

Philosophy 140-13: The Examined Life: _____ MWF 8:00 - 8:50 AM

Instructor: Jason Cather office: Warde N413; office hours: M,F 9:00-10:00 AM

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Course Description:

Socrates states that the unexamined life is not worth living. But does this mean that by examining one's life, one can make life worth living? In light of the inevitability of death, what does it mean to say that life is or is not worth living? In our section of *The Examined Life* we will read three thinkers with vastly different answers to these questions, who 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.

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. 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 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.

Learning Outcomes: Students will be able to:

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

GRADING POLICIES

FOR COMPLETE GRADING POLICIES, 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, indicating significant effort beyond the level of acceptable = **B**
- * On time completion of excellent work, indicating a very high level of effort, exceeding expectations = **A**
- * Late or incomplete work, or work at a level lower than expected = **D**
- * Little or no work completed, excessively late work, or otherwise unacceptable work = **F**

Credit Will Be Given For the Following:

- i.) A set of typed one-page responses to the texts, due every week on Monday or Wednesday, based on prompts given in class (aka “homework”). (20 points)
- ii.) A midterm paper due in week five, based on a prompt to be assigned. (10 points)
- iii.) A conference and subsequent revision to your midterm paper, due one week after your conference. (20 points)
- iv.) A midterm paper due in week eleven(20 points)
- v.) A final paper on a topic to be assigned in class. (30 points)

NO EXTRA OR MAKEUP CREDIT WILL BE OFFERED:

As a policy, I do not offer makeup credit or extra credit on request. In the interests of training you for your lives ahead, deadlines are firm. I will give you ample opportunities to demonstrate your work throughout the term. I have designed assignments to allow you to recover from earlier difficulties if you are struggling. However, none of the work you will do is “extra” and assignments are due when they are due.

A Note on Exams and Quizzes

All devices must be turned off (or on silent) and left in your bags under your desks during exams and quizzes. No use of these devices is permitted during an exam or quiz. If you leave the classroom, you are not permitted to return during the exam or quiz. Any violation of this policy will be considered cheating. Any communication between students during exams or quizzes will be considered cheating. Unless otherwise noted, all exams and quizzes are closed book, and the unauthorized use of notes or textbooks will be considered cheating. Any cheating on an exam or a quiz will result in a grade of zero for that exam or quiz.

Course Policies:

1.) 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 you cause a distraction, you will be asked to leave for the remainder of the class, even if we are near the end of class. You may return the next day of class with a clean slate. To clarify: if *you* are capable of quietly leaving and taking care of your business, you may return to class, provided you can do so without disruption. If *I* have to ask you to leave, you will be dismissed for the day. In either case, *you* are responsible for whatever you missed. Do not ask me to repeat it, it is *your responsibility*.

2.) On emailing me: I encourage each of you to email me if you have substantive questions concerning the material we are discussing in class. Please do not e-mail me to ask if you can make up the assignment (you cannot). Do not e-mail me to ask what you missed if you were absent. There will be regular quizzes designed to test you on the material covered up to that point in the term. There will be no make-up quizzes offered — the same holds true for the essay assignments and conferences.

3.) Canvas: Homework assignments, revisions to the syllabus, and grades will be posted to the Canvas site. The print copy of the syllabus is for your convenience, however the authoritative version is online.

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.

Texts:

- > Plato: *Apology*, entire (handout)
- > Blaise Pascal: *Pensees*, selections (handout)
- > Friedrich Nietzsche: *On Truth and Lying in an Extramoral Sense*, entire (handout)
- > Cormac McCarthy: *The Sunset Limited*, entire (available from the bookstore or online)

Materials:

1.) 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. Reading and homework assignments will be listed on Canvas. While I will try to announce all readings and assignments in class, you are expected to check this regularly. If you miss class or forget to write them down, check Canvas first and then ask another student in the class. Do not email me to ask what the assignment is.

2.) 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.

3.) 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.

Division of Course:

This is our course outline. I reserve the right to adjust the schedule, in which event I will place the revised version on Canvas. The online version is the official version, and you are responsible for the assignments listed there.

I. week 1: Introduction. We will discuss the expectations of the course, the course assignments, and briefly review how to construct an argument.

II. weeks 2-4: Plato’s *Apology*.

FIRST ESSAY DUE: September 22

III. weeks 5-7: Pascal’s *Pensees*.

PAPER CONFERENCES: October 6-10

REVISIONS DUE: One week after your conference date.

IV. weeks 8-10: Nietzsche’s *Truth and Lying*..

SECOND ESSAY DUE: November 5

V. weeks 11-12: McCarthy’s *Sunset Limited*

VI. weeks 13-15: Conclusion

FINAL ESSAY DUE: December 3