

Phil 150-01: The Examined Life

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Office Hours: M,W,F 11:00 -12:00, 1:00 - 2:00

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Class Hours: **M,W,F 2:00pm - 2:50pm**

Class Room: L321

Please Note: Students may not receive credit for both PHIL 140 and PHIL 150

Course Description

Socrates states that the unexamined life is not worth living. Thus begins a long tradition according to which reflection is an essential part of a good life. This reflection is the self-appointed task of philosophical inquiry. Philosophy is sometimes categorized into three large issues, defined by characteristic questions. First, we might ask questions like, "What is the nature of reality? Is there a God, and if so, is God good? What is justice?" We might further ask questions such as "How do we know the answers to these questions? *Could* we know? What does it mean to know?" Beyond this, there is the question of "So what? Is there a right or wrong way to act? How should we live our lives? How should I treat others?" In our section of *The Examined Life*, we will read thinkers with different approaches to these issues. They will challenge our lives with the claims they make, and we will formulate our own responses to these challenges.

Reflecting Saint Xavier University's commitment to the Catholic tradition of preparing students for a lifelong reflection on ethical values, Philosophy 140 is required of all incoming first-year students. The course introduces students to the close reading and analysis of primary texts (both in speech and in writing) required at the college level. Primarily the course aims to develop in students a propensity to examine critically and continually the concepts and attitudes that shape our lives. Plato's *Apology of Socrates* (from which the course derives its name) serves as the common reading across all sections of the course, and all sections of the course will focus on primary texts in the history of philosophy. Rather than merely surveying a variety of philosophical topics or views, the primary aim of the course is to introduce to students to the discipline by engaging them in the activity of ethical reflection and philosophical thinking. As a required course for all first-year students, Philosophy 140 plays an integral role in the First-Year Learning experience and the General Education Program. The Department seeks in this way to provide a substantive introduction to a discipline that facilitates the aims and objectives of the General Education Curriculum and the First-Year Learning Experience.

Learning Outcomes

Philosophical study challenges us to read attentively, think precisely, and communicate clearly. These skills will serve you throughout your time in college. Beyond that, the ability to communicate in this way is crucial to any professional and personal setting in your adult lives. To this end, our course will prepare you to do the following:

1. Read philosophical texts closely, identifying the argument of the text and restating it clearly and fairly in their own words.
2. Critically assess arguments in terms of the assumptions made and the structure of reasoning to a conclusion.
3. Formulate and defend a philosophical thesis with evidence and careful reasoning both in speech and writing.

Required Readings

There will be a course reading packet distributed on the first day of class. Additional readings will be handed out in class before the due date. These readings will include works classically regarded as philosophical (i.e. “discursive”), and some short stories in the genre of speculative or science fiction.

PART I. Discursive Philosophical Texts:

- Plato. *Apology*, Jowett Translation.
- Plato. *Euthyphro* (selections), Jowett Translation.
- Plato. *Crito*, Jowett Translation.
- Descartes, René. *Meditations*, Haldane, Elizabeth Translation. (Selections TBD)
- Pascal, Blaise. *Pensées* (selections), Project Gutenberg edition.
- Murdoch, Iris. “The Sovereignty of Good Over Other Concepts” from *The Sovereignty of Good*, 1985.

PART II. Philosophical Fiction:

- Borges, Jorge Louis. “The Library of Babel” 1941.
- Carroll, Lewis. “The Two Clocks”
- —. “What the Tortoise Said to Achilles” Published in *Mind*, 1895.
- Chiang, Ted. “What’s Expected of Us” Published in *Nature*, 2005.
- —. “Liking What You See” from *Story of Your Life and Others*, 1998.

Course Policies

Please read and understand the policies listed below. You are responsible for understanding and abiding by all of these policies. If you e-mail a question for which The Answer Is On The Syllabus, I will respond “TAIOTS.”

General

Use of Technology in the Classroom

I strongly advise taking notes on paper (cf. “materials” below). Please do not allow your laptops, tablets, phones, etc. to be a distraction to you, to your fellow students, or to me. Take care of all socializing (e.g. facebook, texting, emails) outside of our classroom. If you need to use your phone for whatever reason, you may quietly leave the classroom and return when you are finished. If your use of technology becomes a distraction for anyone in the room, you may be dismissed from the class for the day.

Email

Please read the syllabus and the *Frequently Asked Questions* section of the course website before e-mailing. If the answer to your question is on the website or the syllabus, I may not respond. I encourage you to be in touch with me if you have substantive questions concerning the material we are discussing in class. If you send me an e-mail, please show up to the next class. If several students have similar questions, I may choose to answer your question in class rather than sending out multiple e-mails. I may deem that it is better to speak with you in person to answer your question immediately before or after our class. Please do not e-mail me to ask what you missed if you were absent. There will be regular assignments, and possibly quizzes, designed to test you on the material covered up to that point in the term. There will be no make-up assignments or quizzes offered – the same holds true for the major essay assignments.

Course Website

Major assignments, revisions to the syllabus, and grades will be posted to Canvas. You will receive a notification via e-mail when a change has been made. The print copy of the syllabus is for your convenience; the most up to date version will be online. If you miss class or forget to write the assignment down, check Canvas first and then ask another student in the class. Do not email me to ask what the assignment is.

Materials

1. **COURSE PACKET:** You will receive a course reading packet at the beginning of the term. You are expected to keep up with the packet throughout the entire semester. Any additional materials will be distributed in class in advance of their due date. You are responsible for getting copies of materials from classes you missed. Bring every text to every class meeting. This serves two purposes. First, part of the work of philosophy is the comparison of texts, which means we will often be referring to multiple texts, regardless of the day’s assigned reading. Second, Your studies are intended to prepare you for future employment. Being

responsible for documents over the entire term is an excellent way to practice important organizational skills, and develop a sense of responsibility.

2. **NAME PLATE:** In order to learn your names and so that your colleagues can address you respectfully, I provide materials for a name plate for your desk. You are responsible for this throughout the term. If you lose your name plate, please create another one before the start of class.
3. **PEN & PAPER:** You are required to bring paper and a pencil or pen to each class. There will be regular quizzes and short writing assignments to be completed and turned in during the class. Loose leaf or detachable paper is suggested for this purpose. I strongly recommend that notes be taken on paper. I strongly discourage taking notes on your computer. This will actually be to your advantage, because we will be using symbols, diagrams, and tables, all of which are difficult to format on a computer at the pace we will be proceeding.
4. **STUDY GUIDES AND OTHER SOURCES:** The works we will be reading have a long and rich tradition of scholarship. Many, many people have read these texts, and there are no doubt countless study guides and interpretive essays that may be easy to find online. Rather than spending time reading these guides about our texts (scholars call these secondary sources), you should spend that time re-reading the texts themselves (the primary sources). Do not be tempted to plagiarize from these guides– if you can find it, it is likely that I can find it as well, and this will result in a failing grade (see academic integrity) . All of my students have the integrity to do their own work. Cheating will not help you to understand the material, but will actually prevent you from learning it. More importantly, whatever points you think you might earn from cheating are not worth compromising your integrity. At the end of your life, you probably will not remember or care about the grade you made in this class. You will reflect on whether you lived with honesty and integrity.

Grading Policies

For complete grading policies, including rubrics for papers and frequently asked questions, please refer to the online version of the syllabus.

Grading Scale

- Successful, on time completion of all work at an acceptable level: **C**
- On time completion of work at a high level that indicates significant effort beyond the acceptable level: **B**
- On time completion of excellent work that indicates a very high level of effort exceeding expectations: **A**
- Incomplete work or work at a level lower than expected: **D**
- Little or no work completed, plagiarism or otherwise unacceptable work: **F**

Credit Will Be Given For The Following:

1. A set of typed responses no more than two pages each. You will respond to the texts, and partner with your classmates to respond to their writing as well. (20 points)
2. A midterm paper due in week five, based on a prompt to be assigned. (10 points)
3. A conference and subsequent revision to your midterm paper, due one week after your conference. (20 points)
4. A midterm paper due in week eleven. (20 points)
5. A final paper on a topic to be assigned in class. (30 points)

Attendance and Participation

There are no make-up assignments or quizzes. Record the due dates now and do not miss on those days. I expect you to attend and participate every day. While your final grade will not be directly penalized for absences, I will take attendance for my records. You will not be able to succeed if you are absent regularly and your grades will reflect this fact.

Academic Integrity

The University's full statement on academic integrity can be found at:

<http://catalog.sxu.edu/chicago/Shared/ACA/integrity.html>

The policy for academic integrity in this course is very straightforward: I expect that any work submitted for this course will be your own. This includes revisions made to your papers. Never submit another's work as your own. This goes for any unit of writing, down to a sentence, or a memorable phrase. If someone else wrote it first, you must cite it, and give credit to the original author. Any submission of another's work as your own constitutes plagiarism. Any instance of plagiarism, intentional or otherwise, will result in a grade of zero for the assignment, and makeup will not be allowed. I will be happy to meet with you during office hours to discuss any questions you may have about what constitutes plagiarism.

Students With Disabilities

If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, please contact the Learning Center and Disability Services (LCDS) in L-108 or call (773) 298-3308 for an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations. LCDS is responsible for coordinating disability-related accommodations and will issue students with documented disabilities "Confidential Accommodation Plan" letters, as appropriate. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact LCDS as soon as possible.

Schedule

Week 01, 08/22 - 08/26: Introduction

- Course Materials Distributed

- Key Terms: Metaphysics, Epistemology, Ethics
- How to read and write philosophy
- Begin reading Plato's *Apology*

Week 02, 08/29 - 09/02: Plato: *Apology*

- Short Review paper due Wednesday
- Form partners for review

Week 03, 09/05 - 09/09: Plato: *Euthyphro* and *Crito* (Selections)

- Partner review essay due Monday
- Short review paper due Friday

Week 04, 09/12 - 09/16: Plato continued

- Partner review essay due Monday
- Term paper outline due Friday

Week 05, 09/19 - 09/23: Pascal: *Pensees* (selections)

- Term paper draft due Monday
- Partner review due Wednesday
- First term papers due Friday
- Sign up for grading conferences

Week 06, 09/26 - 09/30: Grading Conferences

- We will meet in office hours to discuss paper grades (regular class meeting canceled)
- Read Pascal. It's challenging, so use this time to re-read it!

Week 07, 10/03 - 10/07: Class convenes normally; Pascal/Descartes

- Revised papers due one week after conference

Week 08, 10/10 - 10/14: Descartes

- Finish Descartes for Monday
- Response paper due Monday

Week 09, 10/17 - 10/21: Descartes/Murdoch

- Partner response due Monday

Week 10, 10/24 - 10/28: Murdoch

- Response paper due Monday

Week 11, 10/31 - 11/04: Review session/Case studies

- Chiang, Ted. "What's Expected Of Us" (Short Story)
- Midterm paper due Friday

Week 12, 11/07 - 11/11: Philosophical case studies: Thought Experiments

- Chiang, Ted. "Liking What You See" (Short Story)
- Borges, Jorge Louis. "The Library of Babel" (Short Story)
- Review Papers due Friday

Week 13, 11/14 - 11/18: More philosophical case studies

- Partner Response due Monday
- Carroll: "Two Clocks" and "What the Tortoise Said to Achilles"

Week 14, 11/21 - 11/25: Philosophical case studies

- Excerpts from news, etc. (Posted to Canvas)
- Response paper due Wednesday

Week 15, 11/28 - 12/02: Conclusion

- Final papers due Wednesday