Modern Philosophy

University of St. Thomas, Houston, TX
Spring 2015
Monday, Wednesday, 1:40 AM to 2:55 PM
Classroom: Malloy 020

Francisco E. Plaza, Adjunct Professor of Philosophy
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Office: 109 in the Math Building,
Office Phone: 713-831-7265
Office Hours: Wednesdays 3 PM to 3:30 PM, or by appointment

Course Summary:

This course will serve primarily as an overview of the modern period in the history of philosophy, from Rene Descartes to Friedrich Nietzsche. We shall be utilizing primary as well as secondary sources in our study. More specifically, the primary texts considered will be those of: Rene Descartes, John Locke, David Hume, Immanuel Kant, Karl Marx, and Friedrich Nietzsche. Generally speaking, we will be exploring various themes in metaphysics, ethics, and political philosophy, as they arise in the text. Our endeavor will also be to show how these thinkers dialogue with our contemporary state of affairs.

Primary Objectives:

The primary aim of the course is to gain an overall understanding of the history of modern philosophy. Moreover, our goal is to intersect our present study of philosophy to our contemporary lives. Students will learn how to analyze philosophical texts directly, as well how to express themselves critically through articulating philosophical positions in writing.

Required Texts:


Note: this syllabus is subject to revision at the discretion of the professor.


**Classroom Expectations:**

Philosophy cannot only be studied passively (through readings or lectures); it must be actively engaged. Accordingly, classes will consist in lectures and discussions. **Students are expected to participate in class dialogue by asking questions and posing solutions to philosophical inquiries.** Obviously, this will require regular classroom attendance.

If help is needed in further understanding the class, or in preparing for the exam, or in writing the papers, please do not hesitate to contact me either during office hours, or by email. Students can also find help at the Tutoring Center, on the second floor of the Crooker center. They have a tutor specifically for Philosophy.

**Computers, text messaging, and other forms of disruptive digital multimedia are prohibited.** Students are expected to take notes the old fashioned way: pen and paper, with their book on hand.

**Assignments and Examinations:**

**Check class schedule page for assignment dates.**

**Reading Assignments:** **Reading assignments of primary texts are mandatory.** If a student does not complete the assigned reading for a particular day, this will severely impact their ability to understand the class lecture or discussion. Moreover, it will have a negative effect on their participation grade.

**Daily quizzes:** Apart from classroom discussion, class readings will also be evaluated through the use of daily quizzes over that particular day’s reading. Quizzes will consist of three brief questions regarding the reading. They will take place at the beginning of every class. **There are no make-up quizzes. If a student arrives late to class, they will receive a zero for the quiz.**

**Research Paper:** Students have the freedom to choose the area of focus for the paper. The paper itself should be 10 pages, double spaced, Times New Roman font, size 12. The format of these papers should be in Chicago style.

They should be **turned in electronically (via email) with the student’s name in the document’s filename, as well as printed at the beginning of class on each due date.**
Syllabus: Philosophy of Human Person – PHIL 3317-A  
Professor Plaza

Students are expected to have a minimum of two secondary sources (not provided in class), which could be library books, or articles. However, students, are expected to meet with the professor at least two weeks before the paper is due to discuss their topic and sources. The professor’s approval of the topic, as well as the sources, is required before the paper can be turned in.

The cover page and works cited page are not part of the expected page count.

Examinations: There will be a final exam consisting of essay questions. The final exam will be cumulative.

Missing the final exam will result in failure of the final exam. If you cannot take the exam on the scheduled date, you are responsible for scheduling an alternate time to take the final before the end of the final exam period.

Grade Distribution and Scale:

- Class Participation: 10%
- Quizzes: 10%
- Research Paper: 40%
- Final Exam: 40%

A: 93-100  
A-: 90-92  
B+: 87-89  
B: 83-86  
B-: 80-82  
C+: 77-79  
C: 73-76  
C-: 70-72  
D+: 67-69  
D: 63-66  
D-: 60-62  
F: 59 or below

Attendance:

Students are required to attend class. Attendance factors directly into one’s participation grade. Moreover, examination questions on the final will follow from what is dealt with in class. If you have a good reason for being absent, please let me know ahead of time if possible. An unexcused absence will result in failure for that day’s quiz.

Note: this syllabus is subject to revision at the discretion of the professor.
Suggestions for Class Readings:

Students are encouraged to take careful notes on each of the reading assignments. This means preparing an outline, underlining text, creating brief summaries, and writing margin notes. Clear, slow, patient reading is necessary to accomplish this. Students will find that their work in this regard will be indispensable for them for the mid-term and final exams. There will not be enough time to re-read texts; students will have to rely primarily on their notes (both class notes, as well as textual notes) for the purpose of study.

Academic Dishonesty:

Plagiarism and cheating in any form will result in failure of the course. Plagiarism means using another author’s work in part or in whole without attributing it to that author. This includes not quoting the author when using his words, or paraphrasing the author without proper citation. Another form of cheating is to copy another student’s work (be it in a paper or during the exam), or to have another person do your work.

If you are worried about inadvertent plagiarism, please visit http://campusguides.stthom.edu/plagiarism for suggestions about paraphrasing and when to cite a text to which you are referring.

Do not copy and paste from Wikipedia articles or other similar kinds of on-line summaries, or from papers posted by other students on-line. Wikipedia is not an academic source, SparkNotes is not one either, and neither are other students. Aside from the universally accessible tool of Google, your professor also has easy access to “Turn-it-in.”

Disability Statement:

Any student with a documented disability needing academic accommodations is requested to speak with me as early as possible. All discussions will remain confidential. Students with disabilities will also need to contact Counseling and Disability Services in the Crooker Center. This office can be reached at (713) 525-2169 or 6953.
Tentative Course Schedule:

Modern Philosophy 3317-A

Spring, 2015
Professor Plaza

Day: Date: Description:

January

Week 1

Introduction

Monday 01/12/15 No Readings. Syllabus. Schedule.
Wednesday 01/14/15 Modern Science (pp. 216-219); Bacon in Stumpf (pp. 220-224) (handout).

Week 2

Monday 01/19/15 MLK Day: No Class.

Rene Descartes – Meditations on First Philosophy

Wednesday 01/21/15 Descartes' Dedication, Preface, and Synopsis; Meditation 1 (pp. 47-63); Stumpf handout (Descartes: pp. 236-248).

Week 3

Monday 01/26/15 Meditations 2-3 (pp. 63-81).
Wednesday 01/28/15 Meditations 4-5 (pp. 81-92).

February

Week 4

Monday 02/02/15 Meditations 6 (pp. 92-103).
Wednesday 02/04/15 Hobbes and Machiavelli (Stumpf: pp. 211-213; 224-234) (handout).

Note: schedule subject to revision.
### John Locke – *Second Treatise of Government*

**Week 5**
- **Monday** 02/09/15  
  Preface; Chs. 1-4 (pp. 5-18); Stumpf handout (Locke: pp. 264-274).
- **Wednesday** 02/11/15  
  Chs. 5-8 (pp. 18-65).

**Week 6**
- **Monday** 02/16/15  
  Chs. 9-15 (pp. 65-91).
- **Wednesday** 02/18/15  
  Chs. 16-19 (pp. 91-124).

### David Hume – *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*

**Week 7**
- **Monday** 02/23/15  
  Parts 1-2; Stumpf handout (Hume: pp. 280-289)
- **Wednesday** 02/25/15  
  Parts 3-7.

**March**

**Week 8**
- **Monday** 03/02/15  
  Parts 8-10.
- **Wednesday** 03/04/15  
  Parts 11-12.

**Week 9 – Spring Break**
- **Monday** 03/09/15  
  Spring Break: No Class.
- **Wednesday** 03/11/15  
  Spring Break: No Class.

### Immanuel Kant – *Grounding of the Metaphysics of Morals*

**Week 10**
- **Monday** 03/16/15  
  Stumpf handout (Kant: pp. 299-324).

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Note: schedule subject to revision.
Wednesday 03/18/15  Preface; Section 1.

**Week 11**

Monday 03/23/15  Section 2.

Wednesday 03/25/15  Section 3.

**Karl Marx – The Communist Manifesto**

**Week 12**

Monday 03/30/15  Hegel (Stumpf) (handout: pp. 325-341).

**April**

Wednesday 04/01/15  Stumpf handout (Marx: pp. 401-418).

**Week 13**


**Friedrich Nietzsche – Genealogy of Morals**

Wednesday 04/08/15  Preface; First essay (1 to 10) (pp. 3-24); Stumpf handout (Nietzsche: pp. 419-430).

**Week 14**

Monday 04/13/15  First essay (11 to 17); Second essay (1-15) (pp. 24-60).

Wednesday 04/15/15  Second essay (16 to 25); Third essay (1 to 11) (pp. 60-91).

**Week 15**

Monday 04/20/15  Research Paper Due. [Nietzsche] Third essay (12 to 28) (pp. 91-128).

**Conclusion**

Wednesday 04/22/15  St. John Paul II – Veritatis Splendor: Introduction; ch. 1; ch. 2 (I to II) (pp. 1-62).

Note: schedule subject to revision.
## Week 16

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<tr>
<th>Day</th>
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<th>Activity</th>
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<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>04/27/15</td>
<td>St. John Paul II – <em>Veritatis Splendor</em>: Ch. 2 (III to IV); Ch. 3; Conclusion (pp. 62-112).</td>
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