Introduction to Philosophy
PHI 205-601(Internet)
Fall 2014

Course Description
We will be considering five major questions in this course: Is it possible to know anything for certain? Is immortality possible? What is the nature of consciousness? Do you ever act freely (and are you morally responsible for your actions)? And, finally, what is the nature of rightness and wrongness? Throughout the course, we will entertain several skeptical hypotheses related to these questions. One of your tasks in this course will be to try to refute the skeptic.

Basic Information
Instructor: Professor Nicole Smith
Email: nasmith6@ncsu.edu

The best way to reach me will be by email. I will also be available during my “office” hours for video conferencing. Instructions on how to use video conferencing will be made available shortly after the start of the semester.

Required Textbook

Specific Learning Outcomes
- To learn about some of the oldest and most difficult philosophical problems.
- To critically evaluate some of your deepest beliefs and convictions.
- To learn and be able to use the skills necessary for understanding and evaluating philosophical arguments.
- To discuss, think, and write critically about the various topics covered.
- To reach and be able to support your own conclusions on some of these issues.

“Class Meetings” and Material
This course is completely online and all materials (except the readings from your textbook) will be accessible through Moodle. Online courses allow some flexibility. Nevertheless, there are still weekly due dates, as well as deadlines for assignments and exams. This means that you must log into Moodle regularly and follow the guidelines of the syllabus in order to complete the course material in a timely fashion. PLEASE READ THE ENTIRE SYLLABUS CAREFULLY! Below I will provide you with a schedule of weekly readings, assignments, and expectations. Also, please check your NC State email on a regular basis and read my messages carefully.
Course Requirements, Materials, and Grading Policies
(1) 10 reading questions, worth 20% of your grade.
(2) Participation (in forums, “office” hours, etc.) worth 20% of your grade.
(3) 2 exams (at the middle and end of the semester) each worth 30% of your grade.

Lecture Notes

What are they?
The lecture notes for this course aim to carefully take you through the readings by exploring and evaluating the argument(s) presented in the readings. There are two parts to the lecture notes: (1) Visual presentation and outline. (2) Typed lecture notes corresponding to the slides of the presentation that explain the content of the slide in more detail often using examples. There will also be supplementary audio and video clips made available on occasion.

Where can I find the lecture notes?
They will be made available on Moodle corresponding to the appropriate week’s assigned readings, typically on Wednesday after 3:00 pm when the deadline for reading question submissions has passed.

Reading Questions

What are they?
In order to ensure that you are keeping up with and understanding the required readings, you will need to answer regularly assigned reading questions. You will be asked to write a paragraph or two about some issue(s) in the assigned reading (your answer to the question should be in your own words and should be brief—clearly and concisely answer the question and leave it at that (no more than one double-spaced typed page; roughly 150 words). The idea is that these questions should be fairly easy to answer if you’ve carefully read the entire selection, which will generally be pretty short. There will be a total of twelve reading questions. These will be due on Wednesday no later than 3:00 pm; no late assignments will be accepted, so do not wait to the last minute to complete or submit them. The lecture notes (with the answers to the reading questions contained in them) will be made available shortly after the reading questions are due. For this reason, there are absolutely no exceptions to this policy.

Where do I go to complete the reading questions?
Each reading question prompt will be posted on Moodle corresponding to the appropriate week’s assigned reading. These assignments should be completed and submitted on the Moodle.

How will my reading questions be evaluated?
You will be assigned a total of 12 reading questions throughout the semester. Each will be graded according to the following rubric:

- Check-plus: This is reserved for complete and correct answers that also offer some interesting philosophical insight. These answers must not omit any relevant details and they must reveal a genuine understanding of the material (worth 3 points; rarely given).
• **Check**: This is reserved for an answer that is mostly correct in that it gets the general idea right and does not say anything mistaken (worth 2 points).

• **Check-minus**: This is reserved for an answer that is incorrect or incomplete in some important respect (worth 1 point).

• **Zero**: This is reserved for an answer that is utterly incorrect or not handed in at all (worth 0 points).

At the end of the course, all your points on the reading questions will be added up and then translated into a 100 point scale as follows: 20 = 100; 19 = 95; 18 = 90; 17 = 85; 16 = 80; 15 = 75; 14 = 70; 13 = 65; 12 = 60; 11 = 55; 10 = 50; 9 = 45; 8 = 40; 7 = 35; 6 = 30; 5 = 25; 4 = 20; 3 = 15; 2 = 10; 1 = 5; and 0 = 0. (Note: an easy way to get 100% for this portion of your grade is to receive a check (i.e., 2 points) on 10 of the 12 questions). Once you reach 20 points, you no longer need to turn in any more answers (and no extra points will be given for doing so).

**Participation**

**What counts as participation?**

Various opportunities for participation will be made available throughout the semester. I will announce such occasions calling them “participation exercises.”

**How will my participation be evaluated?**

I will keep a tally of the quality and quantity of your participation using the same point scale for reading questions (see above). More than enough opportunities will be given for you to receive the full 20 points, but be sure to pace yourself throughout the semester. The participation rubric is as follows:

• **Check-plus**: This is reserved for a demonstration of your analytic skills in an extended dialogue that reveals a genuine understanding, on your part, of both sides of a philosophical debate or issue. Your contribution must also incorporate an interesting philosophical insight as well as being clearly and respectfully stated (worth 3 points; rarely given).

• **Check**: This is reserved for those occasions when a reasoned and appropriate philosophical point has been made. Some examples include: offering an illuminating example to help illustrate or support a philosophical claim; proposing a successful counterexample to a philosophical thesis; offering an argument by analogy to support a philosophical thesis—just to name few. The contribution must also be relevant as well as being clearly and respectfully stated (worth 2 points).

• **Check-minus**: This is reserved for occasions when the philosophical point or argument is unsuccessful on one or another measure. Some examples include a response that is: fallacious, insufficiently clear, irrelevant in some important respect, misses the point, not remotely deep or illuminating, trivial or tautologous, etc. (worth 1 point).

• **Zero**: If you do not participate, you cannot receive points for participation, but this is not the only way to receive no points. If the tone of your comment is not respectful of your classmates, me, or humanity in general, you will receive no points for your contribution (worth 0 points).
What are the guidelines for participation?
Most important is maintaining a respectful mode of discourse. For example, if you are offering a criticism of an argument someone else has provided, insults or an inappropriate tone will not be tolerated. Instead, such comments or criticisms should address the content of that person’s argument by offering a reasoned response. Also, your contributions should strive to be clear, relevant, substantive, and thoughtful.

Exams

What will the exams be like?
There will be two exams: one roughly around midterm and one at the end of the semester. The first exam will cover the first half of the course and the second exam will cover the second half, i.e., there will be no cumulative exam at the end. Both exams will be open-book and open-note, and will consist of essays questions. The exams will not require much factual recall, but they will require substantive understanding of the material, so it would not be wise to attempt to learn the material just prior to the exam. Your answers should be treated like proper essays with carefully thought out and detailed responses, not just whatever comes to mind at the time. Throughout the exam, you will be evaluated according to the accuracy of your answers and the strength of your reasoning, as well as the clarity and quality of your writing.

Your are required to work on the tests alone. This means that you may not collaborate with friends, family, roommates, or fellow students. Any such collaboration would constitute cheating. See the information below about academic integrity.

Where do I go to complete the exams?
Unless, you have made arrangements with DSO (see policy below), the exams will be made available on Moodle and should be submitted there as well.

How long do I have to complete the exams?
Each exam will be made available on Monday at 3:00 pm on the week that they are due. They must be completed by Thursday at 3:00 pm, which means that you have 72 hours to complete the exam (it won’t take you this long to complete it provided that you have kept up with the coursework). Be sure you have at least 2 hours of uninterrupted time to concentrate on the exam.

Policies

Final Grade Scale Policy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage Range</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100% to 98%</td>
<td>A+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>97% to 94%</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>93% to 90%</td>
<td>A-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>89% to 88%</td>
<td>B+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87% to 84%</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>83% to 80%</td>
<td>B-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79% to 78%</td>
<td>C+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77% to 74%</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73% to 70%</td>
<td>C-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69% to 68%</td>
<td>D+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67% to 64%</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63% to 60%</td>
<td>D-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59% and below</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Late Policy
I will permit makeups only for medical reasons, jury duty, family emergencies, some related emergency, or in observance of a religious holiday (for more information see: <http://oied.ncsu.edu/oied/diversity/diversity_calendar.php>). I will do my best not to schedule exams that interfere with religious observance, but if such a conflict arises please let me know as soon as possible so that we can make arrangements for you to make up the relevant assignment. Documentation for all other excuses will be required.

Students with Disabilities
Reasonable accommodation will be made for students with verifiable disabilities. In order to take advantage of available accommodations, students must register with Disability Services for Students at 1900 Student Health Center, Campus Box 7509, 919-515-7653. http://dso.dasa.ncsu.edu. For more information on NC State’s policy on working with students with disabilities, please see the Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities Regulation (REG02.20.01) http://policies.ncsu.edu/regulation/reg-02-20-01.

Academic Integrity
Absolutely no plagiarism will be tolerated. This means that your ideas and writing must be your own. For more information on the university’s official policy on academic honesty use the following link: <http://policies.ncsu.edu/policy/pol-11-35-01>.

Privacy Policy
Students may be required to disclose personally identifiable information to other students in the course, via electronic tools like email or web-postings, where relevant to the course. Examples include online discussions of class topics, and posting of student coursework. All students are expected to respect the privacy of each other by not sharing or using such information outside the course.

N.C. State Policies, Regulations, and Rules (PRR)
Students are responsible for reviewing the NC State University PRR’s located at http://oucc.ncsu.edu/course-rights-and-responsibilities which pertains to their course rights and responsibilities.