

NEW YORK CITY COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY
The City University of New York School of Arts & Sciences
Department of Social Science Course Outline

Course code: PHIL 2101

Course title: Introduction to Philosophy

Class hours/credits: 3 class hours, 3 credits

Prerequisite: ENG 1101 or ENG 1101CO or ENG 1101ML

Pathways: Individual and Society

Catalog Description: Philosophy as the rational analysis and justification of basic cultural beliefs about religion, politics, morality, knowledge, art, technology, etc. Students are encouraged to formulate and defend their views.

Course Description:

An introduction to metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, aesthetics, philosophy of religion, philosophy of mind, etc. as well as to the critical explanatory function of philosophy. Philosophy is the oldest, most basic and most general discipline. Introduction to Philosophy covers the central topics in philosophy in an introductory way and also is an introduction to the history of philosophy. By examining what historical philosophers said about the central issues of philosophy, the course will cover both these issues and their history in philosophy. Students will learn to read philosophy critically, as well as discovering how different philosophers have contributed to the great conversation of humankind. The impact of philosophy on our lives will be discussed in the hope that the students will be able to articulate their own ideas.

RECOMMENDED/TYPICAL/REQUIRED TEXTBOOK (S) and/or MATERIALS*

Cahn, Steven M. Classics of Western Philosophy. 6th ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2002) Cottingham, John. Ed. Western Philosophy. 1st ed. (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers, 1996).

Gould, James A. (ed.), Classic Philosophical Question, 10th ed. (New York: MacMillan Pub. Co., 2000). Pojman, Louis P. Philosophy: The Pursuit of Wisdom. 4th ed. (Belmont, Ca.: Wadsworth Pub. Co. 2004)

**These are suggested texts; instructors may choose their own.*

COURSE INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES/ASSESSMENT METHODS

LEARNING OUTCOMES	ASSESSMENT METHODS*
1. Know philosophical schools and positions through history.	1. Quizzes, oral discussion, exams, papers.
2. Understand and apply core concepts.	2. Oral discussion, exams, papers.

3. Understand the main problems in some or all of the areas of metaphysics, ethics, logic, epistemology, and aesthetics.	3. Quizzes, oral discussion, exams, papers.
4. Evaluate ideas and arguments using logical thinking.	4. Oral discussion, exams, papers
5. Understand the similarities and differences of different philosophical positions.	5. Quizzes, oral discussion, exams, papers.

PATHWAYS INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIETY LEARNING GOALS

1. Identify and apply the fundamental concepts and methods of a discipline or interdisciplinary field exploring the relationship between the individual and society, including, but not limited to, anthropology, communications, cultural studies, history, journalism, philosophy, political science, psychology, public affairs, religion, and sociology.
2. Examine how an individual's place in society affects experiences, values, or choices.
3. Articulate and assess ethical views and their underlying premises.
4. Articulate ethical uses of data and other information resources to respond to problems and questions.

GENERAL EDUCATION LEARNING OUTCOMES/ASSESSMENT METHODS

LEARNING OUTCOMES	ASSESSMENT METHODS*
1. KNOWLEDGE: Develop knowledge from a range of disciplinary perspectives, and develop the ability to deepen and continue learning.	1. Quizzes, oral discussion, exams, papers.
2. SKILLS: Acquire and use the tools needed for communication, inquiry, analysis, and productive work.	2. Oral discussion, exams, papers
3. INTEGRATION: Work productively within and across disciplines.	3. Oral discussion, group work, and papers.
4. VALUES, ETHICS, AND RELATIONSHIPS: Understand and apply values, ethics, and diverse perspectives in personal, civic, and cultural/global domains.	4. Oral discussion, group work, and papers.

**may vary slightly per instructor to suit their own needs*

SCOPE OF ASSIGNMENTS and other course requirements A selection of the following assignments should be utilized:

1. Study questions
2. Short answer essays
3. Exam review preparation
4. Group projects
5. Quizzes

METHOD OF GRADING – elements and weight of factors determining the students’ grade

This is an example of grade breakdown*:

1. Assignments – 20%
2. Mid-term Exam – 25%
3. Final Exam – 30 %
4. Quizzes – 10%
5. Group project – 15%

**may vary slightly per instructor to suit their own needs*

ATTENDANCE POLICY

It is the conviction of the Department of Social Science that a student who is not in a class for any reason is not receiving the benefit of the education being provided. Missed class time includes not just absences but also latenesses, early departures, and time outside the classroom taken by students during class meeting periods. Missed time impacts any portion of the final grade overtly allocated to participation and/or any grades awarded for activities that relate to presence in class.

Instructors may including a reasonable “Participation” grade into their final grade calculations for this course.

STUDENT ACCESSIBILITY

City Tech is committed to supporting the educational goals of enrolled students with disabilities in the areas of enrollment, academic advisement, tutoring, assistive technologies, and testing accommodations. If you have or think you may have a disability, you may be eligible for reasonable accommodations or academic adjustments as provided under applicable federal, state, and/or city laws. You may also request services for temporary conditions or medical issues under certain circumstances. If you have questions about your eligibility and/or would like to seek accommodation services and/or academic adjustments, please email the [Student Accessibility Center](#).

COMMITMENT TO STUDENT DIVERSITY

The Department of Social Science complies with the college wide nondiscrimination policy and seek to foster a safe and inclusive learning environment that celebrates diversity in its many forms and enhances our students’ ability to be informed, global citizens. Through our example, we demonstrate an appreciation of the rich diversity of world cultures and the unique forms of expression that make us human.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY STATEMENT

Students and all others who work with information, ideas, texts, images, music, inventions, and other intellectual property owe their audience and sources accuracy and honesty in using, crediting, and citing sources. As a community of intellectual and professional workers, the College recognizes its responsibility for providing instruction in information literacy and academic in-

tegrity, offering models of good practice, and responding vigilantly and appropriately to infractions of academic integrity. Accordingly, academic dishonesty is prohibited in The City University of New York and at New York City College of Technology and is punishable by penalties, including failing grades, suspension, and expulsion. The complete text of the College policy on Academic Integrity may be found in the catalog.

SAMPLE SEQUENCE OF TOPICS AND TIME ALLOCATIONS*

UNIT ONE: SOCRATIC-PLATONIC INTRODUCTION

Week One

Meanings of “philosophy”: original meaning as love of wisdom: the Greek origins of Western philosophy; philosophy as the testing of the meaning, consistency, and the truth of basic ideas; as providing a picture of humanity’s relation to the totality of what is, or as dealing with questions beyond (or beyond for now) the means of science to resolve; philosophy as cultural criticism; philosophy contrasted with science and religion.

Reading: Introductory material in textbook.

Week Two

A. Logical method of philosophy. Logic as one method (but a very important one); concept of an argument: premises and conclusion; assumptions, implications coherence of our ideas; truth and validity as criteria for good reasoning. The tools of critical thinking: analysis, interpretation and evaluation.

B. Start Euthyphro: Definitions: the meaning of meaning; philosophy begins as critique of religion and morality; Greek myths and views on the nature of the gods and the response by Socrates; philosophy as cross-examination: elenchus; relation of right to might, the problem of different cultures.

Week Three

A. Finish Euthyphro: the four definitions of “piety:” reasoning by analogy; faith and fear; how philosophy works.

B. Apology: Defense of a philosophical life; “examined life” examined; how we acquire our basic moral, political, religious beliefs and what Socrates says we should do about it; critique of materialism; the soul and the afterlife: myth in Plato; doing evil unintentionally.

Week Four

A. Crito: why are we obligated to obey the law (if we are)?; origin of theme of civil disobedience; social contract; analogy of state to family; justice as a moral balance to utility.

B. EXAMINATION ONE; ALL exams require writing, rumination, reasoning.

UNIT TWO: EPISTEMOLOGY: An introduction to the nature, certainty, extent, types, and limits of our claims to knowledge. Differences among knowledge, belief, opinion. Inadequacy of certainty as a criterion of possession of knowledge. Skepticism. Why we should care about defining knowledge: bogus claims to knowledge by astrology, etc.

Week Five

Rationalism: either Plato or Descartes will be studied.

PLATO: Origin and meaning of “Forms”: intelligible and visible universes; problems with sense-perception as source of knowledge; why true belief is not knowledge; Cave allegory and divided line; knowledge as recollection. DESCARTES: mathematical physics as new science: need to justify it; method of systematic doubt; cogito; two (created) substances: mind and matter: how do they fit?; types of ideas.

Week Six

Empiricism: Locke and Hume: Origin of knowledge in sense-perception; blank tablet theory of the mind; refutation of innate ideas theory; ideas of sensation and reflection; degrees or types of knowledge. Science and empiricism.

Problems with empiricism: the justification of induction and the concepts of cause and effect. (N.B. Week Seven can be either a continuation of epistemology or the beginning of Ethics.)

Week Seven

A. Truth: Compare and contrast at least two analyses of what truth is: the relation of language to language and language to the “world”; truth as propositional and non-propositional; pragmatism and the idea of what “works;” warranted assertibility as a substitute for the idea of truth.

Readings: Russell and James are recommended but other are possible.

B. Other Minds: Skepticism about whether people can be known to also have minds (just as I take myself to have a mind); how do we know they do?; evaluating analogical reasoning; do philosophical problems arise from the “misuse” (in some special ways) of words?

Readings: Russell, Austin, Malcolm, or Wisdom. UNIT THREE: ETHICS

Week Eight

Introduction to problems of ethics: moral versus non-moral (not immoral) concepts; meaning of ethical terms such as good, right, duty, justice, conscience, etc.; search for principles to live by and with which to justify ideas of right action; justification of those principles; etc.

A. Ethical relativism and absolutism: what is at issue here and what is not (e.g., imposing one’s views on others); defining “relativity” thesis; cultural and ethical relativity; arguments for and

against ethical relativity; beliefs and principles/ranking values and the arguments about relativity of ethics.

Readings: Benedict and Stace are recommended.

B. Egoism and self-realization: what egoism says: psychological and ethical/ personal and impersonal/ is egoism self-refuting? How egoism would treat some common moral problems. Why be moral?

Self-realization as ideal of life: good as a function, and its application to people; the problem of different definitions of humanity. Virtue as a mean. Problem of self-realization and the social good.

Readings: Aristotle, Rachels, Plato, Nietzsche.

Week Nine

Bentham (or Mill) and Kant: Utility and formalism (the ethics of duty or deontology)

A. Utility: happiness as intrinsic good/positive and negative utility/ utility calculus/ Mill's quality of happiness. "Proof" of utility and the problem of utility in relation to justice.

B. Kant: why Kant rejects utilitarianism as an account of what morality is (or should be); good will and duty as the motive for (moral) action. Maxims and the categorical imperative: treating people as ends not means (only)/ reversibility. An attempt to improve on Kant by Ross.

Readings: Kant and Ross

Week Ten

A. Sartre (Or review): consciousness and (self-) consciousness/ freedom and responsibility: issue of bad faith and authenticity, the extent of our freedom.

B. EXAMINATION TWO

UNIT FOUR: POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Week Eleven

Should we have a New York government at all? How is the government (or under what conditions is the government) different from a band of robbers? Law, liberty, and justice. Ideas of anarchism. Rights of the people and of citizens.

A. Dewey on democracy: democracy (and liberalism) as political ideas in the narrow sense. Why dictatorship fails. Democracy in the work place and school. Equality of opportunity and democracy as shared experience shaping ideals. Criticisms of Dewey.

B. Socialism: capitalism and its critics: meaning of capital, capitalists, capitalism; free market, profit, proletariat; self-interest (greed?) as motivating power. Glories and damage of capitalism. Socialist ideal and its method: government ownership and rationally planned economy.

Readings: Marx and Engels

Week Twelve

- A. Communism: Marx and Engels on historical materialism; origin and struggle of class; division of labor; revolutionary action; surplus value and exploitation leads to alienation. The vision of the Communist society.
- B. Mill on limits to government power: coercion and non-paternalism; social pressures to conform; freedom of thought and action and the struggle of individualism; is our modern situation worse than Mill's?

UNIT FIVE: PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

Week Thirteen

Arguments for the existence of God and their evaluation. Defining God. Cosmological, or teleological or ontological arguments will be discussed. Hume's criticism of the teleological argument are presented and analogous criticisms of the other arguments. If possible, miracles and arguments from experience (mysticism) will also be evaluated.

Readings: Aquinas, Paley, Hume, Malcolm.

Week Fourteen

Theodicy Problem: Faith and the problem of evil; two types of evil: from nature and from humanity. Possible solutions based on man's free will and "soul-making" concept. Amount of evil as a difficulty for these resolutions of the problem.

Readings: Dostoevsky. Hick.

Week Fifteen: Review and FINAL EXAMINATION

**guidelines from which instructors may select or adapt*

Reviewed/Revised by: Laureen Park Date: February 4, 2016

Revised by Peter Parides, Spring 2021