

PHI 201: Introduction to Philosophy
1-2:15pm TuTh, Science Building 41
Fall 2015

Professor: Jennifer Kling, PhD

Office Hours: MW 11:30am-1pm, TuTh 10am-12pm; available by appointment (Sacred Heart Hall 312E)

Email: jkling@sienaheights.edu

Phone (emergencies only!): 919-260-2719

Course Description:

In this course we will tackle six of life's big questions (which you might or might not already have contemplated to some degree). Throughout the class, we will be reading both historical and contemporary philosophical texts, with an eye to understanding what philosophers think about these questions and why. However, our efforts will not be merely an academic exercise where we will only study what others have thought. Instead, in this course you will be joining in an active and ongoing effort to better understand the world in all its complexity and our place in it.

This class fits into a broader program of liberal education, insofar as it seeks to question and grasp issues surrounding human nature, morality and ethics, the production of knowledge, the nature of reality, and the structure of political systems. It has no prerequisites and is designed for students with no background in philosophy, although students with a philosophy background are welcome. For students who are interested in continuing in philosophy, this course will provide a taste of the wide range of problems in philosophy, which will allow you to leave with a better understanding of which areas you would like to study in more detail in the future.

In this class, you will have to struggle with big concepts that you may not have engaged before, and you will have to work hard to succeed. Along the way you will come to better understand what philosophers do, how they do it, and why. That will entail using and refining your abilities to effectively think, argue, read, and write. In other words, in this course you are going to learn how to *do* philosophy, which is both difficult and rewarding.

Course Requirements:

Participation (10%): You will need to both do the readings and come to class in order to be successful in this course. If you don't do the readings, you'll be lost in class; if you don't come to class, you'll be lost in the readings and the assignments. While *excessive* participation is not required, some willingness to engage with both me and your fellow classmates is necessary— without this willingness on your part, we won't be able to have the sort of productive class discussions that will enable you to successfully engage in philosophy. So, while a lack of participation won't harm your grade very much, participation can significantly *help* your grade.

I appreciate that speaking to a classroom full of your peers can be difficult; so, there are a number of other ways to participate in class. You may speak in class, you may engage in small group work, you may visit my office hours, you may send me emails with questions, comments, and concerns, you may join the online discussion threads, you may post relevant outside documents/videos/blogs, etc. to the course eCollege site, you may tweet and/or blog and/or journal about issues raised in class, etc. If you're unsure of whether some action counts as participation, please see me, and we'll discuss it.

Argument Reconstructions (5% each): You are required to submit **five** argument reconstructions throughout the semester. Argument reconstructions are due by the start of the class period on the due date. **Late argument reconstructions will not be accepted.** They should be roughly ½-1 page in length,

and should reconstruct the relevant written argument. Argument reconstructions may take the form of a detailed bulleted outline or a detailed conceptual map (hand-drawn or computer-generated are both fine). If you wish to submit an argument reconstruction in some other form, please see me, and we'll discuss it. ****Collaboration is encouraged but not required.****

Papers (10% each): There are **five** required papers for this course. Each paper should be 2 pages long, and should *critically engage* with some issue brought up in the course readings and class discussions. I will provide a list of topics two weeks in advance of each paper's due date. If you wish to write on a topic not on the list, please come see me to discuss your proposed topic. If you wish to submit a paper in some other form, please see me, and we'll discuss it.

Papers are due by the start of the class period on the due date. For every 24-hour period that a paper is late, I will take 5 points off. That said, I am aware that life happens; if you feel you need an extension, please ask me as soon as possible. The earlier you ask, the more likely I am to give you an extension. Failure to turn in any one of the papers will result in failing the course.

Final (15%): There is a required final exam for this course. The exam will consist of a series of short answers as well as one longer essay. Please bring a bluebook for the final. Failure to take the final exam will result in failing the course.

Grading Scale:

A: An 'A' denotes exceptional skill and ability. An 'A' student demonstrates an excellent grasp of the material (i.e., the student understands the material enough to explain it succinctly and well), and also displays the ability to engage philosophically with both the broad issues and finer points under discussion.

B: A 'B' denotes solid-to-impressive skill and ability. A 'B' student demonstrates a good grasp of the material (i.e., the student understands the material well enough to explain it with few mistakes), and also displays the ability to engage philosophically with most, if not all, of the issues and points under discussion.

C: A 'C' denotes adequate skill and ability. A 'C' student demonstrates a fair grasp of the material (i.e., the student understands the big picture, but makes some serious errors in presentation), and also displays the ability to engage philosophically with at least some of the issues under discussion.

D: A 'D' denotes inadequate skill and ability. A 'D' student has serious problems with grasping the material, and fails to engage philosophically with any of the issues under discussion.

F: An 'F' denotes catastrophic problems in fulfilling the requirements of the course. An 'F' student neither grasps the material nor engages with it critically at any level.

While hard work is correlated with success, it is not sufficient for success. To get a good grade in this course, you need to not only understand and engage with the material, but also communicate your understanding and engagement to me via your participation, reconstructions, papers, and exam. If you sense that you are heading towards a grade you do not want, please come see me as soon as possible (if you wait until the end of the semester, it will be too late).

Assignments:

All readings, videos, podcasts, etc can be found on this course's eCollege site.

Date	Topic	Assignment
9/1	Introduction to the Course	
9/3	How To:	<i>Read:</i> Judith Jarvis Thompson, excerpt from

	Map Out an Argument	“Self-Defense”
9/8	How To: Write a Philosophy Paper	<i>Watch:</i> 'A Sample Philosophy Paper' by Angela Mendelovici https://prezi.com/z4h1_fwilbxj/a-sample-philosophy-paper/
9/10	How To: Be a Philosopher	<i>Read:</i> Plato, excerpts from <i>Apology</i> and from <i>The Republic</i>
9/15 Argument Reconstruction #1 Due	Who Am I?: Questions of Personal Identity	Argument Reconstruction #1 Due: John Locke, excerpt from <i>An Essay Concerning Human Understanding</i>
9/17	Who Am I?: Questions of Personal Identity	<i>Read:</i> Daniel Dennett, “Where Am I?”
9/22	Who Am I?: Questions of Personal Identity	<i>Read:</i> Jean-Paul Sartre, “Existentialism Is a Humanism”
9/24	Who Am I?: Questions of Personal Identity	<i>Watch:</i> “Identity in the 21 st Century: Byrad Yyelland at TEDx Education City” Ted Talk https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hoCLCAQJ6_A
9/29	No Class: Common Dialogue Day	
10/1 Paper #1 Due	What Should I Do?: Questions of Ethics and the Good Life	Paper #1 Due on eCollege <i>Listen:</i> “David Edmonds on Trolley Problems” Philosophy Bites Podcast http://philosophybites.com/2013/09/david-edmonds-on-trolley-problem.html
10/6	What Should I Do?: Questions of Ethics and the Good Life	<i>Read:</i> Peter Singer, “Famine, Affluence, and Morality”
10/8 Argument Reconstruction #2 Due	What Should I Do?: Questions of Ethics and the Good Life	Argument Reconstruction #2 Due: Bernard Williams, excerpt from “A Critique of Utilitarianism”
10/13	What Should I Do?: Questions of Ethics and the Good Life	<i>Read:</i> David Velleman, excerpt from “A Brief Introduction to Kantian Ethics”
10/15	What Should I Do?: Questions of Ethics and the Good Life	<i>Listen:</i> “Susan Wolf on Meaning in Life” Philosophy Bites Podcast http://philosophybites.com/2010/07/susan-wolf-on-meaning-in-life.html
10/20 Paper #2 Due	Does God Exist?: Questions of Religion and Spirituality	Paper #2 Due on eCollege <i>Watch:</i> “3 Minute Philosophy—St. Thomas Aquinas” Youtube video https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CwToalGjIF4
10/22	Does God Exist?: Questions of Religion and Spirituality	<i>Read:</i> St. Anselm, excerpt from <i>Proslogium</i>

10/27 Argument Reconstruction #3 Due	Does God Exist?: Questions of Religion and Spirituality	Argument Reconstruction #3 Due: J.L. Mackie, excerpt from <i>Evil and Omnipotence</i>
10/29	Does God Exist?: Questions of Religion and Spirituality	<i>Listen:</i> “Marilyn McCord Adams on Evil” Philosophy Bites Podcast http://philosophybites.com/2009/07/marilyn-mccord-adams-on-evil.html
11/3	Does God Exist?: Questions of Religion and Spirituality	<i>Read:</i> Derek Parfit, excerpt from “Why Anything? Why This?”
11/5 Paper #3 Due	What is the World Like?: Questions about the Nature of Reality	Paper #3 Due on eCollege <i>Watch:</i> “Brian Greene: Is Our Universe the Only Universe?” TED Talk https://www.ted.com/talks/brian_greene_why_is_our_universe_fine_tuned_for_life?language=en#t-86545
11/10	What is the World Like?: Questions about the Nature of Reality	<i>Read:</i> Sharon Street, excerpt from “A Darwinian Dilemma for Realist Theories of Value”
11/12 Argument Reconstruction #4 Due	What is the World Like?: Questions about the Nature of Reality	Argument Reconstruction #4 Due: Sara Bernstein, excerpt from “Time Travel and the Movable Present”
11/17	What is the World Like?: Questions about the Nature of Reality	<i>Watch:</i> “AI: Computers and Minds” Youtube video https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7fLNVP5yKt0
11/19 Paper #4 Due	How Do We Know?: Questions about the Nature and Production of Knowledge	Paper #4 Due on eCollege <i>Read:</i> Rene Descartes, Meditations I and II
11/24	How Do We Know?: Questions about the Nature and Production of Knowledge	<i>Read:</i> David Hume, <i>An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding</i> (section four)
11/26 Thanksgiving Break	No Class: Thanksgiving Break	
12/1 Argument Reconstruction #5 Due	How Do We Know?: Questions about the Nature and Production of Knowledge	Argument Reconstruction #5 Due: Elizabeth Anderson, excerpt from “Feminist Epistemology: An Interpretation and a Defense”
12/3	How Do We Know?: Questions about the Nature and Production of Knowledge	<i>Read:</i> Simon Blackburn, excerpt from <i>Think</i>
12/8 Paper #5 Due	How Should Society Be Organized?: Questions about Politics and Community	Paper #5 Due on eCollege <i>Watch:</i> “Michael Sandel: The lost art of democratic debate” TED talk http://www.ted.com/talks/michael_sandel_the_lost_art_of_democratic_debate?language=en#t-77028

12/10	How Should Society Be Organized?: Questions about Politics and Community	<i>Read:</i> Martin Luther King, Jr., “A Letter from Birmingham Jail” and <i>Watch:</i> http://www.ted.com/talks/bryan_stevenson_we_need_to_talk_about_an_injustice?language=en#t-67274
Finals Week 12/14-12/18	Final Exam	<i>In-Class Final Exam</i>

Code of Student Conduct:

All students at Siena Heights University are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policy of this institution. For more information, please see the [Code of Student Conduct](#). Please obey the spirit as well as the law of SHU's Code of Student Conduct. If you think that something is in violation of the Code, it probably is, so check before doing it. Please remember that unintentional plagiarism is still plagiarism, and that **you must cite all of your sources** for papers!

****Please note:** every assignment turned in for this class must be your own original work, produced specifically *for this class*. You may not turn in an assignment written for a previous and/or different class. To do so would constitute (self) plagiarism, and will be treated as such.**

The Writing Center:

The Writing Center at Siena Heights University is a free resource available to all CAS students. Students are encouraged to visit the writing center for writing feedback at any stage in the writing process. For information regarding their tutors, hours, location, or to utilize their online links and resources, please visit writingcenter.sienaheights.edu. **PLEASE NOTE:** Beginning Fall 2015, the Writing Center will be located on the main floor of the library. For more information, please contact Karin Barbee at kbarbee@sienaheights.edu.

Diversity and Disability Statement:

Our institution values diversity and inclusion; we are committed to a climate of mutual respect and full participation. Our goal is to create learning environments that are usable, equitable, inclusive and welcoming. If there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in barriers to your inclusion or accurate assessment or achievement, please notify the instructor as soon as possible. Students with disabilities are also welcome to contact the Office of Disabilities Resources (517) 264-7683 or Laura Lyall (coordinator) at llyall@sienaheights.edu to discuss a range of options to removing barriers in the course, including accommodations. This process is initiated and driven by the student. It is to your advantage to begin the process in a timely manner, since accommodations are not retroactive. Grades earned before verification of a disability by the ODR will not be changed.

Syllabus Changes:

I reserve the right to make changes to this syllabus as appropriate. The odds that I'll do so during the semester are small, but if I do, I will inform you as soon as possible.