Fall 2017: The Work of Philosophy / Philosophical Work

Philosophy 2610, Section 1 (82437), Orientation and Methods
MWF 12:00-12:50, Science III 101
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Office: HOB 226, MWF 11:00-12:00, TR 12:00-1:00

This course is designed to introduce new philosophy majors and minors to the discipline and major. We will approach this objective by asking two related but distinct questions, both extensions of our main question “What is philosophy?”:

- “What is the work of philosophy?”
- “What constitutes philosophical work?”

To orient ourselves in the discipline, we will study three types of philosophical writing:

1. Essays that are written with the explicit purpose of answering the question “what is philosophy?” focusing on the contributions from Karsten Harries, Barry Stroud, Martha Nussbaum, Allen Wood, and Robert Brandom included in the collection “What is Philosophy?” available on Blackboard;

2. Selections from key texts in the history of philosophy, from Plato, Aristotle, Sextus Empiricus, Descartes, Hume, Kant, and Hegel, studying the development of philosophical methodology and the unity of discipline attested to by its perennial questions;

3. Short articles and Op-Ed pieces written by contemporary philosophers included in the recent “The Stone Reader” ed. Catapano and Critchley, to get a broad view of what is done in the name of philosophy today.

This class will give you an opportunity to explore and formulate your vision of

1. the work philosophy does and should do in our world, as well as
2. the type of philosophical work and issues and questions you would like to pursue here at CSUB and further into your lives.

PHILOSOPHY @ CSUB: Here are the Student Learning Objectives for our program:

Goal 1 Students will develop the intellectual and practical skills required for effective personal, professional, and civic life.

1A Students will accurately represent and fairly evaluate diverse views and values.
1B Students will analyze and evaluate arguments using formal systems of deductive logic
1C Students will research and write well-supported essays on philosophical issues.
1D Students will defend philosophical positions using well-organized oral presentation skills.
1E Students will apply philosophical skills in community and/or professional settings

Goal 2 Students will develop a broad understanding of the major themes in the field of philosophy.

2A Students will describe and explicate the historical development of philosophical ideas.
2B Students will analyze and compare normative theories of the just, the good, and/or the beautiful.
2C Students will analyze and compare philosophical views of the nature of reality & our knowledge of it.

Course Goals for PHIL 2620: Students who successfully complete this course will:

- engage texts and people with a conscious effort at intellectual empathy by seeking and considering diverse perspectives (1A);
- recognize, analyze, and evaluate arguments in historical and contemporary philosophical texts (1B);
- research and write strong, precise, clear, and grammatically correct philosophical essays (1C);
- orally present a philosophical argument in a well-organized and developed form (1D);
- relate the concepts discussed in the class to their lives outside the classroom (1E);
- know the major areas of philosophy and the central questions investigated in each (Goal 2);
- become acquainted with the history of philosophy and its importance for the study of philosophical topics (2A).
Required Texts:
*What is Philosophy?* by Ragland and Heidt (available on Blackboard)
*The Stone Reader* by Catapano and Critchley (available at Runner Bookstore)

Assignments (and percentage of final grade):

**Participation (10%)**: Doing philosophy requires active thinking and open dialogue. The emphasis of this class is on your individual development as a thinker, speaker, and writer. Thus, part of your overall class grade will be based on how well and often you participate in class discussions, group exercises, and in-class assignments (which cannot be made up if you are absent).

Come to class on time and do not leave before class is over. Do not miss more than three class meetings. If you come to every class, complete reading assignments and respond thoughtfully to the subject matter, participate in class, and help make our class an active and joyful learning space, you will get 100% for your attendance and participation grade. Behaviors obverse to the ones described will result in lower participation grades.

**Readings**: Have the assigned text or book with you every class meeting. If you have access to a printer, I recommend that you print out the reading selections posted on Blackboard and have hard copies to work with in the classroom. Otherwise, you may access the reading on an electronic device (tablets can be checked out from the library). Reading philosophy is a messy affair – you need to underline, take notes, and thoroughly use those texts in class.

**Note on electronic device use**: Using electronic texts is acceptable as long as the devices are used solely for class work. If I find that a student is accessing non-class-related content, that person will lose his/her electronic privileges.

**Writing Assignments (40%)**: The writing assignments will be at least one-page long (~300 words), and should be brought to class, typed and printed. Writing assignments turned in later than the beginning of class time (12:00 p.m.) will be marked as late and will receive at best a letter C grade. These writing assignments are designed to have you practice key critical thinking and writing skills: summarizing and outlining texts, explaining concepts, identifying issues, analyzing and evaluating arguments. These assignments are also opportunities to “make the reading yours,” to understand and respond to the reading by relating to aspect(s) of the main topic or issue.

**Oral Presentation (20%)**: Students will work in pairs to present a topic from the *Stone Reader* and lead class discussion following their presentation. The presenters will prepare an oral presentation (20 minutes) accompanied by PowerPoint slides as well as a one-page handout to distribute to the class.

**Final Portfolio (30%)**: The final portfolio will be a culminating project, a result of your research and reflection on philosophical concepts and problems that interest you as well as the philosophers and philosophical works that inspire and engage you. You will decide on a topic by mid November, do research on your topic to produce an annotated bibliography of ten sources, work on devising a strong thesis statement, and compose an abstract and an outline of a paper that you may in the future write on this topic. You will give a brief presentation of your project in class on the Final Exam day, December 13, 11:00-1:30.

Course Policies
1. All work is expected to be original; plagiarism will be dealt with according to the College Catalog, and can result in a student failing the course or being expelled from the university.
2. **All work must be typed**, 12 pt. Times New Roman (or similar) font, with regular one-inch margins. Include your name, date, course, and word count on all writing assignments.
3. I will not accept any e-mailed assignments.
Week One: Introduction
8.28 Syllabus; Discuss “Philosophy Quotes”
8.30 Lecture: What is Philosophy? (Skim first section from the Stone Reader)
9.1 Truth and Freedom; Discuss Harries “Philosophy in Search of itself” (in What is Philosophy?)

(WA 1: Research and present the meaning and etymology of “discipline” and how it applies to philosophy as a discipline.)

Week Two: Philosopher and the City
9.4 HOLIDAY
9.6 Discuss Plato’s Apology of Socrates
9.8 Multiple Registers of Thinking/Philosophy; Discuss Plato’s Allegory of the Cave

(WA 2: “The unexamined life is not worth living.” What is Plato’s strongest argument in support of this claim? Write down the argument in your own words, including Stephanus numbers for textual reference.)

Week Three: History and Methods of Philosophy
9.11 Argument Analysis Workshop
9.13 Discuss Stroud “What is Philosophy?” (in What is Philosophy?)
9.15 Faculty Day (HWK: prepare a one-minute speech, introducing yourself to the Philosophy Faculty)

(WA 3: Is studying the history of philosophy necessary for doing philosophy? Present Stroud’s view, state whether you agree with his position, and give your reasons (present an argument) for your position.)

Week Four: Systematic Philosophy
9.18 Causal Explanation; Discuss selections from Aristotle’s Metaphysics
9.20 Philosophy and Psychology; Discuss selections from Aristotle’s De Anima
9.21 Kegley Institute Fall Lecture: Ed Wasserman (7 p.m. at the Dore Theater) (attendance required)
9.22 Virtue Ethics; Discuss selections from Aristotle’s Nichomachean Ethics

(WA 4: Choose Aristotle’s definition of either “soul” or “virtue” and explain how it compares to an everyday (common) understanding/use of this term.)

Week Five: Epistemology: Skepticism and the Problem of Knowledge
9.25 Dilemma of the Criterion; Discuss selections from Sextus Empiricus’s Outlines of Pyrrhonism
9.27 Grounding Knowledge; Discuss Descartes’s Meditations (One and Two)
9.29 NO CLASS

(WA 5: Which philosopher’s view is closer to your demands for epistemic justification, Sextus Empiricus or Descartes? Describe both views and present your response.)

Week Six: Empiricism and Kant
10.2 Problem of Induction; Discuss selection from Hume’s Enquiry
10.4 Possibility of Knowledge; Discuss Kant’s Copernican Revolution
10.6 Universality and Autonomy; Discuss Kant’s Categorical Imperative

(WA 6: Is knowledge possible? Present and evaluate an argument for or against the possibility of knowledge.)

Week Seven: Enlightenment and Modernity
10.9 Uses and Abuses of Reason; Discuss Kant’s “What is Enlightenment?”
10.11 Discuss Wood “Philosophy: Enlightenment Apology, Enlightenment Critique” (in What is Philosophy?)
10.13 Alumni Day

(WA 7: Write a précis of Wood’s essay.)
Week Eight: Reason in History
10.16 Dialectical Thinking; Discuss selection from Hegel’s *Logic*
10.18 Negotiating universality: History as the “Space of Reasons”; Discuss selections from Hegel’s *Lectures*
10.20 Discuss Brandom “Reason, Expression, and the Philosophic Enterprise” (in *What is Philosophy?*)

(WA 8: Research the meaning and etymology of “cosmopolitanism.” Should this be a value we defend in the 21st century? Why or why not?)

Week Nine: Public Philosophy in and out of CSUB
10.23 Discuss Nussbaum “Public Philosophy and International Feminism” (in *What is Philosophy?*)
10.25 **Workshop: Philosophy for Children**
10.27 **Workshop: Ethics Bowl**

(WA 9: Prepare a poster or brochure advertising a public philosophy event for our Philosophy Department.)

Week Ten: Philosophy and Politics
10.30 Film: *I am not your Negro*
11.1 Film and Discussion
11.3 **Workshop: Preparing Oral Presentations**

(WA 10: Remember Karsten Harries’s comments in the first week of our class: Philosophy is a pursuit of truth and an exercise in freedom. Political critique also aims at these values. Write a review of the film *I am not your Negro*, focusing on the relationship between politics and philosophy.)

Week Eleven: RELIGION (Stone Reader selections)
11.6 *What is Faith? / The Varieties of Religious Disagreement*
11.8 *The Varieties of Religious Disagreement / Morality's God Problem*
11.10 HOLIDAY

Week Twelve: SCIENCE and PHILOSOPHY
11.13 *Can Science Explain Everything? / The Evolution of Right and Wrong*
11.15 *Where is my Mind? / Blinded by Neuroscience?*
11.17 *The Social Impact of Science / Can We Live with Uncertainty?*

Week Thirteen: MORALITY
11.20 *Some Hard Moral Cases*
11.22 **Thesis Workshop**
11.24 HOLIDAY

Week Fourteen: POLITICS and SOCIETY
11.27 *Economics and Politics*
11.29 *Black, White or Other*
12.1 *Freedom from the Barrel of a Gun*

Week Fifteen: FUTURE OF PHILOSOPHY
12.4 Annotated Bibliography Workshop
12.6 *This American Life*
12.8 *Old Problems, New Spins*
12.11 *New Impressions of an Old Discipline*

Final Exam Day: Wednesday, December 13, 11:00-1:30: Final Project Presentations
**Final Portfolio Due (thesis, abstract, outline, annotated bibliography)**