Course Description

Philosophy literally means ‘love (philein) of wisdom (sophia)’. Philein is the Greek word for love, and sophia is the Greek word for wisdom. That makes philo-sophia the ‘love of wisdom.’

But how is this “love of wisdom” practiced? What does the discipline of philosophy do? Wilfred Sellars, an American philosopher, puts it well: “The aim of philosophy is to understand how things in the broadest sense of the term hang together in the broadest sense of the term.” Philosophers attempt to give a rational account of the whole, by studying reality, knowledge, human nature, language, consciousness, political society, and morality—everything to do with us and our world.

You may remark that other disciplines, such as political science, linguistics, or physics study the areas listed above. What distinguishes philosophy from other disciplines?

- First, philosophy is holistic and thus does not limit its subject matter to one element of reality as other disciplines do. Physics studies the motion of bodies, arithmetic the qualities and relations of numbers, and psychology studies human behavior. Philosophy tries to come up with a way to connect these partial views of reality and make a meaningful and consistent picture out of them.

- Second, philosophy is primarily a form of questioning and its practical impact or results are somewhat precarious. Think about it this way: Philosophy is the love of wisdom, or pursuit of truth. Ask yourself: Would you continue to search for something if you assumed that you already had it in your possession? Philosophical pursuit of truth thus requires a persistent suspicion of ever being in possession of “the truth.”

- Philosophy is thus best described as a radical questioning of belief and convention. The term “radical” comes from the Latin word “radix” which means “root”. Philosophy is the exposition and questioning of the “roots,” i.e., the sources and foundations of our beliefs as well as prevalent and conventional “truths.”

What are some specific questions philosophers ask? Here is a sample list:

- What is really real? Are things really as they appear to be? Is there such a thing as soul? Does God exist? Are humans free? We will see that metaphysics, the study of being and reality, is the branch of philosophy that studies such questions.

- How do I come to know and test my knowledge of reality? Are my five senses a reliable source of knowledge? Is it possible to have certain or true knowledge? Epistemology (the study of knowledge) is the branch of philosophy that deals with these questions.

- How should I live my life? What makes an action right or wrong? What makes a person good or bad? Are moral principles objective or subjective? How do I know whether I have chosen wisely? What shapes my desires and my values? Everyone knows this one: Ethics studies these questions.

- What is the best form of government? Which institutions are necessary for a society to function well? Are there fundamental universal human rights? What is justice? Political Philosophy studies the polis (city/state) and the forms of its governance.

In this course, through classic and widely influential philosophical texts, we will inquire some of these key philosophical issues. These inquiries may often involve a radical challenging of our beliefs and heritage, hence, a challenging of our identities. If questioning is the very basis of this class, it is necessary that you are willing to question. It is not sufficient to learn what the authors we are going to read argue for. We need to approach the readings with an open mind and think critically with and against them.
COURSE POLICIES

Office Hours and Email Policy

The best way to communicate with me is to visit me during my office hours. My office hours this semester are Tuesdays and Thursdays 1:30-3:00 as well as Wednesdays 10:00-11:30. I encourage all of you to meet with me in person at least once during the semester, preferably during the first month of classes. Come by during office hours or email me to make an appointment.

The second best way to communicate with me is to e-mail me at: ssaner@csub.edu. Please treat your emails to me as professional correspondence, which they are: open and close with proper salutations and maintain a polite, professional tone.

I will post clear instructions each week: I will list the readings you need to complete, assignments you need to work on, and lectures or videos you need to view; and I will always tell you the order in which you should complete these tasks. I will send out reminders for due dates, and check everyone’s progress regularly throughout the semester. Make sure that you e-mail me with questions about course policies and instructions only if you are absolutely sure that the information is missing on Blackboard. That said, you may come to my office anytime if you have any questions about format or content.

The Responsibilities of Students

- Students must read the welcome page on Blackboard and watch the video Netiquette.
- The course syllabus is a contract: Students should read the syllabus and understand the requirements of this course.
- Students must use correct spelling and grammar in all written communications.
- Students must use a polite and professional tone in all written communications.
- Students must complete the readings and activities and study the lectures during the week they are due.
- Students must complete blog assignments by entering their responses to prompts as well as commenting on their classmates’ responses by the due date.
- Students must complete the module quizzes online by the due date.
- Students must propose a Philosophy in Practice project, give and receive peer feedback, research and complete the project by its due date.
- Students must complete the final exam by the due date.
- Students must work methodically through the class and adhere to all deadlines. This is a collaborative class and it is not an option to proceed at your own pace.

Academic Integrity

The principles of truth and integrity are recognized as fundamental to a community of teachers and scholars. Students are expected to do all work assigned to them without unauthorized assistance and without giving unauthorized assistance. Violations of the university’s policy of academic integrity include cheating on exams, plagiarism, or multiple submissions of the same work in different courses. Academic dishonesty will be reported to the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities, and will result in a course grade of “F” or other grade penalty.

Support Services for Students

If you experience difficulty in this course for any reason, you should not hesitate to consult with me. A wide range of services is available to support you in your efforts to meet the course requirements.

To request academic accommodations due to a disability, you should contact the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) as soon as possible. This office is located in SA 140, and they may be reached at 661-654-3360 (voice) or 661-654-6288 (TDD). Students with an accommodations letter from the SSD Office documenting a disability should present the letter to me as soon as possible to discuss the specific accommodations you need for this class.
At times, school, work, and/or our personal lives can become overwhelming and difficult to handle. CSUB’s Counseling Center provides you with skilled and experienced counselors to guide you through the challenges of academic and personal life. Contact 654-3366 for an appointment. The center is located south of Science III.

The Writing Resource Center is located in Administration East 105, next to the First Year Experience office. 654-6411. You can make an appointment online as well.

Academic Advising & Resource Center formerly the Student Success and Retention Center, is located in Administration East 100. 654-2700.

The Office of Student Involvement can connect you with student clubs and organizations, which can be wonderful social and academic resources, as well as providing networking opportunities for your future career. Student Union Room 138. 654-3091.

Walter Stiern Library offers help with research in person, online, and by phone: 654-3172.

The Center for Community Engagement and Career Education (http://www.csub.edu/cece/) is located in 54 CAF, next to the Runner Café. It provides services for internships, job searches, graduate school and more. 654-3033. Email: career@csub.edu.

The Help Desk provides support for MyCSUB and Blackboard. 654-2307. Email: helpdesk@csub.edu

The Student Recreation Center (SRC) is south of the Student Union. Phone: 654-4FUN (4386).

### Required Texts

All readings are available on Blackboard.

### COURSE GRADE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Blog Responses, Comments)</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quizzes</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Philosophy in Practice Project</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Discussion Board and Final Project)</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>25%</td>
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**Blog Responses and Comments:** The blog assignments will present a venue for you to connect with and respond to the key philosophical ideas we will be studying. The prompts and instructions will be available as each week’s topic becomes available. Read the instructions for each blog assignment very carefully, twice, and make sure that you complete any preliminary work before you submit your Blog Response. The due dates for your Blog Response and Comments are stated below and on Blackboard under “Course Response”.

Your Blog Responses should be a few fully developed paragraphs, about 200 words. They will be graded Credit/No Credit, and I will evaluate them based on the development of ideas and use of evidence as well as correct grammar and a clear, precise style. You will also be required to comment on two students’ blog responses, a total of 50-100 words each. For the Blog Responses and Comments, I will provide holistic comments to the class. Please note that persistent grammatical errors and misused words can result in a grade of no credit for a Blog Response or Comment.

For full credit on a blog assignment, you must

- submit your entry as well as two peer comments by the due dates,
- follow the assignment instructions carefully,
- use correct grammar and spelling, and
- respond with a coherent and well-argued blog entry.

**Quizzes:** You will take five short quizzes, one on each topic, consisting of ten T/F, multiple choice, fill in the blanks, or matching questions. You may take each quiz up to three times, and your highest grade will be the grade of record. These quizzes will prepare you for the questions that you might expect on the Final Exam. The dates of the quizzes are stated below and on Blackboard under “Course Schedule”.

...
Philosophy in Practice Project and Peer Review: You will prepare a poster presentation that reports and evaluates public responses to a key philosophical question. It will be your intervention, your contribution, to an ongoing debate or discussion, using the insights of the philosophical ideas and methods you have learned in this class. This assignment will have four stages: (1) you will contribute to a brainstorming session on Discussion Board; (2) you will give and receive feedback on your ideas from your classmates; (3) you will submit your project proposal and explain why you chose it and how you want to approach it; (4) you will submit the results of your study in the form of a poster presentation on Blackboard. The due dates of the various stages of this project are stated below and on Blackboard under “Course Schedule”.

Final exam: The final exam will consist of multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions. The last day to complete the final exam is May 16th at 5 p.m.

Course Goals
The overall goals of the program in Philosophy at CSUB are to enable students to (1) explore critically various systems of beliefs and values, (2) grapple with the foundations of their own beliefs and values, and (3) develop habits of critical thinking, writing and reading. In keeping with these general goals, students who successfully complete this course will be able to:

1. understand expressions of human experience by describing the significance of philosophical questions about knowledge, reality, value, and self;
2. demonstrate analytical reading and writing skills by critically reading and analyzing primary source material from the history of philosophy;
3. apply Arts and Humanities disciplinary methods by using philosophical methods to articulate reasoned personal responses to philosophical problems.

To complete the CLO’s above, the students will:
1. Demonstrate their understanding of key philosophical ideas and texts through quizzes and exams;
2. Respond to blog assignments and create a Philosophy in Practice project to develop and enhance reading and comprehension skills as well as articulate their reasoned response to philosophical issues.

Grade Distribution

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Topics and Assignments Calendar

You will find detailed instructions for weekly readings, lectures, and activities on Blackboard. Blog responses are due on Thursdays (5 p.m.) and comments to peers’ entries are due Sundays (5 p.m.). Quizzes are available on Tuesdays (5 p.m.) and are due Thursdays (5 p.m.)

Week One: 1.22-25 What is Philosophy? Blog on What is Philosophy? (B1 Response due 1.24, Comments due 1.27)

Week Two: 1.28-2.1 Philosophical Methods: Critical Thinking and Socratic Method Quiz on What is Philosophy? (Q1 due 1.31)

Week Three: 2.4-8 Problem of Knowledge: Skepticism and the Problem of Knowledge Blog on Philosophical Methods (B2 Response due 2.7, Comments due 2.10)

Week Four: 2.11-15 Mind/Body Problem: Mind as Soul and Mind as Body Quiz on Philosophical Methods and Problem of Knowledge (Q2 due 2.14)

Week Five: 2.18-22 Mind/Body Problem: Mind as Software Blog on Mind/Body Problem (B3 Response due 2.21, Comments due 2.24)

Week Six: 2.25-3.1 Free Will and Determinism: Freedom as Chance
Quiz on Mind/Body Problem (Q3 due 2.28)

Week Seven: 3.4-8
Free Will and Determinism: Freedom as Necessity
Blog on Free Will and Determinism (B4 Response due 3.7, Comments due 3.10)

Week Eight: 3.11-15
Free Will and Determinism: Freedom as Self-Determination
No blogs are quizzes this week.

Week Nine: 3.18-22
The Problem of Relativism and Morality: Might Makes Right
Quiz on Free Will and Determinism (Q4 due 3.21)

Week Ten: 3.25-29
The Problem of Relativism and Morality: Utility Makes Right
Blog on Relativism and Morality (B5 Response due 3.28, Comments due 3.31)

Week Eleven: 4.1-5
The Problem of Relativism and Morality: Duty Makes Right
Discussion Board entry for Philosophy for Practice Project Brainstorm due 4.4

Week Twelve: 4.8-12
The Problem of Relativism and Morality: Virtue Makes Right
Discussion Board Philosophy in Practice Project Peer Reviews due 4.11

SPRING BREAK: 4.15-19
HAVE FUN!

Week Thirteen: 4.22-26
The Problem of Justice: Contract or Community?
Quiz on The Problem of Relativism and Morality (Q5 due 4.25)

Week Fourteen: 4.29-5.3
Work on Philosophy in Practice Project
Philosophy in Practice Project finalized project descriptions due 5.2

Week Fifteen: 5.6-10
Review Week
Philosophy in Practice Poster Presentations due 5.9

Week Sixteen: 5.13
Philosophy in Practice peer evaluations due 5.13
Final Exam: Available on 5.15 at 9 a.m. and due 5.16 at 5 p.m.
The exam can only be taken once.