Philosophy 160: Philosophy of Human Nature
Section 7, MWF, 9:00-9:50, UNH 3320
Section 8, MWF, 10:00-10:50, UNH 3320
Section 15, MWF, 12:00-12:50, UNH 4802

The instructor reserves the right to alter this syllabus to best suit the educational needs and aims of the course.

Instructor: Dr. Shannon Nason
Office: UNH 3614
Email: snason@lmu.edu
Phone: 424-568-8372
Office Hours: MWF: 1:00-3:30, or by appointment.

Course Description

Philosophy is the activity of achieving wisdom about a number of difficult things, including the nature of reality, human nature, and what we can know. This course is an introduction to the essentially human activity of philosophical questioning, and it will primarily be concerned with understanding questions that philosophers throughout history have asked (and why these questions are worth asking) and what theories they have developed as answers to their questions. To do this, we will spend a good amount of time closely reading four philosophers who are exemplary representatives of important movements in the history of philosophy.

Student Learning Outcomes

The aim of this course is for students to become

a. Critical Readers
b. Clear Philosophical Writers
c. Thoughtful and Informed Participants in Discussion
d. Acquainted with Philosophical Problems and their Connection to Issues of Utmost Human Concern
e. Personally Inspired and Enriched by Philosophical Inquiry

Texts You Need to Buy (available at LMU Bookstore) Students MUST use these editions


Handouts (Tentative)

David Hume, An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding (selections)
Søren Kierkegaard, “Subjective Truth, Inwardness; Truth is Subjectivity”
William Lawhead, “Argument and Evidence: How Do I Decide What to Believe?”
-----, “Reasoning Effectively: What to Do and What Not to Do”

Course Requirements

Three Short Papers (2 pages each) 15%
Final Paper (6-7 pages) 20%
Quizzes 10%
Midterm Exam 20%
Final Exam 25%
Attendance/Preparation/Participation 10%

(a) Note on Short Papers: The short papers will be on topics of concern to three of the four philosophers we’ll be reading in this class. It is up to you to decide when to write and turn in your paper, but each paper should be turned in during (and no later than) each three to four week interval (see course calendar). These papers must be well written, tightly argued, and, when offering personal beliefs, supported by objective reasoning. Subjective claims without objective, rational support will not be tolerated. Stay tuned for more instructions.

(c) Note on Final Paper: The final paper will be on some argument or claim from Plato, Descartes, Hume, or Kierkegaard. Stay tuned for information

(d) Note on Quizzes: Nearly every other Monday I will give you a quiz, which will cover information from the previous week. Quizzes will be comprised of no more than five questions and contain multiple choice, true/false, and short answer questions. I will not offer make-up quizzes, unless there is a legitimate reason for doing so.

(e) Note on Exams: The exams will consist of short answer and short essay questions.

(f) Attendance/Preparation/Participation: Coming to class prepared to discuss the readings for the day, including a willingness to offer insightful comments, to raise questions, and to orally provide summaries of arguments, is crucial for earning participation points. In addition, the prepared student will come to class with the assigned reading. You are responsible for obtaining, keeping, and bringing to class the texts we are reading on any given day. I don’t give points for good attendance, but I do take away points for poor attendance. If you miss 4 classes, I will deduct 10% from your final grade. I will deduct 5% from your final grade for each additional absence. I will not keep you up-to-date on how many classes you’ve missed. It is your responsibility to contact me if you are concerned about your attendance. Also, don’t text or surf the Internet in class. Turn off/silence your cell phones when you enter class. Lastly, 50 minutes isn’t a long time. I can think of just one or two good reasons why a student must leave in the middle of class. Unless you are very sick, do not interrupt lecture and discussion by getting up and leaving. If you do, then take your stuff with you, because it would be a shame if you doubly interrupted class by coming back in.

Academic Integrity

Penalties for academic dishonesty and plagiarism are severe. Plagiarized papers will receive a zero and, depending on the severity, may lead to a failing grade for the course as well as disciplinary action from the Dean. Students are responsible for reading and understanding the University policy on academic dishonesty set forth in Loyola Marymount University’s “Honor Code and Process” on pages 24-27 of Community Standards (2008-2009) and at http://www.lmu.edu/Page13245.aspx. If you desire more information about plagiarism and how to avoid it, I recommend looking at Purdue University’s Online Writing Lab on the matter here:

http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/01/

Course Calendar

Week One (Aug. 27/29/31) Introductions, Logical Reasoning
Read Lawhead Handouts

Week Two (Sept. 3/5/7) Logical Reasoning
Read Lawhead Handouts

Sept. 3: No Class—Labor Day

Week Three (Sept. 10/12/14) Socrates, Plato, and the Meaning of Life
Read Plato, Apology (all)
Read Plato, Phaedo, 57a-69e

Week Four (Sept. 17/19/21) Plato on the Nature of Reality and Knowledge
Read Plato, *Phaedo*, 70a-84b
*Week Five* (Sept. 24/26/28) Plato on the Nature of Reality and Knowledge
  Read Plato, *Phaedo*, 84c-118a

**Sept. 28: Short Paper on Plato Due**
*Week Six* (Oct. 1/3/5) Plato, cont./Descartes, Radical Doubt, Skepticism
  Read Descartes, pp. 1-10; Meditation I
*Week Seven* (Oct. 8/10/12) Descartes, Substance Dualism, and the Existence of God
  Read Descartes, Meditations II and III

**Oct. 12: No Class—Autumn Day**
*Week Eight* (Oct. 15/17/19) Descartes, the Essence of the Material World, and the Existence of God
  Read Descartes, Meditation V

**Oct. 19: Short Paper on Descartes Due**
*Week Nine* (Oct. 22/24/26) Descartes Wrap-up/Intro to Hume
  Read Hume Handout
  Review for Exam

**Oct. 26: Midterm Exam**
*Week Ten* (Oct. 29/31/Nov. 2) Hume, Skepticism, and Design
  Read Hume, *Dialogues*, pp. 1-22
*Week Eleven* (Nov. 5/7/9) Hume and the Critique of the Argument from Analogy for God’s Existence
  Read Hume, *Dialogues*, pp. 34-43
*Week Twelve* (Nov. 12/14/16) Hume and The Problem of Evil
  Read Hume, *Dialogues*, pp. 58-76

**Nov. 16: Short Paper on Hume Due**
*Week Thirteen* (Nov. 19/21/23) Catch-up

**Nov. 21-23: No Classes—Thanksgiving Break**
*Week Fourteen* (Nov. 26/28/30) Overcoming Hume’s Fork: Truth and Subjectivity
  Read Kierkegaard Handout

**Nov. 30: Final Papers Due**
*Week Fifteen* (Dec. 3/5/7) Kierkegaard, cont.
  Read Kierkegaard Handout
  Review for Final Exam

**Week Sixteen** (Dec. 10-14)
  Finals Week
  Section 7: W, 8:00am
  Section 8: F, 8:00am (Do NOT make travel arrangements that conflict with this exam time)
  Section 15: W, 11:00am