PHIL 110 Introduction to Philosophy

**Course Description:** This course will introduce students to philosophy through an examination of some of the most fundamental philosophical problems. The abilities to think, read, and write critically, to develop and defend arguments, and to appropriately justify one’s views will be emphasized. Topics to be discussed are chosen from philosophy of religion, epistemology, metaphysics, philosophy of mind, and ethics.

**Required Work:** In order for this course to succeed, attending and being well-prepared for class consistently are both essential. This requires, among other things, reading the assigned texts and articles closely and carefully and being engaged participants in class lectures and discussions. Since discussion is such a crucial element in learning philosophy, class attendance is expected unless the absence in question is unavoidable. Students are each allowed two unexcused absences (proper documentation is required for excused absences, which include, for instance, a serious illness, a family tragedy, or a mandatory court appearance). For every additional absence, the student’s final grade in the course will be reduced by a third of a letter grade.

Students will be expected to write summaries of each of the reading assignments, which will be collected at the beginning of every class (these summaries cannot be taken from those found in the Pojman text) and will be graded on a check-plus (excellent), check (adequate), check-minus (deficient or late), and N/C (not deserving of credit; the assignment must be redone) basis. Reading summaries (but not papers or exams) due during either an excused absence or during one of the two allowed unexcused absences may be turned in for full credit no later than at the beginning of the class immediately following the absence. Students must make arrangements with the professor regarding papers and exams due during either an excused absence or one of the two allowed unexcused absences.

In addition to the reading summaries, students will be expected to write three papers during the quarter. The final grade for the course will be determined in the following way:

- One 4-5 page paper, worth 20% of the final grade.
- One 5-6 page paper, worth 30% of the final grade.
- One 6-7 page paper, worth 30% of the final grade.
- Daily reading summaries and class discussion, worth 20% of the final grade.

**Grade Scale:**

- A+ 98-100
- A  93-97
- A- 90-92
- B+ 87-89
- B  83-86
- B- 80-82
Course Policies:
(1) In order to pass the course, all assignments must be completed.

(2) Extensions must be requested before the due date.

(3) Only paper versions of the assignments may be handed in.

(4) Plagiarism is the presenting of someone else’s thoughts, ideas, or work as one’s own, regardless of whether this is what is intended, and it will not be tolerated in this course. All cases of alleged violation of academic integrity will be referred to the Assistant Dean for Advising and Academic Integrity. Possible penalties range from failing the course to permanent exclusion from the university. For more on plagiarism, see: http://www.wcas.northwestern.edu/advising/dishon.html http://www.writing.northwestern.edu/avoiding_plagiarism.html.

Students with Disabilities:
Any student with a documented disability needing accommodations is requested to speak directly to the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) (847-467-5530) and the instructors as early as possible in the quarter (preferably within the first two weeks of class). All discussions will remain confidential.

Blackboard: Some of the business of this course, including access to readings on reserve, will be conducted through the Course Management System (Blackboard). You are encouraged to check it frequently, as I may post announcements there from time to time. To access Blackboard, you will need to use your NetID and password.


Schedule of Readings and Assignments (unless it is an article posted on Blackboard, the readings are from the Pojman text):

I. INTRODUCTION

09/23 Opening Remarks.

II. PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

i. The Cosmological Argument


ii. The Teleological Argument


iii. The Ontological Argument


iv. The Problem of Evil


10/09 Discussion—bring a prepared discussion question to class;
   *4-5 Page Paper Due.

v. Is Faith Compatible with Reason?


10/16 Antony Flew, R.M. Hare, and Basil Mitchell, “A Debate on the Rationality of
   Religious Belief,” pp. 144-150.

III. KNOWLEDGE

i. What Can We Know? Classical Theories of Knowledge

10/21 René Descartes, “Cartesian Doubt and the Search for Foundational

IV. PHILOSOPHY OF MIND

i. Who Am I? Do We Have Personal Identity?

   David Hume, “We Have No Substantial Self with Which We Are
   Identical,” pp. 343-345.
   Derek Parfit and Godfrey Vesey, “Brain Transplants and Personal

V. ETHICS

i. Are There Any Moral Absolutes or Is Morality Completely Relative?

ii. Ethics and Egoism: Why Should We Be Moral?

                pp. 461-466.

11/04 Discussion—bring a prepared discussion question to class;
                *5-6 Page Paper Due.

iii. Which Is the Correct Ethical Theory?


                Stephanie Strom, “An Organ Donor's Generosity Raises the Question of
                How Much Is Too Much,” available on Blackboard.

VI. PHILOSOPHY IN ACTION

i. Is Abortion Morally Permissible?


ii. Is the Death Penalty Morally Permissible?

                Hugo Adam Bedau, “No, the Death Penalty Is Not Morally Permissible,”
                pp. 655-664.

iii. Do Animals Have Rights?

                Patrick Martins, “About a Turkey,” available on Blackboard.
                Michael Pollan, “An Animal’s Place,” available on Blackboard.

iv. Is Affirmative Action Morally Justified?

12/08  *6-7 Page Final Paper Due.