PHI 2010: Introduction to Philosophy

Instructor: Dr. Sabatino DiBernardo

Course Description:

This course will introduce variously constructed life philosophies, notions of the "good life," and questions of truth, reality, belief, meaning, and value in premodern, modern, and postmodern philosophical contexts. In addition to engaging students in critical thinking about philosophical questions, this course will introduce students to different religious philosophies as developed through "Eastern" and "Western" cultural constructions of reality. Consequently, this course will facilitate student engagement regarding matters of faith and reason mediated through different philosophical positions and modes of being in the world that have influenced contemporary culture.

Course Objectives:

- To provide students with an introduction to philosophical questions and topics
- To engage students in critical thinking about diverse beliefs, values, and practices in relation to life philosophies
- To provide students an opportunity to think about and discuss different philosophical and religious approaches to existence (viz., questions about subjectivity, community, culture, reality, and truth)
- To provide students with a general overview of various trans-historical and cross-cultural philosophical and religious worldviews
- To introduce students to various modern and postmodern philosophical perspectives alongside ancient philosophical worldviews

Texts:

Constructing a Life Philosophy, **Mary Williams ed.** (Greenhaven Press, **2005**) [Make sure you get this edition if you are ordering it online; if you have any questions about the correct edition, email me]

The Good Life, Charles Guignon ed. (Hackett Publishing, 1999)

The Truth About The Truth: De-Confusing and Re-Constructing the Postmodern World, Walter Truett Anderson ed. (Penguin Putnam, 1995)

Course Introduction

Hi, All.

My name is Dr. Sabatino DiBernardo (or Dr D, which should make things easier). I'm here to help facilitate your progression through this online course dealing with the philosophical and religious perspectives provided by the texts, as well as any questions or issues that may arise as you're completing the readings and the assignments. My academic background is primarily in philosophy of religion and postmodern philosophy; you can expect that a close reading of each philosopher's perspective in a critical fashion will be our main focus [Note: thinking critically does not mean thinking negatively about the perspectives provided]. We will do our best to try to understand each perspective; that is, we will read each essay in the best possible light before thinking about the consistency, implications, and value of the argument, proposition, position, or perspective being proposed. What unites each of the perspectives through their often diametrically opposed differences is that each proposes a *way* (of thinking, believing, and living). A way is a path or guide through being or becoming, as it were. Although this overview of different ways is not exhaustive (how could it be), think of it as a representative sample of different periods of time and cultures that have proposed their own philosophies regarding different way(s) of being. As we will see, in many ways these ways continue to shape or exert an influence in contemporary society.

The course is structured around anthologies of primary philosophical readings from diverse historical, geographical, and religious perspectives. Let me begin by saying that condensing an entire semester's worth of readings, assessments, and assignments into a six-week summer session will not be easy. There will be a lot of reading in this course (followed by assessments/quizzes and assignments). You should consider the amount of time you have available before proceeding. The books will progress from very accessible to less accessible in order to ease students into the philosophical and theoretical matters at stake in thinking rigorously about the different philosophies represented. If you hope to do well in the course, make sure you keep up with the readings, assessments, and assignments. If you encounter any problems or have any questions about the material, don't hesitate to message me through course mail. If you have any questions about Canvas (or technical questions), make sure you utilize the Canvas Study Guide, since it includes everything you need to understand how to navigate an online course.

Note: Do not bypass the modules by going directly to assessment or assignment prompts that appear on your homepage (unfortunately, these can't be removed). My strong suggestion is to progress through each part of a module accessed through the Modules link, since you will be required to view each of the pages.

Overview of Assignments and Assessments

I. Introductory Posts: There will be 2 introductory assignments (5 points each; graded as complete or incomplete) during the first module in which the student introduces herself/himself to the rest of the class and provides requisite information to the instructor.

Note: the Student Information for Instructor assignment will be used to determine course activity for financial aid purposes.

II. Discussion Posts and Reflection Questions: Participation in the course will be determined by student-to-student discussion questions/responses and reflection questions. Directions and due dates for written assignments will be provided under the "Assignments" heading in the modules. **Students must be aware of all deadlines.** Do not wait until the last day (or closing minutes) to respond.

Discussion post assignments: These assignments will ask you to post a question or questions and respond to other students' questions. Since these assignments are meant to generate conversations between students about the assigned reading material, they **will not be reopened once closed (nor will they be accepted through course mail).** Note: You will **not** be able to view questions or responses until you post your own. Do **not** attempt to post something in order to view questions or responses without being ready to post, since you will **not** be able to delete or edit your post once submitted.

Reflection question assignments: When included in the module, these questions will be provided by the instructor. Everyone will be allowed **one** missed reflection question submission after the deadline (**without deduction**); no questions asked. This option must be requested by the student during the **subsequent module**. Any additional requests will require a medically documented reason for missing the assignment.

Written assignments will be worth a total of 135 points.

III. Quizzes: There will be a quiz in each of the first five modules. Quizzes will consist of responding to multiple-choice questions based on the readings. Given the open book nature of the course, **quizzes will be timed**. You will only be allowed **one attempt per quiz, so make sure you are prepared before taking them**. Students may request a make-up for **one** missed quiz (without deduction); no questions asked. This option must be requested by the student during the **subsequent module**. Any additional requests will require a medically documented reason for missing a quiz. There will be no resubmissions of quizzes already taken.

Quizzes will be worth a total of 300 points.

IV. Final Exam: There will be a final exam in module 6. It will consist of responding to multiple-choice questions based on the readings. Given the open book nature of the course, the final exam will be timed. You will only be allowed one attempt, so make sure you are prepared before taking it.

Final exam will be worth a total of 65 points (not including any potential extra credit points).

Extra Credit: Since students are allowed to submit **one** missed reflection question assignment and **one** missed quiz, exercising either or both of these options will be considered "extra credit" (since you will have an extra opportunity to earn points that otherwise would have been lost). There may also be some possible extra credit points on the final exam.

For those students who have turned in everything on time and have not exercised their missed reflection question or missed quiz option, there will be an extra credit assignment worth ten points during the final module available upon request.

Regarding the Comments Box in Grading Rubrics:

Any questions about written assignments or quizzes should be addressed through course mail. Since the comments box in assignment and assessment rubrics (as it is currently structured in Canvas) does not immediately alert the instructor on her/his dashboard (thereby creating an unnecessary lag in communication), and because it is important to keep all student-instructor correspondence archived in one "place," all questions related to writing assignments, quizzes, and course material should be sent to the instructor through course mail.

Final grades will be based on the **number of points earned** by the student out of a total of 500 possible points. Canvas has a habit of breaking down different types of assignments in terms of percentages. One of the problems with this feature is that it doesn't count missed assignments in its calculation (which yields a false percentage). This feature cannot be turned off; do not let those percentages confuse you. See Grade Scale for points/letter grid.

Grade Scale

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Grade Scale

A = 473-500 pts.   C+ = 373-397 pts.
A- = 448-472 pts.   C = 348-372 pts.
B+ = 423-447 pts.   D+ = 323-347 pts.
B = 398-422 pts.   D = 298-322 pts.
                                        F = 297 pts. and below

Conduct, Copyright, and Accomodations

Academic Honesty

Plagiarism and Cheating of any kind on an examination, quiz, or assignment will result at least in an "F" for that assignment (and may, depending on the severity of the case, lead to an "F" for the entire course) and may be subject to appropriate referral to the Office of Student Conduct for further action. See the *UCF Golden Rule* for further information. I will assume for this course that you will adhere to the academic creed of this University and will maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. In other words, don't cheat by giving answers to others or taking them from anyone else. I will also adhere to the highest standards of academic integrity, so please do not ask me to change (or expect me to change) your grade illegitimately or to bend or break rules for one person that will not apply to everyone.

Personal Conduct

You are expected to conduct yourself in a manner that is conducive to the academic ends that we are attempting to achieve (see University standards for personal conduct as outlined in The Golden Rule). It is expected that each student will respect the views of those in the course and will refrain from offensive posts. Furthermore, it is expected that each student will be sensitive to the beliefs/values of others in the course. **Critical thinking should not be understood as "belief bashing."** In the case that this advice is not followed you should expect a lowering of your final grade or, in the event of continuous serious violations, removal from the course.

Copyright

This course may contain copyright protected materials such as audio or video clips, images, text materials, etc. These items are being used with regard to the Fair Use doctrine in order to enhance the learning environment. Please do not copy, duplicate, download or distribute these items. The use of these materials is strictly reserved for this online classroom environment and your use only. All copyright materials are credited to the copyright holder.

Third-Party Software and FERPA

During this course you might have the opportunity to use public online services and/or software applications sometimes called third-party software such as a blog or wiki. While some of these could be required assignments, you need **not** make any personally identifying information on a public site. Do not post or provide any private information about yourself or your classmates. Where appropriate you may use a pseudonym or nickname. Some written assignments posted publicly may require personal reflection/comments, but the assignments will not require you to disclose any personally identity-sensitive information. If you have any concerns about this, please contact your instructor.

Disability Statement

The University of Central Florida is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for all persons with disabilities. This syllabus is available in alternate formats upon request. Students

with disabilities who need accommodations in this course must contact the professor at the beginning of the semester to discuss needed accommodations. No accommodations will be provided until the student has met with the professor to request accommodations. Students who need accommodations must be registered with Student Disability Services, Student Resource Center Room 132, phone (407) 823-2371, TTY/TDD only phone (407) 823-2116, before requesting accommodations from the professor.

Protocols

Cyber-Classroom Expectations

The following ground rules will help your work in this course to go more smoothly. Please carefully review these expectations and follow them.

1. Academic integrity will be appraised according to the student academic behavior standards outlined in *The Golden Rule of the University of Central Florida's Student Handbook*. See http://www.goldenrule.sdes.ucf.edu/ for further details.
2. Keep up with the reading. You have quite a few chapters, modules, discussion postings, and e-mail messages to read for the class. Please keep up with the reading. Students who keep up with the reading tend to do much better in this kind of class than those who do not.

Messaging

Make sure you:

1. Check your inbox at least twice per week (more often is better).
2. Be patient. Don't expect an immediate response when you send a message. Generally, two days is considered reasonable amount of time to receive a reply.
3. Be courteous and considerate. Being honest and expressing yourself freely is very important but being considerate of others online is just as important as in the classroom.
4. Make every effort to be clear. Online communication lacks the nonverbal cues that fill in much of the meaning in face-to-face communication.
5. Do not use all caps. This makes the message very hard to read and is considered "shouting." Check spelling, grammar, and punctuation (you may want to compose in a word processor, then cut and paste the message into the discussion).
6. Break up large blocks of text into paragraphs and use a space between paragraphs.
7. Never assume that your messages can be read by no one except yourself; others may be able to read or access your mail. Never send or keep anything that you would not mind seeing on the evening news.

Discussions

General "rules of the road" or protocols that apply to messages also apply to the use of discussions. Use the following conventions when composing a discussion posting:

1. During a Discussion assignment, deadlines for posting to and replying will be specified with each assignment. It is a good practice to always check the Discussions multiple times during the week.
2. Be patient. Don't expect an immediate response when you send a message.
3. Everyone should feel free to participate in class and online discussions. Regular and meaningful discussion postings constitute a substantial portion of your grade.
4. Respect each other's ideas, feelings and experience.
5. Be courteous and considerate. It is important to be honest and to express yourself freely, but being considerate of others is just as important and expected online, as it is in the classroom.
6. Explore disagreements and support assertions with data and evidence.
7. Do not use postings such as "I agree," "I don't know either," "Who cares," or "ditto." They do not add to the discussion, take up space on the Discussions, and will not be counted for assignment credit.
8. Avoid posting large blocks of text. If you must, break them into paragraphs and use a space between paragraphs.

Word of Caution

Since this course is predominantly self-paced, my **very strong recommendation** is that you keep up with the readings, discussion posts, and quizzes in order to stay on track. It has been my experience that self-paced courses are a double-edged sword. The flexibility that makes online courses popular also brings with it the temptation to procrastinate in the absence of weekly F2F meetings. As a result, withdrawals and "F's" due to the inability to complete work are very high in online courses (especially due to missed quizzes and written assignments). Given this flexibility as well as the open-book nature of this course, make sure you complete the quizzes and written assignments on time. It is best not to wait until the last hour, minute, or seconds prior to the deadline.

No "Incomplete" will be granted without a documented medical emergency. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of all deadlines (keep an eye on the module schedule and follow prompts in the modules and announcements regarding deadlines).

If you find that you have forgotten, misread, misunderstood, misconstrued the deadlines, and/or have "misplaced" your cyber-calendar, are the victim of a computer crash, have fallen prey to cyber-gremlins, and/or your cyber-dog ate your cyber-paper, and/or just plain procrastinated, **do not e-mail the instructor requesting any of the aforementioned.**

The moral of the story is this: if you want to avoid undue stress, anxiety, and do well in the course, make sure you take the time to read on a consistent basis and check in on the discussion messages regularly. Keep in mind that students who are actively engaged in the course will fare better at the end of the semester. If you have any questions concerning the course, feel free to email me. If you encounter material in the readings that you do not understand, contact me and I will gladly assist you.

Federal Financial Aid Regulation

All faculty members are required to document students' engagement in the course based on their academic activity at the beginning of each semester. In order to document that you have begun this course, the **student self-introductions** assignment included in this module must be completed within the first week of classes (or, if adding the course late, as soon as you have access to the course); see the due date in the introductory module. Failure to complete this assignment prior to the deadline will result in a delay in the disbursement of your financial aid.

Support Services

The following services/resources are available to assist students:

- Review the [Academic Engagement for Financial Aid FAQ](#) web page for a list of frequently asked questions.
- Online@UCF Support – Provides technical assistance to students who use Webcourses@UCF.
  - Live support 8:30 to 4:30
    - 407-823-0407
    - Live Chat and online document search: http://online.ucf.edu/support/
  - Email: onlinesupport@ucf.edu
  - Support form: http://online.ucf.edu/support/contact-online-support/
  - Weekend and evening hours: Messages are answered by email.
- Service Desk – Students should contact the Service Desk for issues regarding NID passwords or access to university systems.
  - Hours: 8:00 am to 5:00 pm Monday-Friday
  - Call: 407-823-5117
  - Website: http://www.cst.ucf.edu/service-desk/

Module Schedule

Below is an overview of the topics, readings, and opening/closing schedule for the modules. However, specific readings, assignments, and deadlines are found in each of the modules. Since these may change due to different circumstances, you are to follow the specific directions for readings and assignments in each of the modules.

Note: Since many online courses close on Sundays at 11:59 pm, and since I prefer to be online while students are posting assignments in order to respond to questions and provide quick feedback (when possible), I have provided an extra day for each **weekly** module. Modules will open/close on **Mondays @ 6:00 pm (unless otherwise indicated)**; this provides students some extra time to get their work done, if needed. However, I would not encourage you to wait until the last day to post written assignments or to take quizzes. Also, if you prefer (or are used to modules closing on Sundays @11:59 pm, feel free to treat that day/time as your own personal deadline prior to the actual closing day :)

Module	Topics	Text & Readings	Opens/Closes
1	Course Introduction Choosing a Life Philosophy and Life's Ultimate Meaning	Course and Canvas Material *Constructing a Life Philosophy* • Chs. 1 & 2	Monday 5/15 @ 8:00 am -- Monday 5/22 @ 6:00 pm Note: Modules, Posts, and Quizzes open and close at 6:00 pm on Mondays (unless otherwise indicated)
2	Religion, Meaning, Morals, and Guiding Principles	*Constructing a Life Philosophy* • Chs. 3-5	Monday 5/22 @ 6:00 pm -- Monday 5/29 @ 6:00 pm
3	Classics and Religion	*The Good Life* • Classical Sources (Chs. 1-5) • Religious Ways of Life (Chs. 6-10)	Monday 5/29 @ 6:00 pm -- Monday 6/5 @ 6:00 pm
4	Reason and the Self	*The Good Life* • The Use of Reason (Chs. 11-13) • Self-Exploration (Chs. 14-17) • Self-Realization (Chs. 18-20)	Monday 6/5 @ 6:00 pm -- Monday 6/12 @ 6:00 pm

5	Themes and Definitions
	
	The Construction of Reality
	
	Three Useful Inventions
	
	Symbols at Work and Play
	
	Different Kinds of Difference
		The Truth About The Truth
		
		• Introduction
		• Part One: In And Out Of The Grand Hotel
		   o Chs. 1-9
		• Part Two: All That Is Solid Melts Into Air
		   o Chs. 10-19
			Monday 6/12 @ 6:00 pm --
			
			Monday 6/19 @ 6:00 pm

| 6 | The Pluralistic Person, the Disappearing Self

Sex and Gender

Reconstructing Psychology

Science without Scientism

Religion in the Age of Disbelief

Final Exam | *The Truth About The Truth*

• Part Three: Self, Sex, and Sanity
  ○ Chs. 20-26
• Part Four: Faith and Freedom
  ○ Chs. 27-33 | Monday 6/19 @ 6:00 pm --

Friday 6/23 @ 6:00 pm

(**Note**: This final module closes on the last day of classes/finals **Friday 6/23 @ 6:00 pm**) |