"Let no one when young delay to study philosophy, nor when he/she is old grow weary of study. For no one can come to early or too late to secure the health of his/her soul."
(Epicurus)

"Unless we can so enlarge our interests as to include the whole outer world, we remain like a garrison in a beleaguered fortress, knowing that the enemy prevents escape and that ultimate surrender is inevitable. In such a life there is no peace, but a constant strife between the insistence of desire and the powerlessness of the will. In one way or another, if our life is to be great and free, we must escape this prison and this strife. One way of escape is by philosophic contemplation."
(Bertrand Russell)

"Philosophic study means the habit of always seeing an alternative."
(James)

"Philosophy is really homesickness."
(Novalis)

“To be or not to be. That is the question.”
(Shakespeare)

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PHI 121: INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

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REQUIRED MATERIALS:


- **Selected handouts and Blackboard Readings**

- **Bound Notebook (spiral, etc. but with pockets)**

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

1. You will determine and explore the nature of your own curiosity (deemed peculiarly "human" according to Aristotle), and appreciate how such wonder associates you to fundamental, ultimate, perennial questions sought by us all, regardless of cultural perspective.

2. You will hopefully "enlarge the Self." (Bertrand Russell)

3. You will learn to discern and describe various branches, methods, concepts, interests, values and tasks of world philosophies/ers, including current trends affecting us in the end of this century. You will be able to do this through the acquisition of some selected vocabulary, concept identification, and essay exploration.

4. You will become acquainted with multiple, conflicting arguments answering philosophical queries. At first, you might find that you hold contradictory notions about reality, truth, values etc. Eventually, you will learn to process these notions freely, openly, and thoughtfully. In short, you will become a critical "thinker", caring for what Bertrand Russell calls "the goods of the mind".

5. You will explore some multicultural philosophies through a contextual format; that is, you will discover how context, method, assumptions, biases, etc. web a philosophical worldview. You will also delineate how objectivity, consistency, informed scholarship, and the standard of reasonableness assist you in critique, evaluation and personal meaning.
6. You will internalize some important world history of ideas, especially those ideas affecting the nature of God, the self, knowledge, meaning and purpose, value creation and your own definition of self.

7. You will encounter and write about that enlarged self resulting in the practice of "philosophic contemplation", or ‘Darsana”, or other wisdom visions.

**COURSE EVALUATION AND GRADING:**

A Directed Philosophy Journal: (part of your assessments +1) 4 entries at 5% each = 30%

3 In-Class/Take-Home Assessments (Open Note, With Extra Credit Incentive) (10% each = 30%)

3 Debate Forum Experiences; (10% each for = 30%)

Two Teaching Events (10% each = 20%)

= 100%

**A DIRECTED PHILOSOPHY JOURNAL:** The first step towards achieving success in your philosophy journal is to find a spiral notebook. You will write in it as much as you’d like, and this will be your “thinking about thinking” place to record what you read or what we have talked about in class, as well as responses to audio-visual experiences or group reading lessons. In short, this is an informal journal requiring deep-seated informed points of view, of interest, of like and dislike. I will try to post assignments in Blackboard for you this semester, as well as hand-out paper copies in class. For those of you who miss the paper assignments, it will then be your responsibility to look on-line for this and get the assignments in this fashion. (I am trying to choose sustainability...)

For each journal assignment, you will be given a selection of essay/work sheet options that I provide for various thinkers/questions in your text. You will be required to answer only one option per assessment, and this option will be due one week after your in-class assessment portion.

**THE IN-CLASS ASSESSMENTS:** Three times this semester you will be given an in-class test experience that will ask you to identify and explain various concepts and quotes by philosophers from the lecture and reading materials covered in class. You will be allowed to bring in two pages of material for this test, and I shall give you up to 40 points extra credit incentive if you have in-depth quality. In this way, you already have an “A” before your test begins, and you should use this incentive as a way to be ready for the in-class event. I always grade my tests on a curve basis, and you can easily maintain the grade you like by your choice for preparation.
Generally, there are approximately 10 quotes/concepts questions and 5 concepts/explanations questions which you will answer in one test sitting.

**DEBATE FORUMS:**

*Three times* this semester we will have a debate experience. Your class will vote on a topic relating to a new group of chapter readings and prepare to dialogue about this issue. The grade given for these projects will be based upon a joint attendance/writing policy. Thus, you are required to be in class during the both meetings of these weeks (mandatory attendance) and be part of a group platform position paper if you wish to receive an "A" grade. The debate forum requirements are as follows:

A. Attendance both days for your week;
B. Copious notes/quotes on your 4 philosophy readings. One of these readings must be from a Blackboard offering;
C. A personal argument platform outlining the position of your position, the people used, and the members of your council. (2 handwritten pages)
D. A personal quotation list citing 5 substantial quotes from each of your four readings (thinkers). These reading must include 1 reading taken from a Blackboard offering.

**TEACHING EVENTS:**

Twice this semester, you will be asked to join to “teach” certain readings within a a Question section. You may work with another member, but you must individually provide the following when your teaching days arrive:

A. An outline representing the contents of your teaching;
B. Copious notes on the readings including section by section discussion;
C. Copious notes on a Blackboard reading or an SEP (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy) selection that pertains to your thinkers;
D. A study guide list of concepts to be handed out and taught in your teaching; these might be possible parts of the in-class assessment;
E. 5 substantive quotations from your readings should be provided;
F. any extra materials you wish to address the content of the subject;
G. (NOTE: If you are relatively shy, you need not talk to the class, but you must be part of your group in presence, and your talking should thus be done in your written work).

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:**

**ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION**

Regular class attendance and participation is expected and there will be many times that your “live write” takes place. I believe this kind of course can only be successful thorough a teacher-student partnership. As such, missing class could hurt your grade. Still, as an added incentive, if you attend all classes before week 13 and have all your responses handed in to that date, you
may drop a writing a Journal essay for your final grade. On the down side, I also reserve the right to down grade you one letter grade after missing 6 classes.

**LATE ASSIGNMENTS:** All in-class tests and assignments will be due when specified on the syllabus, unless the class opts for a “benevolence” day. I shall take late ESSAYS PAPERS up to one class day late; however, there will be no re-write option. Those papers handed in on time will have this re-write option.

**PHILOSOPHICAL DILEMMAS:** When confused or troubled (about the subject matter called philosophy, the readings, the class format, etc., please connect with me. Also, please do not interrupt our class time to receive handouts, etc. that you have missed. Our time (Kant) is a construction that we cannot waste in studying this discipline! I want you to receive the grade you desire, will, and make an effort towards and I am here to facilitate your success, but we are in an academic contract this semester.

**READING PHILOSOPHY:** Experience has shown me that the reading of philosophy may appear: 1) difficult and overwhelming, perhaps at first glance hazardous to your health; 2) dry, crusty, lacking in passion, downright boring; 3) seemingly inaccessible and irrelevant; 4) all of these. This is natural with your first reading attempts. Part of my job is to help you comprehend this material without outlining in such a way that you never need read it at all, and I shall make every attempt to do so. PLEASE BRING YOUR TEXTS TO CLASS, so that we can learn how to read and understand this material together. Also, please try to read your assignment before class time; I can explain concepts more directly if you have something “tangible” to explain your confusion. If you hang in there, knowing that not all of the material is easy at first, and give your mind a thorough chance to excel (this always takes time), you will be amazed at the depth of your intelligence. In this course, patience is a virtue, and the exercise of the mind, like the body, cannot provide immediate “in shaping” without proper conditioning.

**CLASS ETIQUETTE:** In this class setting I expect all of you to feel free to speak your mind after careful consideration of the integrity I demand from all of you. This should be a safe place where freedom of expression is welcome, but hate language, disrespect, plagiarism, and any obvious lack of intellectual dignity and integrity toward another person here will be promptly stopped me for the greater classroom good. PLEASE TURN OFF YOUR CELL PHONES AND TURN ON TO THE CLASS ACTIVITY!!! I MIGHT REMIND YOU IN PERSON IF YOU FORGET...

**GRADING:** I intend to grade you developmentally. This will be in addition to a quantitative averaging of your scores. Therefore, you will note that all assignments are take home, and I shall allow you time to concentrate on content more than form in your journal so that you can become more comfortable with the subject matter and the philosophical process and not be penalized for form. Perfection is not expected for any "A", but continuous improvement is part of the evidence I require for giving you a final assessment. If at first you do not succeed, keep going, as the proof is in the final metaphorical pudding, not in those early attempts at learning how to cook, (or think). Note that you have several grading types that allow me to be able to
"drop" less admirable grades in my averaging as I witness your progression. As an added incentive; those students who have straight “A's” in their work by Thanksgiving break may be allowed to drop a further course requirement.

TENTATIVE COURSE SYLLABUS

(NOTE: This is an ambitious syllabus subject to change; be prepared to go with the flow of assignments changes if needed. I deserve the right to “select” or “delete” authors, but these shall be done during class)

WEEK 1 -- (August 24-28)
Why Do Philosophy?
Assignment: Buy Book: Read and bring all of Selected Handouts to class for second meeting

WEEK 2/3 – (August 31-September 4, September 7-11)
Why Do Philosophy continued, and Question #1: What Gives My Life Meaning?
Assignment: Read Question #1 section Selected Handouts; bring materials to class

WEEKS 3/4 – (September 14-18, 21-25)
Question #4: What does Science Tell Me about the World? What Should I believe? Creation, Evolution or Design?
Assignment: Read Question 4 section Week 3 and Question #5 section Week 4; bring materials to class

WEEKS 5/6 – (September 28-October 2, October 5-9)
Questions #7 and #8: What Do I Know? Does Language Make Me Think the Way I do?
Assignment: Read Question #7 by Week 5 and Question #8 by Week 6; bring materials to class

In-class Assessment and Journal Assignment #1
WEEKS 7/8/9 – (October 12-16, 19-23, 26-30)
Part 4, The Dilemmas of Personhood: Questions #9, #10, and TBA (class vote on topic)
Assignment: Read Question #7 section and Selected Handouts; bring all materials to class

DEBATE #1

WEEK 10—(November 2-6)
TENTATIVE (if time allows)
Question #17: I like it, But is it Art?
Assignment: Read Question #17 section; bring all materials to class

In-Class Assessment and Journal Assignment #2

WEEKS 11/12 -- (November 9-13, 16-20)
Part 5: Living a Good Life
Assignment: Read Question #14 section and Question #16 section

WEEK 13 — (November 23-25)
TEACHING EVENTS #1 or #2

DEBATE #2 ON Question #18

WEEK 14 — (November 30-December 4)
Part 6: Justice and Responsibility
Assignment: Read Question #18 section

TEACHING EVENT #2

VOTE ON CHAPTER: Questions 2, 3, 6, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, (17) 19, 20
Notification to students who may drop a further requirement due to straight “A’s”

WEEK 15—(December 7-11) Question TBA (class vote)
Assignments: In-class attendance required to work on DEBATE

In-Class Assessment and Journal Assignment #3

WEEK 16 — (December 14-18)

FINAL DEBATE INSTEAD OF FINAL EXAM

Journal Assignment #4 Due but may be handed in any time throughout the semester