Syllabus: Metaphysics (PHIL 3313, A, B, and E)

Spring Semester 2017

Instructor: Theodore P. Rebard, PhD; office: Sullivan House, 103; Telephone: (713)525-3953; Office hours: M&W 10:00-12:00; TuTh & F 1:00-3:00, and other times by arrangement at mutual convenience; E-mail: rebard@stthom.edu.

Texts: Man's Search for Meaning, Viktor Frankl; lecture notes for course, available from instructor at $20.00; A Summa of the Summa Peter Kreeft

Requirements: Attendance is not optional, nor is tardiness. Preparation according to any assignments is necessary for the sake of learning, and for the sake of intelligent class participation. Every student is subject to oral recitation every day. There will be a midterm and a final examination, and the final examination is comprehensive. Active participation is earnestly encouraged. All of these considerations are relevant to the final grade. (The examinations are weighted at 45% each; 10% depends on helpful and worthwhile class participation.)

Objective: To provide an introduction to the basics of the universal, comprehensive and coherent underlying principles of all reality and so therefore of human lives with respect to all the dimensions of human wisdom. Consideration will be given to the major areas of metaphysical enquiry, with emphasis on the concrete, personal, and contemporary importance/relevance of this science as it reaches the first and deepest sources of the answers to the questions that typify philosophy: Who am I? Where did I come from? Where am I going? How should I live? The profoundest human answers to all these questions lies in metaphysics.

Method: The course will proceed chiefly by lecture-presentations by the instructor. Of course, questions and commentary from and among students is expected and encouraged. It remains, though, to the discretion of the instructor to provide intellectual order and discipline to such questions and commentary. I cannot sufficiently emphasize the importance of daily disciplined study to assimilate this work. Without preparation and follow-up any day’s classwork is wasted. As in all other important parts of one’s life: Achievement requires discipline.

A 10-12 page original philosophical essay will be required. Topics and outlines must be submitted to the instructor before the mid-term.

Misc: Promptness is essential, as are attendance and alertness/attention. Grading considers participation. No class absences are allowable without explicit permission; absence (unless expressly excused) will be counted against the final grade in the value of one grade point per instance. There is to be no use whatsoever of cell-phones, texting, nor any devices huitusmodi -- nor laptops except for note-taking. Failures anent these policies
will be considered grounds for grade reduction in increments of one grade point per incident.

NB: TWO OR MORE UNEXCUSED ABSENCES WILL BE SUFFICIENT REASON FOR FAILURE (F) IN THE COURSE, ANY OTHER CONSIDERATIONS NOTWITHSTANDING. Three absences, even with reason, constitute grounds to fail the course.

Grading: A = 90-100; B = 80-89; C = 70-79; D = 60-69; anything below this fails. ‘Plus’ and ‘minus’ are divided by .33 pts. within the tens, as above. (e.g., 90-93 = A-; 87-89 = B+ etc.) The mid-term and final examinations are obligatory in all cases, as is the essay mentioned above. Dates and times of examinations are posted on the UST website.

ANY ACADEMIC DISHONESTY WILL MERIT A GRADE OF FAILURE (F) IN THE COURSE. THREE OR MORE UNEXCUSED ABSENCES WILL ALSO YIELD FAILURE IN THE COURSE.