

Introduction to Philosophy: The Philosophical Basis of Western Culture and Science

Instructor: Rockwell F. Clancy
Course: VR 202 – Introduction to Philosophy: The Philosophical Basis of Western Culture and Science
Meeting: Tuesday and Thursday 12:10-1:50 pm
Location: 204 Dong Xia Yuan
Office Hrs: Thursdays 2:00-3:40 pm
Office Rm: UM-SJTU JI building, room 404
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Teaching assistant

Name: Qi Chengyan
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Office Hrs: Tuesday 8:00-10:00 pm*

*TA-student meeting location: JI Electronic Reading Room.

1. Course Description

This course will introduce students to the study of philosophy, understood as a discipline that consists in asking questions and giving answers in a systematic and critical fashion. The course will take a two-fold historical and topical approach, in the first place reading texts by significant figures within the Western philosophical tradition – isolating and understanding the types of questions they pose – in the second place attempting to understand how these provide the basis for Western culture and science. Upon completion of this course, students should be able to ask questions and give answers in a systematic and critical fashion, be familiar with major themes and figures within the Western philosophical tradition, and have an awareness of how these shape Western culture and science. In addition, students will develop their abilities to read closely, think critically, and write clearly.

2. Texts

Cahn, Steven M. *Classics of Western Philosophy*.

This book will be posted on Sakai. You are expected to print out, read, and bring these to each class.

You might find the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (available online) helpful as well.

3. Course Requirements

You are expected to have read the assigned text multiple times before class, taking notes and raising questions regarding the reading, and coming to class ready to discuss the text in depth. Try to identify questions the texts raise and answer regarding the different branches of philosophy, dealing with the nature of reality, the nature of knowledge and what one can know, and what one should do given some conception of the good, as well as the way these pertain to the basis of Western culture and science. (I will more fully explain what I mean by this throughout the course of the semester.) The success of this course hinges on your willingness to actively participate in discussion.

A. Attendance: Attendance is required. Failure to attend each class will affect your grade. Students who miss over 1/3 of classes cannot pass. A percentage of your grade is based on class participation, which consists in attendance as well as active participation, for example, answering questions, asking questions if the course material is unclear, etc. You will be responsible for all material covered in class, including lecture content, schedule and policy changes, and other general information. **You are expected to take copious notes in class. The midterm and final exams will contain questions on content not covered in the readings but only the lectures. You will not do well on the essays unless you have taken notes in class to use in the process of writing your essays.**

To quote the JI policy on leave/missed classes:

- a) "An advance request for leave of absence is required if the student cannot attend the class due to illness or other reasons. Absence without approval will be regarded as skipping classes."
- b) "A note that a student visited a medical facility is not a sufficient excuse for missing an assignment or an exam. The note must specifically indicate that the student was incapable of completing an assignment or taking an exam due to medical problems and that this condition was sudden enough that it was impractical to contact the instructor in advance."

Students will receive a zero for any in-class work or tests they miss due to unexcused absences. Please note that even with an excused absence, you are still required to hand in any work due for the class, on time. For example, if you have an approved leave of absence on Monday, you are responsible for handing in any homework at the same time as other students.

TIP: Be sure to ask for the contact information of several classmates so you can contact them about what you missed.

B. Attendance questions: Each day of class you will bring in at least two questions you have regarding the previous class' discussion, the assigned reading, or issues you encounter in your life you think are relevant to the course. I will review these at the beginning of the next class. They count towards your attendance grade, helping me to know you better and what you do or do not understand about the course. The questions should be written out with your name and student ID number, ready to hand in at the beginning of class. If you are excused from class, then you should let me know and will receive four points for that day's questions. If you have an unexcused absence, then you will receive a zero for that day's questions. Anyone caught handing in questions for a student not in class or acting in an otherwise dishonest way will face a lowered score and be reported to the Honor Council.

C. In-class presentations: After an initial review of the previous class's content, each class will begin with a presentation of the reading by a student. These presentations will consist in summarizing what the reading was about, answering questions other students might have, and raising at least two questions regarding the reading to facilitate further discussion. This discussion will focus on the assigned reading, relevant questions the reading raises, and/or potential connections the reading has with personal experience, current events, etc. The

presentations should be at least five minutes but no longer than ten. This will be followed by lecture, and time at the end of class for more questions and “house cleaning” issues.

D. Papers: You will write two word-processed essays of two to three pages for this course. **Your grade will be determined as much by content as form – i.e., that your essays follow standard essay form (introduction, body, etc.) and are free of punctuation, grammar, and syntactical mistakes. Please consult the guidelines/grading criteria for your written work that I have posted on Sakai. Your papers should be no more than three – and no less than two – full pages.**

Late Papers: Your grade for essays will drop by 1/3 for each day that they are late, including weekends. In other words, a paper that would otherwise receive an A, if handed in one day late, would drop to an A- (and so on).

E. Exams: The exams will be closed book, closed notes, with short answer questions drawn from the readings, lectures, *and class discussions*. **For this reason, it is absolutely necessary – not only for your participation grade but also for exam performance – that you attend *all* classes, or get notes from someone you trust for classes you miss.**

4. Grading Policy

Participation –attendance, in-class presentations, and questions/discussion	15%
Paper one	15%
Paper two	20%
Midterm Exam	25%
Final Exam	25%

Grades will be assigned according to this chart:

Final average	Course grade	Final average	Course grade
98% and above	A+	77% and above	C+
93% and above	A	73% and above	C
90% and above	A-	70% and above	C-
87% and above	B+	60% and above	D
83% and above	B	59.9 and below	F
80% and above	B-		

5. Academic Integrity

As a Joint Institute student, you are bound by the UM-SJTU JI Honor Code. All work handed in for this class must be your own. The inclusion of any data, words, or ideas from any other source must be acknowledged, and that source must be given proper credit. Failure to do so is a violation of the Honor Code. Any suspected violation of the Honor Code will be reported to Honor Council for investigation.

Please be sure you understand JI’s policy on plagiarism. For this course, it is defined as:

- a) The use of any passage of **three words or longer** from another source without proper attribution. Use of any phrase of three words or more must be enclosed in quotation

marks (“**example, example, example**”). The source of the material must be identified in the text, by a parenthetical reference, footnote, or endnote.

- b) Use of material from an uncredited source, making very **minor changes** (like word order or verb tense) to avoid the three-word rule.
- c) Inclusion of **facts, data, ideas, or theories** originally thought of by someone else, without giving that person (organization, etc.) credit. You must identify the source, whether in an endnote, footnote, parenthetical reference, or in the text.
- d) **Paraphrasing** ideas or theories (writing them in your own words) without giving the original thinker proper credit.
- e) Allowing another person to make extensive changes to your paper. This is considered “unauthorized aid.” Allowing a friend to check your work for minor errors is fine.
- f) Use of an electronic translation program such as Google Translate. The use of machine translation programs is classified as “unauthorized aid.”

Please note that because **even partially plagiarized** assignments will receive a failing grade, it is in your best interest to do your work on your own. Even assignments that you have struggled with will probably result in a grade higher than that of plagiarized work that is discovered by the instructor or TA. If you have any questions about what constitutes or how to avoid plagiarism, please do not hesitate to ask.

6. Language

As long as students are in the classroom, they should speak English. Students should also speak English when meeting with me or the TA. If students must ask for the definition of an English word, this should be done in English. I will ask students not speaking in English to leave class.

7. Courtesy

Please foster a learning atmosphere by respecting classmates, TAs, and the teacher. Students are asked to turn off their cell phones when class begins. Please do not play with electronic devices during class. Please be polite to other students. Any discussions about grades should take place calmly. It is recommended that students wait twenty-four hours before contacting an instructor or TA about a disputed grade. Again, I will ask students speaking out of turn or being disruptive to leave class.

*This syllabus is tentative and subject to revision as the instructor sees fit.

8. Assignments and Tentative Course Schedule

Class	Topic(s)	Reading/homework	Work due/exam
1 – T 9/16	Introduction to the course/philosophy, sign up for in-class presentations	Review the syllabus and guidelines/grading criteria for your written work, Phaedo 87-99	
2 – Th 9/18	Introduction to Plato/Phaedo	Phaedo 100-116	
3 – T 9/23	Phaedo	Phaedo 117-129	

4 – Th 9/25	Phaedo	Phaedo 128-141	
5 – T 9/30	Phaedo	Meditations 990-996, work on essay one	
8 – Th 10/9	Introduction to Descartes/Meditations	Meditations 997-1009, work on essay one	
10 – T 10/14	Meditations	Meditations 1010-1020, work on essay one	
11 – Th 10/16	Meditations	Meditations 1021-1026	Essay one due
12 – T 10/21	Meditations	Meditations 1027-1031	
13 – Th 10/23	Meditations	Meditations 1032-1042	
14 – T 10/28	Meditations	Study for midterm exam	
15 – Th 10/30	Movie – <i>Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind</i>		
16 – T 11/4	Review for midterm exam, midterm evaluations	Study for midterm exam	
17 – Th 11/6	Midterm exam		Midterm exam
18 – T 11/11	Enquiry	Enquiry 1502-1507	
19 – Th 11/13	Enquiry	Enquiry 1508-1512, work on essay two	
20 – T 11/18	Enquiry	Enquiry 1513-1524, work on essay two	
21 – Th 11/20	Enquiry	Enquiry 1523-1529, work on essay two	
22 – T 11/25	Enquiry	Existentialism 2342-2348	Essay two due
23 – Th 11/27	Introduction to Sartre/ Existentialism as a Humanism	Existentialism 2348-2360	
24 – T 12/2	Existentialism		
25 – Th 12/4	Existentialism		
26 – T 12/9	Movie – <i>The Village</i>		
27 – Th 12/11	Review for final exam	Study for final exam	

28 – T 12/16 or Th 12/18	Final exam		
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