

## COURSE SYLLABUS

### **Philosophy 101-1001: Introduction To Philosophy**

**Fall Semester, 2014**

**Professor: William Ramsey**

**Teaching Assistant: Allison Roth**

#### **I. TEXTS**

The following book has been ordered and should be available (starting today, Monday, August 25) at the *on-campus* University Bookstore: ***Philosophy, The Quest For Truth, Custom Edition for UNLV***, Pojman and Vaughn. It is critical that you get this specific text (and not a non-custom edition) because the readings are assigned via page numbers. Other reading materials will be made available on the Lied Library Electronic Reserve. Using Mozilla Firefox, go to -- <https://ereserves.library.unlv.edu/eres/default.aspx> -- and follow the instructions for logging in, and then find my course (often can be done by clicking on the philosophy department).

Readings for the first week are also posted on the Webcampus site for this course. It is probably wise to download all the articles now from E-reserve and make a folder or binder so that they are readily available when you need them. (One optional book worth owning, but not required is *Philosophical Writing*, 2nd Edition, A.P. Martinich.)

#### **II. EVALUATION**

There will be a **MIDTERM EXAM** on **Monday, October 13** and a cumulative **FINAL EXAM** on **Monday, December 8 at 10:10 am**. In addition, you will have two writing assignments during the course of the semester. The first paper will be shorter (about 3 pages), the latter one will be somewhat longer (around 6 pages). (Students should know that one-on-one or small group assistance with writing is available free of charge to UNLV students at the Writing Center, located at CDC-301). The schedule for the papers will be as follows:

**First Paper** -- Assigned: Sept. 22, Due: Oct. 1

**Second Paper** -- Assigned: Nov. 5, Due: Nov. 24

Since there will be *ABSOLUTELY* no make-up exams or late papers accepted without university approved reasons, you should plan your schedules accordingly *now*. All papers will be submitted electronically via Webcampus. Finally, there will also be a weekly quiz on Wednesdays just on the readings for that week. In calculating your course grade, things will be broken down roughly as follows:

**Second Paper: 30%**

**Final: 25%**

**First Paper: 20%**

**Midterm: 15%**

**Weekly Quiz: 10%**

#### **III. ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT POLICY**

Academic integrity is a legitimate concern for every member of the campus community; all share in upholding the fundamental values of honesty, trust, respect, fairness, responsibility and professionalism. By choosing to join the UNLV community, students accept the expectations of the Academic Misconduct Policy and are encouraged when faced with choices to always take the ethical path. Students enrolling in UNLV assume the obligation to conduct themselves in a manner compatible with UNLV's function as an educational institution. Also, students are required to read the "Guidelines Regarding Plagiarism" (the first reading on Webcampus), which will be covered on the first quiz. Students are not allowed to write papers together or share

drafts or outlines. Moreover, students are forbidden from downloading or copying *any* information from the internet in the composition of their papers. Since part of your paper grade will depend upon your originality, any use of any outside source for specific ideas, analysis, arguments -- other than what is generally covered in the course readings and lectures -- must be properly cited. Remember: if you have any doubts about the appropriateness of any action, check with Professor Ramsey or Professor Anders. Honor Code violations have been and will continue to be dealt with in the harshest possible manner. You should also look at the Student Academic Misconduct Policy (approved December 9, 2005) located at:

<http://studentlife.unlv.edu/judicial/misconductPolicy.html>

#### **IV. OFFICE HOURS**

Professor Ramsey's office is in **Central Desert Complex # 4, rm. 411; # 895-2931**. His official hours will be **Mondays and Wednesdays: 11:30-12:30** and other times **by appointment**. However, students are welcome to drop by whenever they wish or arrange alternative meeting times if the official hours are inconvenient. Also, correspondence is possible via e-mail at [wramsey@unlv.edu](mailto:wramsey@unlv.edu), or, in case of emergency, cell # at 574-229-7100. Professor Roth's office is CDC # 4, rm. 404; contact at 895-4333; [Allison.Roth@unlv.edu](mailto:Allison.Roth@unlv.edu) -- office hours, **Wednesdays: 11:30-1:30**.

**Note:** There is a WebCampus site for this course where students can read messages, check their grades and all papers will be submitted through Webcampus. However, do **NOT** try to contact either Professor Ramsey or Professor Roth via Webcampus e-mail – use the addresses on this syllabus. For every exam, there will be a review session beforehand at a time and place to be announced.

#### **V. COURSE OBJECTIVES AND FORMAT**

**There are 4 main Course Objectives:**

1. Introduce students to many of the major problems and topics in the core areas of metaphysics, ethics and epistemology, resulting in students with:
  - Knowledge of several major philosophical problems, debates, concepts and principles.
  - Deep understanding of specific philosophical theories and objections to those theories.
  - Ability to articulate the central arguments for and against radically different positions on fundamental philosophical issues.
2. Introduce students to classic philosophical authors and their writings, resulting in students who can:
  - Articulate some of the arguments, positions and critiques of such major Western thinkers as Plato, Descartes, Mill, Locke and Berkeley.
  - Explain some of the positions of important contemporary figures, like Singer and Jackson.
3. Expose students to viewpoints radically different than their own and familiarize them with the arguments for those positions, resulting in:
  - Open-minded students with a much greater appreciation for alternative ideas and viewpoints.
  - Deeper appreciation of the need to defend one's own views in an intellectually robust manner.
4. Teach students to reason in a manner that is intellectually robust and responsible. Instill critical thinking skills so that students can:
  - Identify the main premises and conclusions of arguments in texts.
  - Critically evaluate the validity and cogency of various arguments.
  - Be able to construct a valid and cogent argument for a position.

**Format:**

Our classes will be mostly lectures mixed with some discussions. It is possible for students to ask questions, offer insights and raise objections during any time (though I cannot promise to accommodate everyone). Because understanding philosophy requires discussing it, all students are encouraged to participate when possible.

**VI. TOPICS AND READINGS**

This course is designed as a "topic-based" course. What this means is that instead of working through the history of philosophy, focusing on great historical figures and their views on different topics, we will focus on great philosophical topics and look at what historical and contemporary writers have said about them. Many of the readings are somewhat difficult and you should plan to go over them more than once. Hence, a strong effort has been made to keep the overall amount down to a minimum, though some weeks will nevertheless be tough. A good strategy is to do all of the readings for a given week during the preceding weekend, and then carefully go through the material again during the week as we discuss it. Because of holidays and other factors, our schedule should be flexible and the following is only *rough* timetable for the course. WC = "Webcampus"; "PQT" = Philosophy, The Quest For Truth, "E-Reserve" = Electronic Reserve (note, some E-reserve readings have a discussion following the short story, and you should read that as well).

**Week of Aug. 24: Introduction; Course Goals; Philosophical Method & Logic**

WC: "Handout on Plagiarism"; "Elements of Argument"

PQT: **1-6**.

**Week of August 31:; Philosophy of Religion**

E-Reserve: "Traditional Arguments for the Existence of God".

PQT: **7-11; 54-62**

**Week of Sept. 7: Philosophy of Religion**

PQT: **62-67; 16-23**

**Week of Sept. 14: Philosophy of Religion**

E-Reserve: "The Argument From Design (Old and New)"

PQT: **30-40; 44-46**

**Week of Sept. 21: Philosophy of Religion**

E-Reserve: "Atheism and the Problem of Suffering"

E-Reserve: "Surprise! It's Judgment Day".

PQT: **74-92**

**Week of Sept. 28: Mind and Freedom**

E-Reserve: "The Ontological Problem – Dualism"

PQT: **93-97**

***NOTE: FIRST PAPER DUE OCT. 1*****Week of Oct, 5: Mind and Freedom**

PQT: **122-132**

Week of Oct. 12: **Mind and Freedom**

E-Reserve: “Please Don’t Tell Me How the Story Ends”; “The Determinism/Free-Will-Issue”  
PQT: 133-148

**NOTE: MIDTERM -- MONDAY, OCTOBER 13**

Week of Oct. 19: **Mind and Freedom**

E-Reserve: “Compatibilism, Freedom and Responsibility”  
PQT: 148-165

Week of Oct. 26: **Ethics**

PQT: 167-181; 191-193

Week of Nov. 2: **Ethics**

E-Reserve: “The Sherriff’s Wife”  
E-Reserve: “Utilitarianism Versus Rawls and Kant”  
PQT: 184-190.

Week of Nov. 9: **Ethics**

E-Reserve: “The Life You Can Save”  
PQT: 196-207

Week of Nov. 16: **Epistemology**

PQT: 209-217; 239-248

Week of Nov. 23: **Epistemology**

PQT: 227-229; 218-227

**NOTE: FINAL PAPER DUE: MON. NOV. 24**

Week of Nov. 30 **Epistemology & Review**

E-Reserve: “Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous”

**NOTE: FINAL EXAM, MON. DEC. 8 ; 10:10 AM**

**VII. ADDITIONAL GENERAL INFORMATION:**

**Copyright** – The University requires all members of the University Community to familiarize themselves and to follow copyright and fair use requirements. **You are individually and solely responsible for violations of copyright and fair use laws.** Violations of copyright laws could subject you to federal and state civil penalties and criminal liability, as well as disciplinary action under University policies. Additional information can be found at:

<http://provost.unlv.edu/copyright/statements.html>.

**Disability Resource Center (DRC)** – The Disability Resource Center (DRC) determines accommodations that are “reasonable” in promoting the equal access of a student reporting a disability to the general UNLV learning experience. In so doing, the DRC also balances instructor and departmental interests in maintaining curricular standards so as to best achieve a

fair evaluation standard amongst students being assisted. In order for the DRC to be effective it must be considered in the dialog between the faculty and the student who is requesting accommodations. For this reason Professor Ramsey allows course adjustment after having received an “Academic Accommodation Plan.” UNLV complies with the provisions set forth in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. The DRC is located in the Student Services Complex (SSC-A), Room 143, phone (702) 895-0866, fax (702) 895-0651. For additional information, please visit: <http://drc.unlv.edu/>.

**Religious Holidays Policy** – Any student missing class quizzes, examinations, or any other class or lab work because of observance of religious holidays shall be given an opportunity during that semester to make up missed work. The make-up will apply to the religious holiday absence only. It shall be the responsibility of the student to notify professor Ramsey no later than the end of the first two weeks of classes of his or her intention to participate in religious holidays which do not fall on state holidays or periods of class recess. This policy shall not apply in the event that administering the test or examination at an alternate time would impose an undue hardship on the instructor or the university that could not reasonably be avoided. For additional information, please visit: <http://catalog.unlv.edu/content.php?catoid=4&navoid=164>.

**Incomplete Grades** - The grade of I – Incomplete – can be granted when a student has satisfactorily completed all course work up to the withdrawal date of that semester/session but for reason(s) beyond the student’s control, and acceptable to the instructor, cannot complete the last part of the course, and the instructor believes that the student can finish the course without repeating it. A student who receives an I is responsible for making up whatever work was lacking at the end of the semester. If course requirements are not completed within the time indicated, a grade of F will be recorded and the GPA will be adjusted accordingly. Students who are fulfilling an Incomplete do not register for the course but make individual arrangements with the instructor who assigned the I grade.

**Tutoring** – The Academic Success Center (ASC) provides tutoring and academic assistance for all UNLV students taking UNLV courses. Students are encouraged to stop by the ASC to learn more about subjects offered, tutoring times and other academic resources. The ASC is located across from the Student Services Complex (SSC). Students may learn more about tutoring services by calling (702) 895-3177 or visiting the tutoring web site at: <http://academicsuccess.unlv.edu/tutoring/>.

**UNLV Writing Center** – One-on-one or small group assistance with writing is available free of charge to UNLV students at the Writing Center, located in CDC-3-301. Although walk-in consultations are sometimes available, students with appointments will receive priority assistance. Appointments may be made in person or by calling 895-3908. The student’s Rebel ID Card, a copy of the assignment (if possible), and two copies of any writing to be reviewed are requested for the consultation. More information can be found at: <http://writingcenter.unlv.edu/>