

Philosophy 0122-230-02
Philosophy of the Human Person

Spring 2009: 10:30 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.
Room: Cowell 324

Instructor:

Dr. Marjolein Oele
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Office Hours:

Tuesdays 2:15 – 3:15 p.m.
Thursdays 5:30 – 6:30 p.m.
(or by appointment)

Course Description:

This course is oriented around the question “What does it mean to be human?” As we will see in this course, philosophers have offered different answers to this question over time. While some find that the most distinguishing characteristic of humans is the rational nature of our soul (Aristotle), others emphasize the free will (St. Augustine), while others still have questioned the notion that there is such a thing as a predetermined human nature (Sartre) or a predetermined feminine nature (De Beauvoir).

Since the philosophical texts that we will be reading are not self-explanatory, I will ask you to read the texts carefully, to formulate questions about the texts, and to translate the texts into your own words. To aid you in appropriating the texts, we will use movies and contemporary examples. In addition to reading the texts carefully and appropriating the texts in your own words, I will ask you to evaluate the texts and use them to engage in philosophical reflection upon your own existence, both in writing (for example in reading responses) and in in-class discussions.

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of the semester, you will be able to do the following:

1. Read, understand, and interpret philosophical texts on the topic of the human person.
2. Understand the value of thinking philosophically by reflecting upon yourself.
3. Demonstrate an ability to identify and analyze philosophical themes, and evaluate upon them critically, both orally and in writing.

Required Texts:

- Plato, *Phaedo* (Focus Publishing, 1998)
- Aristotle, *De Anima* (Prometheus Books, 1991)
- St. Augustine, *The Confessions* (Works of Saint Augustine, a Translation for the 21st Century) (New City Press).
- Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* (Cambridge University Press, 2007)

Excerpts and Essays:

- Plato – *Allegory of the Cave*
- Descartes – Excerpts from the *Meditations*
- Heidegger – *What is Metaphysics?*
- Sartre – *Existentialism is a Humanism*
- De Beauvoir – Excerpts from *The Second Sex*

Course Requirements:

1. Brief reading responses & peer reviews: You will be writing brief responses to prepare you for the readings and to have you reflect on them. These responses are a way for students to reflect upon the readings in their own words, and to encourage students to think about their own lives. Students will be asked to comment upon one another's responses, and at the end of the semester students will hand in a printed portfolio with a selection of their entries.

2. Student questions and in-class assignments: I will ask you to bring questions to class to prepare for discussion. Also, in-class writing assignments, small group discussions, and group projects aim at facilitating learning and integrating knowledge.

3. Mid-term paper: This paper will be 5-6 pages (approx. 1250-1500 words) in length.

4. Final paper: Since philosophy requires time to think and reflect, you will be writing a final paper instead of a final exam, due **May 15**. This paper will be 5-6 pages (approx. 1250-1500 words) in length. Topics will be distributed two weeks in advance, and you will be expected to choose one topic on which to write your paper.

Participation and Attendance: Since philosophy is ultimately dialogical, students are strongly encouraged to attend every class and to participate. **Three absences** are allowed; any additional absences will negatively affect your final grade. If you do not want to count additional absences against you, you may compensate your absence by writing an extra **500 word** essay on the material of the class you missed, due the following class.

Note 1: When you miss a class, you are responsible for finding out what material and assignment(s) you have missed. Call or e-mail another student (so: make sure you have the telephone number or e-mail address of at least one other person in this class).

Note 2: All electronic devices such as cell phones, laptops and MP3-players should be turned off at all times.

Breakdown of Grade:

Reading Responses & Peer Reviews	20 %
In-class assignments	10 %
Mid-term paper	35 %
Final Paper	35 %

Lateness Policy

Reading responses and student questions are not accepted late. Mid-term and final papers will be penalized $\frac{1}{2}$ of a grade for every day the paper is late.

Notes on writing:

1. Plagiarism is a serious academic crime that will result in an "F" for the course and a report to the dean. Plagiarism is any direct or indirect use of another person's work without acknowledgment of that use. Submitting another student's work as your own, or buying papers off web sites are the most serious forms of plagiarism. Plagiarism is also constituted by quotations and paraphrasing of another author's work, without acknowledging that use. If you have any doubts about how you should quote properly and acknowledge your sources, consult me before you hand in your paper. In order to avoid plagiarism do not use any secondary sources (books, websites, etc.), but work only with the texts we discuss in class

and your class-notes. It is the Philosophy Department's policy to have students submit all their written work through turnitin.com, an online service that contains a paper database and is a tool for detecting plagiarism. To sign up for turnitin.com, you need the following information: Turnitin class ID: **2583149**. The class enrollment password is: **person**

2. Express yourself clearly in your assignments. Write in a transparent, well-argued style, and in grammatically correct English. If you have concerns about your writing abilities, contact the Writing Center in Cowell Hall, Room 227 (422-6713).
3. If you have concerns about study habits or learning styles, please contact the Learning Center in Cowell Hall, Room 227 (422-6715).
4. For students with demonstrated disabilities, I recommend that you contact me as soon as possible so as to accommodate your ability in the best way I can, and also to contact Disability Related Services, University Center, Room 310 (422-2613).

For any questions concerning the reading, your paper, assignments, etc., before or after you have written it, please come see me during my office hours or make an appointment.

Tentative Course Schedule (*changes will be announced in class and on blackboard)

Ancient Philosophy

Week 1 – Introduction + Plato

January 27: Introduction; Plato's *Allegory of the Cave*

January 29: Plato and *The Truman Show*, Plato's *Phaedo*

Week 2 – Plato

February 3: Plato – *Phaedo*

February 5: Plato – *Phaedo*

Week 3 – Plato

February 10: Plato – *Phaedo*

February 12: Introduction to Aristotle

* *February 13: Census Date (last day to drop classes with a refund)*

Week 4 – Aristotle

February 17: Aristotle – *De Anima*

February 19: Aristotle – *De Anima*

Week 5 – Aristotle

February 24: Aristotle – *De Anima*

February 26: Aristotle – *De Anima*

Medieval Philosophy

Week 6 – St. Augustine

March 3: St. Augustine – *Confessions*

March 5: St. Augustine – *Confessions*

* **Friday March 6: Midterm Paper Due**

Week 7 – St. Augustine

March 10: St. Augustine – *Confessions*

March 12: St. Augustine – *Confessions*

Transition to Modern Philosophy

Week 8 – St. Augustine & Descartes

March 17: St. Augustine – *Confessions*

March 19: Descartes – Excerpts from the *Meditations*

Week 9 – *No Classes (Spring Recess)*

Week 10 – Descartes & Nietzsche

March 31: Descartes – Excerpts from the *Meditations*

April 2: Nietzsche – *Beyond Good and Evil*, Part One

19th and 20th Century Philosophy

Week 11 – Nietzsche

April 7: Nietzsche – *Beyond Good and Evil*, Part Two

April 9: Nietzsche – *Beyond Good and Evil*, Part Three

Week 12 – Nietzsche & Heidegger

April 14: Nietzsche – *Beyond Good and Evil*, Part Five, Part Nine

April 16: Heidegger – *What is Metaphysics?*

* *April 13: Last Day to Drop Classes*

Week 13 – Sartre

April 21: Heidegger – excerpts

April 23: Sartre – *Existentialism is a Humanism*

Week 14 – Sartre

April 28: Sartre – *Existentialism is a Humanism*

April 30: Reviewing Sartre

* **Hand out final paper topics**

Week 15 – De Beauvoir

May 5: De Beauvoir – Excerpts from *The Second Sex*

May 7: De Beauvoir – Excerpts from *The Second Sex*

Week 16 – Review

May 12: Review

May 14: Last day of class

* **Friday May 15, 3 pm: * final paper due**