In the fifth part of this course, we will raise the complex question of human inequality, using Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *A Discourse on Inequality* as our guide. Is inequality among human beings natural? Or is it unnatural – a deviation from an original human existence? Rousseau takes on these questions, and we will critically discuss his fascinating response to them, a response that continues to inspire social and political analysis today.

In the sixth part of this course, we will look at Charles W. Mills' *The Racial Contract*, in which institutionalized racism – or white supremacy – is explored as an especially oppressive form of unnatural human inequality. In this text, which is not even fifteen years old, political philosophy is criticized for its “normative whiteness.” We will work to understand this harsh criticism, and also to evaluate it.

In the seventh part of this course, we will explore the existentialist philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre, which he summarizes in *Existentialism Is a Humanism*. This text is about the human being as a fundamentally free being, a being for whom “existence precedes essence,” and in it we will discuss several concepts: from anguish to abandonment, from despair to bad faith. Time permitting, we will also watch the film *It's Such a Beautiful Day* by Don Hertzfeldt.

In the eighth and final part of this course, we will read *We Should All Be Feminists* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, a short text that makes a compelling case for feminism today. What is feminism, and what does it mean to be a feminist? Also, what are the different types of feminism? What, for example, are the “waves” of feminism? These are just some of the questions that we will consider.

Required Texts:

- *The Last Days of Socrates* by Plato; ISBN: 0140449280
- *Meditations on First Philosophy* by René Descartes; ISBN: 0192806963
- *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals* by Immanuel Kant; ISBN: 0061766313
- *Utilitarianism* by John Stuart Mill; ISBN: 0061766313
- *A Discourse on Inequality* by Jean-Jacques Rousseau; ISBN: 0140444394
- *The Racial Contract* by Charles W. Mills; ISBN: 0801484634
- *Existentialism Is a Humanism* by Jean-Paul Sartre; ISBN: 0300115466
- *We Should All Be Feminists* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, ISBN: 110191176X

Course Objectives:

- Students will learn (and hopefully appreciate) what it means to do philosophy.
- Students will discover new (and possibly profound) concepts, ideas, and theories.
- Students will become better arguers (in the sense making and evaluating arguments).

Student Learning Outcomes:

- Students will be able to explain course readings in pop quizzes and written papers.
- Students will be able to evaluate course readings in class discussion and written papers.
- Students will be able to develop their own arguments in class discussion and written papers.

Course Requirements:

We will be doing lots of reading in this course, and it is your responsibility to read the assigned pages *before class begins*. To this end, I will be giving you several pop quizzes throughout the semester, on which you may use your notes but not the texts themselves. These quizzes will usually be on new material, but expect questions on older material, too. Also, they cannot be made up, so do not make lateness a habit.

In addition to these pop quizzes, I will be assigning two papers, which will be six-to-eight pages in length. You will have several choices with respect to the questions, so start thinking about the philosophical issues that interest you the most. You will also be writing a review essay on a book of popular philosophy, which will be ten pages in length.

And finally, there will be a comprehensive final exam.

Grading:

- Attendance – 10%
- Pop Quizzes – 20%
- First Paper – 15%
- Second Paper – 15%
- Review Essay – 20%
- Final Exam – 20%

Undergraduate Grading System:

<http://www.newhaven.edu/UGGradingSystem>

Caveats:

As an instructor, I am pretty easy-going. I do, however, insist upon a respectful atmosphere in the classroom. What does this mean? It means: no phone calls, no texting or Facebooking, no sleeping, and no ridiculously long bathroom breaks. If your phone does go off during class, you have a choice: You can either sing a song for the class, or I can assign an additional paper that everybody must do. This is not a joke.

Also, “My flash drive broke” has become the new “My dog ate my homework,” and I will no longer accept it as an excuse for late or incomplete work. Please use www.dropbox.com (or something similar) to ensure the security of your written work.

2018-2019 Academic Calendar:

<http://www.newhaven.edu/AcademicCalendar>

Course Outline:

- August 27 – Course Introduction

PLATO

- August 30 – *Euthyphro*, 2a-10a
- September 3 – NO CLASS
- September 5 – *Euthyphro*, 10b-16a
- September 10 – *Apology*, 17a-34b
- September 12 – *Apology*, 34c-42a
- September 17 – *Crito*, 43a-54e
- September 19 – *Phaedo*, 57a-91c
- September 24 – *Phaedo*, 91d-118a

DESCARTES

- September 26 – *Meditations on First Philosophy*, pp. 13-17
- October 1 – *Meditations on First Philosophy*, pp. 17-24
- October 3 – *Meditations on First Philosophy*, pp. 25-37

KANT

- October 8 – *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*, pp. 55-60
- October 10 – *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*, pp. 61-73
- October 15 – *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*, pp. 74-113

MILL

- October 17 – *Utilitarianism*, pp. 1-22
- October 22 – NO CLASS
- October 24 – *Utilitarianism*, pp. 23-55

ROUSSEAU

- October 29 – *A Discourse on Inequality*, pp. 67-107
- October 31 – *A Discourse on Inequality*, pp. 109-123
- November 5 – *A Discourse on Inequality*, pp. 123-137

MILLS

- November 7 – *The Racial Contract*, pp. 1-40
- November 12 – *The Racial Contract*, pp. 41-89
- November 14 – *The Racial Contract*, pp. 91-133
- November 19 – Video: “Michelle Alexander: The 2013 George E. Kent Lecture”
- November 21 – NO CLASS

SARTRE

- November 26 – *Existentialism Is a Humanism*, pp. 17-38
- November 30 – *Existentialism Is a Humanism*, pp. 38-54
- December 3 – Film: *It's Such a Beautiful Day*

ADICHIE

- December 5 – *We Should All Be Feminists*, pp. 3-48
- December 10 – Discussion and Course Conclusion

- December 17 – FINAL EXAM (8:00-10:00)

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Academic Policies:

<http://www.newhaven.edu/UGAcademicRegulations>

Adding and Dropping Classes:

<http://www.newhaven.edu/studenthandbook>

The final day to drop a course without it appearing on your transcript is Tuesday, September 4th. During the second week of classes, further adjustment requires the approval of the chair of the department offering the course.

Attendance Regulations:

<http://www.newhaven.edu/studenthandbook>

All students are expected to attend regularly and promptly all their classes, appointments, and exercises. While the university recognizes that some absences may occasionally be necessary, these should be held to a minimum. A maximum of two weeks of absences per semester (or its equivalent for shorter terms) will be permitted for illness and emergencies. The instructor has the right to dismiss from class any student who has been absent more than the maximum allowed. After the last date to drop as published in the academic calendar, a student will receive a failure (F), if failing at that point, or a withdrawal (W), if passing at the time of dismissal.

Withdrawal Deadline:

<http://www.newhaven.edu/studenthandbook>

Students wishing to withdraw must submit a request for an official course withdrawal in writing using the Course Withdrawal Form. The final date to request a withdrawal for this semester is Tuesday, October 30th. This request must be submitted to the Registrar's Office and signed by the International Office if you are an international student. The grade of W will be recorded, but the course will not affect the GPA.

Course Withdrawal Form: <http://www.newhaven.edu/907680.pdf>

Incomplete:

A grade of Incomplete (INC) is given only in special circumstances and indicates that the student has been given permission by the instructor to complete required course work (with the same instructor) after the end of the term. In the absence of the instructor a student should contact the Department Chair.

Academic Integrity Policy:

<http://www.newhaven.edu/studenthandbook>

“Academic integrity is a core university value which insures respect for the academic reputation of the University, its students, faculty and staff, and the degrees it confers.” It is the responsibility of each student to be familiar with the UNH policy on Academic Integrity. Please ask about my expectations regarding permissible or encouraged forms of student collaboration if they are unclear. Students are required to adhere to the Academic Integrity Policies found in the Student Handbook.

Commitment to Positive Learning Environment:

The University adheres to the philosophy that all community members should enjoy an environment free of any form of harassment, sexual misconduct, discrimination, or intimate partner violence. If you have been the victim of sexual misconduct we encourage you to report this. If you report this to a faculty/staff member, they must notify our college's Title IX coordinator about the basic facts of the incident (you may choose to request confidentiality from the University). If you encounter sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, sexual assault, or discrimination based on race, color, religion, age, national origin, ancestry, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability please contact the Title IX Coordinator, Caroline Koziatek, at 203-932-7479 or ckoziatek@newhaven.edu.

Title IX at the University of New Haven: <http://www.newhaven.edu/about/title-IX/>

Coursework Expectations:

This course will require significant in-class and out-of-class commitment from each student. The University estimates that a student should expect to spend two hours outside of class for each hour she or he is in a class. For example, a three credit course averages six hours of additional work *outside* of class.

Bottom line: *If you cannot fully commit yourself to this course, then you should not take it.*

University Support Services:

The University recognizes that students can often use some help outside of class and offers academic assistance through several offices.

The Academic Success Center provides a wide range of academic support to day and evening undergraduate students beyond their first year of college.

Academic Success Center: <http://www.newhaven.edu/AcademicSuccess>

The Center for Learning Resources (CLR), located in the Peterson Library, provides academic content support to the students of the University of New Haven using metacognitive strategies that help students become aware of and learn to apply optimal learning processes in the pursuit of creating independent learners CLR tutors focus sessions on discussions of concepts and processes and typically use external examples to help students grasp and apply the material.

Center for Learning Resources: <http://www.newhaven.edu/CLR>

Writer to Writer is a peer-tutoring program inspired by the belief that all writers struggle and can benefit from talking through their ideas. Tutors are undergraduate students trained to work with you at any stage in the writing process.

Writer to Writer: <http://www.newhaven.edu/writertowriter/>

Accessibility Resources Center:

<http://www.newhaven.edu/AccessibilityResources>

Students with disabilities are encouraged to share, in confidence, information about needed specific course accommodations. The Accessibility Resources Center, located in Sheffield Hall, is responsible for and committed to providing services and support that serve to promote educational equity and ensure that students are able to participate in the opportunities available at the University of New Haven. Accommodations cannot be made without written documentation from the Accessibility Resources Center.

Religious Observance Policy for Students:

<http://www.newhaven.edu/studenthandbook>

The University of New Haven respects the right of its students to observe religious holidays that may necessitate their absence from class or from other required university-sponsored activities. Students who wish to observe such holidays should not be penalized for their absence, although in academic courses they are responsible for making up missed work.