COURSE SYLLABUS

PHIL 3313: Metaphysics
Spring 2017
PHIL 3313 D: MoWedFri 9:10 AM - 10:00 AM, Strake 204
PHIL 3313 F: MoWedFri 10:10 AM - 11:00 AM, Strake 106

John Boyer, Adjunct Professor of Philosophy
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Office Hours: Tue, Thurs, 11:10 AM-12:00 PM, Sullivan Hall, Rm. 212 or by appointment

Required texts:


All other readings for the class will be posted in the course documents section on Blackboard.

The aim of the course:

This is an introductory course in Philosophy. In this course, we will consider several important questions: “What is the human person?”; “How do we know things?”; “How do we communicate?” and “What has philosophy to do with human life?” We will explore these questions through some of the most notable writings in the western canon.

We will also focus on the arguments which the authors present to support their positions. An important part of philosophy, as well as an important part of being an intelligent, educated person, is being able to understand why something is true or claimed to be true. Human beings, as rational animals, use arguments to support and justify what they think to be true. Thus, in addition to exploring what the human person is, you will also learn how to identify and explain arguments. This is a crucial skill. It is not enough to know what positions a philosopher or thinker holds; you must also understand why. Until you understand why a thinker holds a position, you are not able to properly determine whether the position is true or false. These exercises will also prepare you for later philosophy classes, in which you will have to be able to present counterarguments and recognize how particular arguments function within the context of

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1 These books can be purchased from the bookstore. If you want to get them at a lower price, I would also recommend checking Amazon as well as the local Half Price Books stores, especially the Westheimer @ Yoakum and Rice Village locations.
a broader argument. In order to succeed at these papers, you need to clearly present the arguments, premise by premise, rather than merely summarizing the text. You must also cite and quote the text to support your analysis of what the argument is.

Assignments and Grading:

This class requires a combination of papers, tests, and class participation.

Each paper will focus on an important argument found in one of the texts we have read. Students will correctly identify and explain the premises and conclusion of an argument imbedded in the texts we have read. The purpose of paper writing is threefold. First, papers demonstrate that you have done the readings and comprehended the material. Second, papers demonstrate that you can clearly communicate and convey your understanding. Third, papers are means by which you practice and improve your writing ability.

Paper 1: 20%
Paper 2:
Comprehensive Final Exam: 25%
Participation: 20%

A = 100-94%  A- = 90-93%; B+ = 87-89%; B = 84-86%; B- = 80-83%; C+ = 77-79%;
C = 74-76%; C- = 70-73%; D+ = 67-69%; D = 60-66%; F = 59% and below.

Attendance and Participation

One of the best ways to learn is to ask questions and to discuss them. This is definitely true of philosophy. Since most students will not have taken any philosophy classes before, questions and discussion are encouraged. Participation has three components. First, students must attend every class. If you cannot attend class, you must notify me ahead of time and provide a valid reason for your absence. Second, students must do all the readings and bring the assigned text to class. Third, students must participate in class discussions and turn in any and all reflection papers.

Electronic distractions such as computers, smartphones, and tablets (e.g. iPads) may not be used during class except with my permission. Students may record lectures if they wish.

Academic Dishonesty

Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated. If I discover cheating or blatant plagiarism, the student will automatically fail the class. Plagiarism is presenting someone else’s work as your own. This includes paraphrasing other author’s words without attribution. If you are worried about inadvertent plagiarism, please visit campusguides.stthom.edu/plagiarism for suggestions about paraphrasing and when to cite a text to which you are referring.

Disabilities
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 Crooker Center. This office can be reached at (713) 525-2169 or 6953.

Disclaimer

This syllabus is subject to change at the professor’s discretion.