The Western intellectual tradition was born of philosophy first commenced in Ancient Greece. Indeed, the term itself is of the language of this ancient culture: it is a compound of φίλος / pilos meaning “love” (from the verb φιλέω), and σοφία / sophia meaning “wisdom.” One of the primary themes already present in the Ancient Greeks’ pursuit of knowledge, and running through Medieval and Modern philosophy, is that of the nature of the human (ἄνθρωπος / anthropos; hominus for the Latins). Serving as an introduction to philosophy, this course will survey primary texts from the Ancient, Medieval, Modern, and Post-Modern periods highlighting the key aspects of human nature: sensation, emotion, understanding, will, habits, soul and body. The primary texts considered will be those of Plato and Aristotle (5th Century B.C.), St. Thomas Aquinas (13th Century A.D.), Rene Descartes (16th Century A.D.), David Hume (18th Century A.D.), and Jean-Paul Sartre (20th Century, A.D.). A pervasive theme throughout the course will be the relation of the concepts of nature, definition, and the human person. The course terminates with a treatment phenomenology as a post-modern response to problems in the person stemming from modernism.

Primary Objectives:

The primary aim of the course is to gain understanding of the theories of human nature presented by key figures in the history of philosophy from Ancient to Modern times. Students will learn to utilize tools of textual analysis and writing necessary for critically expressing philosophical positions articulated in the primary text.

In accordance with the University of St. Thomas’ Student Learning Objectives, promulgated by the Director of the QEP (Quality Enhancement Plan), students will be tested twice during the course of the semester to show competence in identifying and explaining the premises and conclusion of an argument imbedded in a text.
Required Text:


Rene Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*

David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*

Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism is a Humanism*

Selections from Edmund Husserl and Robert Sokolowski

*These texts must be obtained for the course.

Required Supplemental Readings:

Supplemental readings will be assigned at various times throughout the course. These readings will be handed out in class, e-mailed, and or posted on Blackboard. In the case of the missed class, students are responsible for obtaining supplemental material from the professor via e-mail request.

Classroom Expectations:

Philosophy is best pursued in dialogue (dialectically). Accordingly, classes will consist in lectures and discussion. Students are encouraged to participate in in-class dialogue by asking questions and posing solutions to philosophical and exegetical problems. Obviously, this will require regular classroom attendance.

Technology in the Classroom:

With the permission of the Professor, students may use devises (lab-tops, i-pads, etc.) for the purpose of taking notes.

*Text messaging, checking e-mail, and other forms of disruptive digital multimedia are prohibited. Engaging in these types of activities during class will result in the loss of participation points and an absence for the day of the infraction.*

Assignments and Examinations:

*Reading Assignments*: Reading assignments of primary and supplementary texts will be given in class or via e-mail.

*Short Essays*: Over the duration of the course, two essays addressing textually relevant questions or problems will be assigned and due at the start of the subsequent class meeting. Essays are to be two pages, double-spaced, with a font
size no smaller than 10 and no bigger than 12. In addition, students will be required to submit one short reflective essay on course material, on page in length. Essay assignments will be graded on a scale of 1-10, 10 being a perfect score.

Note: Questions or Problems for the short textual essays may be formulated by students themselves, with the approval of the Professor.

*Reading Quizzes: Reading quizzes may be given periodically throughout the semester, at the beginning of class.*

*Examination: There will be a final examination, to be held in class, consisting in one comprehensive type essay along with sections in the form of multiple choice and or fill-in-the-blank.*

*Where students wish to improve poor grades, re-writes will be permitted on the short essay assignments.*

*Missing the final exam will result in failure of the final exam.*

**Grade Distribution:**

Class Participation: 10%
Essays: 45%
Final Exam: 45%

*Note: Strong Dialectical Contributions Merit Extra-Credit.*

**Attendance:**

Students are required to attend class. Grades will be adversely affected by significant absences from class.

**Academic Dishonesty:**

Plagiarism and cheating in any form will result in failure of the assignment/exam, and possibly 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.

*Do not copy and paste from Wikipedia articles or other similar kinds of online summaries, or from the papers of other students. Turn-it-in will be used on a regular basis to check student work for plagiarism.*
Disability Statement:

Any student with a disability requiring accommodations in this course is encouraged to contact Counseling and Disability Services in Crooker Center. Their offices can be reached at (713) 525-6953 or 2169. Special needs will be accommodated by the Professor.

Suggestions for Reading Methodology:

Beginning in the medieval period, there is a longstanding commentary tradition. Philosophers in both the Arab and Latin traditions of the west composed commentaries on important texts of ancient Greek philosophy. This method is helpful, not only as a teaching tool (many commentaries were composed by masters at the request of and for the sake of students), but also to the understanding of the composers. Commentaries may consist in summaries, glosses (explanation, interpretation, or paraphrase), and development of blocks of primary text. Students are encouraged to take careful notes on the reading assignments in a similar fashion. This method, though time consuming, will provide the student with invaluable concrete material, ready-at-hand to be utilized in composition of the short essay assignments and final exam. It will also allow the student to formulate textual outlines (divisio textus) highlighting the general order of the text, key points, technical terms, and arguments. Along with notes, students are also encouraged to compose philosophical lexicons, defining key technical terms and vocabulary found in the primary text.

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