

PHIL400

STUDENT WARNING: This course syllabus is from a previous semester archive and serves only as a preparatory reference. Please use this syllabus as a reference only until the professor opens the classroom and you have access to the updated course syllabus. Please do NOT purchase any books or start any work based on this syllabus; this syllabus may NOT be the one that your individual instructor uses for a course that has not yet started. If you need to verify course textbooks, please refer to the online course description through your student portal. This syllabus is proprietary material of APUS.

Course Summary

Course : PHIL400 **Title :** Contemporary Issues in Philosophy

Length of Course : 8

Prerequisites : PHIL101 **Credit Hours :** 3

Description

Course Description: This course is an examination of specific topics in philosophy that are of central interest and interdisciplinary in nature. Topics are selected with reference to the areas of technology, aesthetics, philosophy of religion, as well as ethics, social, and political philosophy. Topics include but are not limited to homosexuality, abortion, drugs, civil disobedience, capital punishment, and the rights of the individual versus the rights of society. (Pre-requisite: PHIL101).

Course Scope:

Utilizing a discussion board and essay-writing format, we will examine a number of contemporary philosophical issues and a number of cultural issues from varying philosophical points of view. Some of the issues have been debated for much of human history; others are unique to our time and could hardly have been imagined just a short time ago. Although it is not likely that we will resolve any of these issues in a way that is satisfactory to all, by completing the objectives listed below we will be better prepared for making informed decisions that will be in the best interest of all.

Objectives

1. Examine and analyze a variety of issues confronting human beings today.
 2. Identify and evaluate opposing viewpoints on philosophically problematic and controversial issues.
 3. Develop critical thinking to be employed in the diagnosis of the issues under discussion as well as to other perplexing issues of contemporary life.
 4. Demonstrate the ability to present complex and detailed arguments using clear and concise language.
 5. Cultivate an attitude of understanding and cooperative problem resolution.
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Outline

Week 1:

Topic(s)

The Role and Function of Philosophy: Old and New

Learning Objective(s)

Objectives:

- Identify and evaluate some contemporary thoughts on the place, function, and status of philosophy.
- Examine and evaluate the contemporary relevance of self- knowledge as fostered by Socrates.

Reading(s) and Course Content

Readings (click on links):

- Read Simon Critchley: "[What is a Philosopher?](#)"
- Read: Alexander George: "[The Difficulty of Philosophy](#)"
- Read John Mahler: "[The Thinker](#)"
- Read Robert Reed [Euthyphro's Elenchus Experience: Ethical Expertise and Self-Knowledge](#)
- Read Robert Frodeman's "[Philosophy dedisciplined](#)"

Read Ian James, Kidd's "[Humility and History](#)"

Assignment(s)

Complete and Submit by the following days

Forum:

Initial Post (due Thursday)

Reply to Student Post (due Sunday)

Short Essay: (due Sunday)

Week 2:

Topic(s)

Contemporary Science and Morality

Learning Objective(s)

Objectives:

- Identify the contemporary scientific approaches to understanding morality
- Identify the epistemological problems particular to punishment and responsibility, and how it concerning the roots of our moral sentiment.

Reading(s) and Course Content

Readings (click on links):

- Read Joshua Greene, et al., "[The Neural Bases of Cognitive Conflict...](#)"
- Read Joshua Greene and Jonathan Cohen, Note, you will have to search under Publications for the document. "[For the Law Neuroscience Changes Nothing and Everything.](#)"
- Read Gregory Koukl, "[Evolution Can't Explain Morality.](#)"
- Read: Joshua Greene, "[From Neural 'Is' to Moral 'Ought': What are the Moral Implications of Neuroscientific Moral Psychology.](#)"

- Read Patricia Churchland's "[The impact of Neuroscience on Philosophy.](#)"
- Read Derek Leben's "[Cognitive Neuroscience and Moral Decision-Making: Guide or Set Aside?](#)"
- Read Robyn Bluhm's "[No need for alarm: A critical analysis of Greene's dual-process theory of moral decision making.](#)"

Assignment(s)

Complete and Submit by the following days

Forum:

Initial Post (due Thursday)

Reply to Student Post (due Sunday)

Week 3:

Topic(s)

Contemporary Philosophical Movements: Experimental Philosophy

Learning Objective(s)

Objectives:

Examine and evaluate the movement of experimental philosophy that supplements the traditional tools of analytic philosophy with the scientific methods of cognitive science.

Reading(s) and Course Content

Readings (click on links):

- Read Kwame Anthony Appiah, "[The New New Philosophy.](#)"
- Read David Panineau, "[What is X-Phi Good for?](#)"
- Read, Joshua Knobe, "[Is Morality Relative? Depends on Your Personality.](#)"
- Read Mark Phelan, "[Just What Are Your Intentions?](#)"
- Read Tamler Sommers, "[Experimental Philosophy and Free will.](#)"
- Read Tamler Sommers, "[In Memoriam: The X-Phi Debate.](#)"
- Read David Rose's and David Danks' "[In Defense of a Broad Conception of Experimental Philosophy.](#)"
- Read Vadim Vasliyev's "[Philosophy of mind, past and present](#)"
- Read Robert Woolfolk's "[Experimental Philosophy: A Methodological Critique.](#)"

Assignment(s)

Complete and Submit by the following days

Forum:

Initial Post (due Thursday)

Reply to Student Post (due Sunday)

Short Essay: (due Sunday)

Week 4:

Topic(s)

Philosophy Through Film: Selfhood, Memory, and Morality

Learning Objective(s)

Objectives:

- Evaluate the contemporary approach of illuminating philosophical issues through the use of film.
- Evaluate the philosophical issues surrounding memory and morality through the films, “*Memento*,” and “*Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*.”
- Analyze and critically evaluate the arguments regarding memory and agency.

Reading(s) and Course Content

View the two films: (1) *Memento*, and (2) *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* [NOTE, only *Memento* will be discussed]

Readings :

- Christopher Grau, “Eternal Sunshine and the Spotless Mind and Morality and Memory.”
- John Kihlstron, et. al., “Self and Identity As Memory.” *Handbook of Self and Identity*, 2002.
- Read Claudia Weiz’ “Identity as self-transformation: Emotional conflicts and their metamorphosis in memory.”
- Read Jeanine Schroer’s and Robert Schroer’s “Getting the story right: A reductionists narrative account of personal identity.”

Assignment(s)

Complete and Submit by the following days

Forum: Initial Post (due Thursday)

Reply to Student Post (due Sunday)

Week 5:

Topic(s)

Contemporary Applied Ethics: The Environment and Animal Rights.

Learning Objective(s)

Objectives:

- Identify different views on animal welfare and the moral considerations of the environment.
- Examine anthropocentric and non- anthropocentric approaches to valuing nature and the environment.

Reading(s) and Course Content

Reading Assignments (links found in “Reading & Resources” for this week):

- Rene Descartes, “Animals are Machines.”
- Tom Regan, “The Case for Animal Rights,”
- Aldo Leopold, “The Land Ethic.”
- From the list below pick one, your choice
- Read Charles Starkey : “The Land Ethic, Moral Development, and Ecological Rationality.”
- Read Stephen M. Gardner “The Perfect Moral Storm: Climate Change, Intergenerational Ethics, and

the Problem of Moral Corruption,"

- Read Lori Swanson *A Feminist Ethic That Binds us to Mother Earth. Ethics and Environment. 20.2, 2015, 83-103.*

Assignment(s)

Forum: Initial Post (due Thursday)

Reply to Student Post (due Sunday)

Short Essay: (due Sunday)

Week 6:

Topic(s)

War and International Terrorism

Learning Objective(s)

Objectives

- Evaluate differing perspectives on the militarism, pacifism, and just war theory in light of contemporary conflicts.

Reading(s) and Course Content

Reading Assignments:

Online Library

- Read Talal Asad, "[Thinking about terrorism and just war.](#)"
- Read Radu Petcu, "[Can terrorism ever be morally justified?](#)"
- Read Peter Tarlow, "[War, Terrorism, Tourism, and Morality.](#)"
- Read Rosemary Kellison's "[Impure Agency and they Just War.](#)"
- Read Christopher Toner's "[The Logical Structure of Just War Theory](#)"

Assignment(s)

Complete and Submit by Sunday the End of Week 6

Forum: Initial Post (due Thursday)

Reply to Student Post (due Sunday)

Philosophical Essay Part 1

Week 7:

Topic(s)

Gender, Sex, Marriage, and Love

Learning Objective(s)

Objectives

- Evaluate the intersection between gender and sex, and the performance of gender.

- Assess the epistemic positions for and against social constructivism.
- Evaluate the issues of same- sex marriage, prostitution, and fidelity.

Reading(s) and Course Content

Reading Assignments:

Online Library:

- Read Amy B Becker, "Whats marriage (and family) got to do with it? Support for same-sex marriage, legal unions, and gay and lesbian couples raising children."
- Read Rob Cover, "marriage, a 'couple' of questions: same sex marriage, coupledness and identity."
- Read Christopher Cordner, "Two conceptions of love in philosophical thought."
- Read William Wilkerson 'Is it a choice? Sexual Orientation as Interpretation'
- Read Stephanie Adair's "Unity and difference: A Critical Appraisal of Polarizing Gender Identities"
- Read Kim Hall's "Not Much to Praise in Such Seeking and Finding': Evolutionary Psychology, the Biological Turn in the Humanities, and the Epistemology of Ignorance."

Assignment(s)

Complete and Submit by the following days

Forum: Initial Post (due Thursday)

Reply to Student Post (due Sunday)

Week 8:

Topic(s)

Contemporary Applied Ethics

Learning Objective(s)

Objectives

Distinguish the basic concepts of moral and political philosophy.

Reading(s) and Course Content

Reading Assignments:

Online Library

- Read Howard J. Curzer "Admirable Immorality, Dirty Hands, Ticking Bombs, and Torturing Innocents."
- Read Paul M. Hughes, "What is Wrong With Entrapment?"
- Read Gary Marchant's and Wendell Wallach's "Coordinating Technology Governance"
- Read Steve Lydenberg's "Reason, Rationality, and Fiduciary Duty"

Assignment(s)

Complete and Submit by Sunday the End of Week 8

Philiosophical Essay Part 2 - Complete

Evaluation

Grading:

| Name | Grade % |
|--|---------|
| Short Essay Assignments | 30.00 % |
| Week 1 - Short Essay 1 | 10.00 % |
| Week 3 - Short Essay 2 | 10.00 % |
| Week 5 - Short Essay 3 | 10.00 % |
| Philosophical Essay | 25.00 % |
| Week 6 - Philosophical Essay - Part 1 | 3.75 % |
| Week 8 - Philosophical Essay - Complete - Part 2 | 21.25 % |
| Discussion | 45.00 % |
| Week 1 - Self-Introduction | 5.00 % |
| Week 1 - Discussion Week One | 5.00 % |
| Week 2 - Discussion Week Two | 5.00 % |
| Week 3 - Discussion Week Three | 5.00 % |
| Week 4 - Discussion Week Four | 5.00 % |
| Week 5 - Discussion Week Five | 5.00 % |
| Week 6 - Discussion Week Six | 5.00 % |
| Week 7 - Discussion Week Seven | 5.00 % |
| Week 8 Discussion | 5.00 % |

Materials

Book Title: Various resources from the APUS Library & the Open Web are used. Please visit <http://apus.libguides.com/er.php> to locate the course eReserve.

Author: N/A

Publication Info: N/A

ISBN: N/A

Course Guidelines

Citation and Reference Style

- Students will follow MLA format as the sole citation and reference style used in written assignments submitted as part of coursework to the Humanities Department.
- Please note that no formal citation style is graded on forum assignments in the School of Arts & Humanities—only attribution of sources (please see details regarding forum communication below).

Tutoring

- [Tutor.com](https://www.tutor.com) offers online homework help and learning resources by connecting students to certified tutors for one-on-one help. AMU and APU students are eligible for 10 free hours of tutoring provided by APUS. Tutors are available 24/7 unless otherwise noted. Tutor.com also has a SkillCenter Resource Library offering educational resources, worksheets, videos, websites and career help. Accessing these resources does not count against tutoring hours and is also available 24/7. Please visit the APUS

Library and search for 'Tutor' to create an account.

Late Assignments

School of Arts & Humanities Late Policy

Students are expected to submit classroom assignments by the posted due date and to complete the course according to the published class schedule. As adults, students, and working professionals, I understand you must manage competing demands on your time. Should you need additional time to complete an assignment, please contact me before the due date so we can discuss the situation and determine an acceptable resolution.

Work posted or submitted after the assignment due date will be reduced by 10% of the potential total score possible for each day late up to a total of five days, including forum posts/replies, quizzes, and assignments. ***Beginning on the sixth day late through the end of the course, late work, including forum posts/replies, quizzes, and assignments, will be accepted with a grade reduction of 50% of the potential total score earned.***

Turn It In

Assignments are automatically submitted to Turnitin.com within the course. Turnitin.com will analyze an assignment submission and report a similarity score. Your assignment submission is automatically processed through the assignments area of the course when you submit your work.

Academic Dishonesty

- Academic Dishonesty incorporates more than plagiarism, which is using the work of others without citation. Academic dishonesty includes any use of content purchased or retrieved from web services such as CourseHero.com or Scribd. Additionally, allowing your work to be placed on such web services is academic dishonesty, as it is enabling the dishonesty of others. The copy and pasting of content from any web page, without citation as a direct quote, is academic dishonesty. When in doubt, do not copy/paste, and always cite.

Submission Guidelines

- Some assignments may have very specific requirements for formatting (such as font, margins, etc) and submission file type (such as .docx, .pdf, etc). See the assignment instructions for details. In general, standard file types such as those associated with Microsoft Office are preferred, unless otherwise specified.
- It is the student's responsibility to ensure the all submitted work can be accessed and opened by the instructor.

Disclaimer Statement

- Course content may vary from the outline to meet the needs of a particular group or class.

Communicating on the Forum

- Forums are the heart of the interaction in this course. The more engaged and lively the exchanges, the more interesting and fun the course will be. Only substantive comments will receive credit. Although there is a final posting day/time after which the instructor will grade and provide feedback, it is not sufficient to wait until the last day to contribute your comments/questions on the forum. The purpose of the forums is to actively participate in an on-going discussion about the assigned content.
- "Substantive" means comments that contribute something new and important to the discussion. Thus a message that simply says "I agree" is not substantive. A substantive comment contributes a new idea or perspective, a good follow-up question to a point made, offers a response to a question, provides an example or illustration of a key point, points out an inconsistency in an argument, etc.
- As a class, if we run into conflicting view points, we must respect each individual's own opinion. Hateful and hurtful comments towards other individuals, students, groups, peoples, and/or societies will not be

tolerated.

- Students must post a response to the weekly forums prompt and post the required number of replies to other students – refer to the grading rubric and/or forum instructions for specific expectations on number of replies and word count requirements.
- The main response to the forum is due mid-week – refer to the grading rubric and/or forum instructions for specific expectations. Late main response posts to a forum may not be accepted without prior instructor approval.
- Replies must be posted in the week due and replies after the end of the each week may not be graded.

Quizzes and Exams

- Quizzes and exams may consist of true/false, multiple choice, and short essay questions. Each quiz/exam is accessible only once. Once a quiz/exam is accessed, you will not be able to access it again if you disconnect. Therefore, allocate time to complete your quiz. Weekly quizzes must be submitted by midnight Eastern Time, Day 7 of the assigned week. Late quizzes or exams will not be accepted without prior instructor approval.

University Policies

[Student Handbook](#)

- [Drop/Withdrawal policy](#)
- [Extension Requests](#)
- [Academic Probation](#)
- [Appeals](#)
- [Disability Accommodations](#)

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