Course Description

This course introduces students to the methods and practices of philosophy through a rigorous investigation of topics pertaining to traditional themes in epistemology and metaphysics. Students will engage key readings and ideas from the history of philosophy, and will find that the themes encountered bear heavily on current issues, events and popular culture. The course will focus on three primary topics: The nature and scope of knowledge, understandings of reality, and the nature of personhood.

Course Objectives

The course is designed to satisfy two primary aims. First, students will develop a critical perspective on philosophical problems found in a variety of philosophical traditions, as grouped according to the topics above. Secondly, students who successfully engage course materials will develop a working knowledge of a core set of philosophical skills, including analysis and construction of arguments, proficiency with key philosophical concepts, and philosophical writing. Readings will come from primary and secondary sources.

Course Expectations and Requirements

- Students may miss a total of two class meetings without penalty during the term. A third absence will result in the loss of the “attendance buffer” (explained below) when final grades are calculated. A fifth absence will result in dismissal from the course.
- Students are not required to provide the instructor with a reason for absence, nor are apologies necessary. I assume that absences will only occur under legitimate circumstances.
- Students who miss a class meeting are responsible for obtaining any information or assignments they may have missed.
- Attendance will be taken at the beginning of class on a daily basis. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that his/her name has been recorded accurately on daily attendance sheets.
- Students are expected to come to class on time. Three late arrivals will be considered equivalent to one absence on the attendance record.
- Reading assignments are required in this course. I understand that the reading load is accelerated by the abbreviated summer schedule, but I expect that students will engage with the texts assigned.
• As a significant portion of the course will involve class discussion of texts, it is expected that students will have completed assigned readings before the corresponding class meeting.

• Participation in discussions will be evaluated according to the quality of student comments, and not quantity. Students who demonstrate excellence in discussions will attend closely to the comments of other students, and offer remarks that are of relevance to the discussion at hand. It is expected that students will engage one another’s ideas in discussion, and that this will be done in a respectful manner. Neither disparaging remarks nor personal attacks will be tolerated in any way.

• Class discussions will frequently feature small-group work. It is expected that students will participate actively in these groups.

• Cell phones must be turned off during class. Students who need to leave a phone on for emergency purposes should let me know at the beginning of the class session. Text messaging is incompatible with active participation in class activities, and will not be permitted during class time.

• Students who are considering dropping the course for personal reasons are encouraged to meet with me first—I’m happy to do what I can to help you succeed in this class!

**Student Assessment:**

Evaluations will be based upon the quality of individual student participation in discussions and written work. The final grade will be awarded according to the following criteria:

• **Written work:**

  o Written work will consist of a series of homework assignments one short essay (20 percentage points), and one longer essay.

  o Homework assignments will be based upon course readings. For each assigned reading, questions will be posted on the course website (explained below) pertaining to the text. Questions highlighted in **bold** should be answered for the homework assignment. You do not need to submit written responses for questions that are not highlighted in bold. Responses may be brief and informal, but *must reflect that the reading has been done*. I will collect responses at the beginning of class. Students who are late will be expected to submit homework responses upon arrival. Students who are absent will be expected to submit responses via email prior to returning to class on the following day. Late responses will not be accepted. Each homework assignment will be worth 2 percentage points toward your final grade in the course (10 assignments=20 pts in total). Assignments will not be handed back to you, but I will read them. If your response is satisfactory, it will be reflected as “x” on the course grade tracker (which I will update on the course website on a weekly basis). If your response is not satisfactory, it will be reflected as “-” in the grade tracker. You may email me or meet me at my office to correct unsatisfactory responses. If this is done *within one week* of the original question date, you will be given full credit for the response. **You may correct a maximum of three responses in this manner.**
o Essays will be evaluated according to standards provided with descriptions of individual assignments. Standards for each paper will also be addressed verbally in class at the time of assignment. It is expected that students who remain unclear as to the standards of excellent written work will meet with the instructor before the assignment is due.

o Academic honesty is imperative in written work. Any plagiarized paper will automatically result in a grade of “F” for the course, and will be reported to the Dean of Academics. Students who are unsure about standards for academic honesty should consult with me. In short, any uncited material, presented as your own original work, constitutes plagiarism. This includes uncited quotes from internet and print sources. There will be no exceptions to this policy.

o Assignments turned in on time will be graded and returned with comments within one week of the due date. Students may submit assignments the Monday after the due date at no penalty, but I make no guarantees for a prompt return. I will not accept any papers that are turned in after this time.

o I practice blind grading to ensure impartiality in evaluating student work. Students should not write their names on the front of any written assignment. Rather, the name should be written lightly in pencil on the back of the last page.

- Mid-Term and Final Exams:

  o A make-up exam will only be available under certifiable emergency circumstances. Students who miss either exam for non-emergency reasons will not have the option for a make-up.

- Attendance buffer:

  o Students who miss two or fewer classes will automatically keep this buffer, which will be used in calculating the final grade. Final grades will be calculated as follows

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>With attendance buffer</th>
<th>Without attendance buffer</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HW Assignments</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Short Essay</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Longer Essay</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm Exam</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance Buffer</td>
<td>15</td>
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- Argument Paper: 5 pts extra credit (OPTIONAL)

  o Students may earn up to 5 extra percentage points in the course by submitting an argument paper. Argument papers are described in detail on the “Assignments” page of the course website

GRADE SCALE: A+ (100-97), A (96-93), A- (92-90), B+ (89-87), B (86-83), B- (82-80), C+ (79-77), C (76-73), D+ (73-70), D (69-67), D- (66-63), F (62-0)
Course Reading Schedule

(n.b.: The schedule is subject to change at my discretion)

- **6/29:** Introduction to course
- **6/30:** Read Descartes, “First Meditation” and “Second Meditation”
  - Read Grau, “Three kinds of Skepticism”
  - Read Chuang Tzu, “Butterfly Dream”
- **7/1:** Read Hume, “Sceptical Doubts Concerning the Operations of the Understanding”
  - Read Greene, “You Perceive With Your Mind”
- **7/6:** Read Moore, “Certainty”
  - Read Reid, Ch. I Sect. VII and Ch. II Sect. I
- **7/7:** Read Gettier, “Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?”
  - In class film: *The Thirteenth Floor*
- **7/8:** Read Clifford, “The Ethics of Belief”
  - Read Long, “Religious Pragmatism through the Eyes of Luke Skywalker”
  - **Argument Paper Date**
- **7/13:** Reading TBA
  - In class film: *Frailty*
- **7/14:** Read Korcz, “Coke into Pepsi: The Miracle in *Pulp Fiction*”
  - Read Lacey, “I Should Have Known It!”
- **7/16:** Read Holt, “The Costanza Maneuver”
  - Read Gracia and Sanford, “The Metaphysics of *The Matrix*”
  - **Short Essay Due**
  - **Argument Paper Date**
- **7/20:** Read *The Diamond Sutra*
  - Read Baur, “The Beatles and Idealistic Monism”
  - MIDTERM EXAM
- **7/21:** Read Quine, “On What There Is”
  - In class film: *Blade Runner*
  - Read Chalmers, “The Puzzle of Conscious Experience”
  - **Argument Paper Date**
- **7/27:** Read Jacquette, “Zombie Gladiators”
  - In class film: *Memento*
- **7/28:** Read Kinghorn, “Is the Hulk the Same Person as Bruce Banner?”
  - Read Smith, “John Locke, Personal Identity, and *Memento*”
- **7/29:** Reading TBA

- **8/3:** Reading TBA
  - In class film: *The Truman Show*
- **8/4:** Reading TBA
- **8/5:** FINAL EXAM
  - Final Paper Due

Texts and Course Website

The majority of readings will come from the following books, which are available for purchase at the bookstore:

- Course Reader
- *The Diamond Sutra*, trans. A. F. Price
- Any additional course readings will be handed out in class or via the course website:
  [http://www.deanza.edu/faculty/ramireztono/phil01/](http://www.deanza.edu/faculty/ramireztono/phil01/)

This site will also contain copies of lecture notes, assignments, and updated grade information for individual students.