

Philosophy 2300: Beginning Philosophy Spring 2019

Basic Information

Instructor: Joel Velasco

E-mail: joel.velasco@ttu.edu

Office: 265G Eng/Phil

Office Hours: M, T, Th 12:00-1:00 or by appointment

TA: Jordan Mascari (Jordan.mascari@ttu.edu)

TA's office: Phil 263, hours W, F 2:00-3:00

Class meets MWF, 9:00-9:50 (in Phil 164)

Honors class meets MWF, 2:00-2:50 (in Phil 301)

What is philosophy?

“Philosophy is to be studied, not for the sake of any definite answers to its questions, but rather for the sake of the questions themselves; because these questions enlarge our conception of what is possible, enrich our intellectual imagination and diminish dogmatic assurance which closes the mind against speculation.”

(Bertrand Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy*, 1912)

“Philosophy is thinking in slow motion. It breaks down, describes and assesses moves we ordinarily make at great speed - to do with our natural motivations and beliefs. It then becomes evident that alternatives are possible.”

— John Campbell (Berkeley)

Philosophy is “the ungainly attempt to tackle questions that come naturally to children, using methods that come naturally to lawyers.”

—David Hills (Stanford)

Course Description

This course will be organized around several major questions which we will approach from many different sides. Examples include: 1) Is government authority justified? 2) Do we have free will? and 3) Should I believe in God?

Required Texts: Rosen et. al *The Norton Introduction to Philosophy* (2nd edition) 2018. Homework assignments and other readings for the course will be found on the course website:

<http://joelvelasco.net/teaching/2300>

Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) Language, Philosophy, and Culture Description and Objectives

Courses in this category focus on how ideas, values, beliefs, and other aspects of culture reflect and affect human experience.

Courses involve the exploration of ideas that foster aesthetic and intellectual creation in order to understand the human condition across cultures.

1. **Critical Thinking Skills:** to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information
2. **Communication Skills:** to include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral and visual communication
3. **Personal Responsibility:** to include the ability to connect choices, actions and consequences to ethical decision-making
4. **Social Responsibility:** to include intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities

TTU Language, Philosophy, and Culture Student Learning Outcomes

1. Identify methodologies of historical, literary, philosophical, and/or aesthetic research and recognize their applicability to everyday life.
2. Develop analytical arguments in written and/or oral forms.
3. Evaluate events, ideas, and artistic expressions in terms of multiple cultural contexts and value systems.
4. Demonstrate ways in which the humanities are fundamental to the health and survival of any society.

TTU College-Level Core Competence Statement: Students graduating from Texas Tech University should be able to: think critically and to evaluate possible multiple interpretations, cultural contexts, and values.

| THECB OBJECTIVES | TTU S.L. OUTCOMES | ASSESSMENT METHODS |
|---|--|--|
| Critical Thinking Skills include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information | Identify methodologies of historical, literary, philosophical, and/or aesthetic research and recognize their applicability to everyday life. | Short essays, midterm exam, final exam |
| Communication Skills: to include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral and visual communication | Develop analytical arguments in written and/or oral forms. | Short essays, midterm exam, final exam |
| Personal Responsibility: to include the ability to connect choices, actions and consequences to ethical decision-making | Demonstrate ways in which the humanities are fundamental to the health and survival of any society. | Short essays, midterm exam, final exam |
| Social Responsibility: to include intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities | Evaluate events, ideas, and artistic expressions in terms of multiple cultural contexts and value systems. | Short essays, midterm exam, final exam |

Grades

The grades will be based on class participation, short essays, a midterm exam, and a final exam.

- Class Participation (10%): Effective class participation is based on coming to class prepared to engage in class activities, especially exercises in which you work together in groups with other students to invent an example or solve a puzzle that illustrates central concepts for that day. The best way to prepare for class is to read and think about the material indicated on the syllabus before coming to class.
- Short Assignments (30%): Approximately every two weeks throughout the semester (see due dates marked on the course schedule), you will be asked to complete a homework assignment. Assignments will usually be in the form of short essays. Each assignment will be worth five points.
- Midterm Exam (30%): There will be one midterm examination on week 8 (just before spring break).
- Final Exam (30%): The final exam will be held at the regularly scheduled final exam time (Tue, Dec 11th 7:30-10:00 am for the 10:00 lecture, Fri, Dec 7th 1:30 - 4:00 pm for the 11:00 lecture).

Rough Grading Scale:

92—100% → A
90—91% → A-
88—99% → B+
82—87% → B
80—81% → B-
78—79% → C+
70—77% → C
65—70% → C-
50—64% → D
0—49% → 0

Late Homework Policy

In the absence of a documented excuse, late homework assignments will be penalized at a rate of up to one point per day.

Religious holy days: a student who intends to observe a religious holy day should make that intention known in writing to the instructor prior to the absence. A student who is absent for the observance of a religious holy day shall be allowed to take an exam or complete an assignment scheduled for that day within a reasonable time after the absence.

ADA Statement: Any student who, because of a disability, may require special arrangements in order to meet the course requirements should contact the instructor as soon as possible to make any necessary arrangements. Students should present appropriate verification from Student Disability Services during the instructor's office hours. Please note: instructors are not allowed to provide classroom accommodations to a student until appropriate verification from Student Disability Services has been provided. For additional information, please contact Student Disability Services in West Hall or call 806-742-2405.

Rough Course Schedule (subject to change) – see the course webpage at <http://joelvelasco.net/teaching/2300>

Part I (of class): Political Philosophy

Chapter 22: Does Justice Require Equality?

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| Week 1-2 | Introduction to Chapter 22 Nussbaum, "Political Equality" Nozick, "Distributive Justice" from <i>Anarchy, State, and Utopia</i> |
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Chapter 21: What is the Value of Liberty?

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| Week 2-3 | Introduction to Chapter 21 Locke, "A Letter Concerning Toleration" Mill, "On Liberty" Devlin, "Morals and the Criminal Law" |
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Chapter 20: How can the State be Justified?

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| Week 1-2 | Introduction to Chapter 20 Simmons, "Rights Based Justifications for the State" |
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Part II (of class): Metaphysics and the Philosophy of Mind

Chapter 12: What is Race? What is Gender?

Chapter 7: Is Mind Material?

Chapter 8: What is Consciousness?

Chapter 11: What is Personal Identity?

Chapter 13: Do We Possess Free Will?

Part III (of class): Philosophy of Religion

Chapter 1: Does God Exist?

Chapter 2: Is it Reasonable to Believe without Evidence?