

**** SYLLABUS ****

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COURSE OBJECTIVES

The problems treated in this course all arise from standard philosophical attempts at questioning human nature and experience. While the discipline of philosophy does encompass specialized agendas and many complex technical issues, the sorts of questions we will address are ones to which most of us have, at one time or another, evolved some answers, however rudimentary.

TEXTS

The following text is required; a thorough familiarity with its contents is advised:

--Gaarder, Jostein. *Sophie's World: A Novel about the History of Philosophy*. Trans. Paulette Møller. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1994.

The following texts are recommended for those students who wish to advance their philosophical understanding or abilities; a limited supply of these texts will be available in the bookstore:

--Biffle, Christopher. *A Guided Tour of René Descartes' MEDITATIONS ON FIRST PHILOSOPHY*. Mayfield Publishing, 1989.

--Palmer, Donald. *Looking at Philosophy: The Unbearable Heaviness of Philosophy Made Lighter*, Third Edition. Mayfield Publishing, 2001.

COURSE DIVISION

After a brief overview of the main branches of contemporary philosophical practice, readings, lectures, exercises, and discussions will pursue the following topic areas:

- (1) ***ANCIENT & MEDIÆVAL PHILOSOPHY***
Readings: Gaarder, Chapters 1-15 (127 pages);
Exercise #1.
- (2) ***RENAISSANCE & ENLIGHTENMENT PHILOSOPHY***
Readings: Gaarder, Chapters 16-25 (134 pages);
Exercise #2.
- (3) ***NINETEENTH & TWENTIETH CENTURY PHILOSOPHY***
Readings: Gaarder, Chapters 26-35 (133 pages);
Exercise #3—Philosophy Paper;
FINAL EXAM (comprehensive).

ASSIGNMENTS

For the most part, reading assignments will be made on a weekly basis. Exercises will be assigned at least one full calendar week before coming due; however, exercises will be accepted for credit **ONLY** on or before the assigned days. The philosophy paper will be assigned sometime after mid-semester, with the paper due on or before Tuesday, 25 November. Class format will follow but will not always overlap the readings, so it is important that you keep up with the designated material.

ATTENDANCE

All students are expected to attend all class periods. While reasonable pleas for exemption from the attendance requirement will be duly considered, a 'reasonable plea' should ordinarily be documented by a physician, team coach, faculty advisor, or a dean. Unexcused absences exceeding *either* four (4) class meetings on the TR schedule **OR** six (6) class meetings on the MWF schedule may result in a grade-penalty.

MAKE-UP EXAMS

Students who miss an examination or fail to hand in an exercise **AND** who satisfy the conditions for exemption from the attendance requirement (specified above) are entitled to receive a **MAKE-UP** examination or exercise. Make-ups will be provided at the earliest mutual convenience of both student and instructor. Students who miss an examination or fail to hand in an exercise **BUT** who **DO NOT** satisfy the conditions for exemption from the attendance requirement will receive **NULL CREDIT** for that exercise or examination. Students falling into this category may, **HOWEVER**, take advantage of the **GRADE REPAIR OPTION** specified below.

GRADE REPAIR OPTION

Any student who wishes to improve what he or she takes to be an unsatisfactorily low grade may submit (in lieu of the material for which that grade was received) a **FULLY COMPLETED** copy of the programmed text, *A Guided Tour of René Descartes' MEDITATIONS ON FIRST PHILOSOPHY* (see "Recommended Texts" above). If the grade assigned this additional work proves more satisfactory, the new grade will replace the old.

NOTA BENE: *the following conditions will apply to the use of this option in all cases:*

- (a) use of the option must be approved by your instructor prior to your submitting the text;*
- (b) texts must be submitted on or before the due-date assigned by your instructor at the time you secure option-approval;*
- (c) the option may be used only **ONCE** per semester;*
- (d) the option does **NOT** apply to the **FINAL** examination;*
- (e) all copies of texts submitted for a grade will be retained by your instructor.*

LOTTERY SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

Message from the Executive Vice President and Provost: To retain Tennessee Education Lottery Scholarship eligibility, you must earn a cumulative TELS GPA of 2.75 after 24 attempted hours and a cumulative TELS GPA of 3.0 thereafter. A grade of C, D, F, or I in this class may negatively impact TELS eligibility. Dropping a class after 14 days may also impact eligibility; if you withdraw from this class and it results in an enrollment status of less than full time, you may lose eligibility for your lottery scholarship.

GRADES

Exercises and exams, as well as the philosophy paper, will receive numerical scores intended to reflect your performance levels on an absolute scale (measured against your instructor's expectations). Each assignment will also receive a +/- letter grade indexed according to the (relative) class mean. Final grades sent to the registrar are based on cumulative average performance: specifically, the overall class average is set to the current University mean GPA, with letter grades adjusted to yield this mean. (Note: the purpose of this grading policy is to avoid grade-inflation WITHOUT penalizing students arbitrarily.)

SCHEDULE OF EXERCISES AND EXAMS

<i>NAME</i>	<i>TOPIC</i>	<i>TOTAL POINTS</i>	<i>GRADE PERCENT</i>	<i>CUM. PERCENT</i>
*****	*****	*****	*****	*****
<i>Exercise #1</i>	<i>Ancient & Mediæval Thought</i>	<i>40</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>Exercise #2</i>	<i>Renaissance & Enlightenment</i>	<i>40</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>40</i>
<i>Exercise #3</i>	<i>Philosophy Paper</i>	<i>70</i>	<i>35</i>	<i>75</i>
<i>EXAM</i>	<i>COMPREHENSIVE FINAL</i>	<i>50</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>100</i>

PHILOSOPHICAL ESSAYS

The exercises and examinations in this course will comprise some short-answer and some essay writing; the philosophy paper will likewise involve the exercise of your writing skills. In each instance, you will be asked to reflect on a prominent course-topic and to provide some indication as to how thoroughly you understand that topic; your writing will, however, indicate little or no actual *understanding* if you restrict your exposition simply to the recapitulation of reading and/or lecture material. When assessing written work, your instructor will generally be looking for evidence of your ability to carry a reading assignment or class discussion *beyond* its initial presentation (rule of thumb: you may be said to understand something when you know what to say next). Accordingly, if your response to an essay question or paper assignment consists mainly of verbatim notes, you can expect *at best* the equivalent of a C-grade on that item.

REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

If you have a disability that may require assistance or accommodation, or you have questions related to any accommodations for testing, note takers, readers, etc., please speak with your instructor as soon as possible. Students may also contact the Office of Disabled Students Services (898-2783) with questions about such services.

ESSAY ANNOTATIONS

I. NUMERICAL MARKERS: The following markers are designed to index problems in essay work. They do NOT necessarily correlate with grade assignments.

*******SYNTAX*******

- (1) Spelling error here.
- (2) Noncritical weakness in sentence structure.
- (3) Critical weakness in sentence structure. (meaning lost).
- (4) Punctuation not clear.

*******SEMANTICS*******

- (5) Term or phrase unclear or unexplained.
- (6) Term or phrase ambiguous.
- (7) New paragraph warranted here.
- (8) Circumlocution here; simpler expression available.

*******ANALYSIS*******

- (9) General structure of this argument unclear.
- (10) Conclusion does not follow without unstated assumptions.
- (11) Relevance of this point to your argument is not clear.
- (12) This assertion is questionable and requires further support.
- (13) Further consequences of this claim are unmentioned but relevant.
- (14) This inference is formally invalid.

II. GLOBAL MARKERS: these symbols DO correlate with grade assignments.

- ∅ Null credit: either question misunderstood or analysis irrelevant.
- / Response is deficient of the (expected) mean.
- ✓ Response is at the (expected) mean.
- + Response is well above the (expected) mean; well-argued analysis.
- ++ Response is superior, no deficiencies.

GRADING SCALE

Grade	Quality Points	Grade	Quality Points
A	4.00	C	2.00
B+	3.33	C-	1.67
B	3.00	D+	1.33
B-	2.67	D	1.00
C+	2.33	D-	.67

The distribution of grades in this course, as discussed above, will be determined by corrected average method, with the current university mean GPA serving as the standard mean for comparative purposes. Thus, for example, if the university average GPA were to fall at 2.6, then a PHIL 211 student exceeding the arithmetic mean score on a particular exercise or exam by 1/3 of the standard deviation for that instrument would receive a B, while a student whose score fell deficient of the mean by 1/3 of the standard deviation would receive a C+, and so on. N.B.: Current university undergraduate average GPAs for the preceding academic year are as follows:

Fall 2007: 2.467
 Spring 2008: 2.573