



PHIL 129 - Introduction to Epistemology and Metaphysics Course Outline

Approval Date:

Effective Date: 08/13/2017

SECTION A

Unique ID Number

Discipline(s) Philosophy

Division Arts and Humanities

Subject Area Philosophy

Subject Code PHIL

Course Number 129

Course Title Introduction to Epistemology and
Metaphysics

TOP Code/SAM Code 1509.00 - Philosophy / E - Non-
Occupational

**Rationale for adding this course to the
curriculum** Textbook update.

Units 3

Cross List N/A

Typical Course Weeks 18

Total Instructional Hours

Contact Hours

Lecture 54.00

Lab 0.00

Activity 0.00

Work Experience 0.00

Outside of Class Hours 108.00

Total Contact Hours 54

Total Student Hours 162

Open Entry/Open Exit No

Maximum Enrollment 50

Grading Option Letter Grade or P/NP

Distance Education Mode of Instruction

SECTION B

General Education Information:

SECTION C

Course Description

Repeatability May be repeated 0 times

Catalog Description Epistemology (the study of knowledge) and metaphysics (the study of reality) are two important branches in philosophy. Epistemology explores the themes of artificial intelligence versus human intelligence and the relationships between knowledge, beliefs, and evidence. Metaphysics examines our reality and everything in existence, including the acquisition of knowledge and the question of consciousness. This course emphasizes the historical and classical works that provide a foundation for the basic principles of good argumentation and critical analysis.

Schedule Description

SECTION D

Condition on Enrollment

1a. **Prerequisite(s):** *None*

1b. **Corequisite(s):** *None*

1c. **Recommended**

- PHIL 120 with a minimum grade of C or better

1d. **Limitation on Enrollment:** *None*

SECTION E

Course Outline Information

1. Student Learning Outcomes:

- Examine and evaluate the major historical classical writings on epistemology and metaphysics.
- Critically analyze and assess any given epistemological or metaphysical question, applying both epistemological and metaphysical considerations to the given topic.

2. Course Objectives: Upon completion of this course, the student will be able to:

- Define, identify and give examples of the major epistemological and metaphysical issues.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the historical development of epistemological and metaphysical thought.
- Read and interpret original philosophical writings on epistemological and metaphysical topics.
- Evaluate and appraise each major epistemological and metaphysical issue.
- Compare and contrast issues found in major epistemological and metaphysical theories which are amenable to a contrastive analysis.
- Develop her/his own judgments on the basis of a critical-thinking approach to the major historical epistemological and metaphysical issues.
- Create, identify and critique logical exposition using critical thinking skills presented in class.

H.

3. Course Content

- I. The Meaning of Life
 - A. The Meaning of Meaning
 - 1. The Meaning of Children
 - 2. God as Meaning
 - 3. Afterlife as Meaning
 - 4. No Meaning at All - Nihilism
 - B. The Meanings of Life
 - 1. Life as a Game
 - 2. Life as a Story
 - 3. Life as Tragedy
 - 4. Life as Comedy
 - 5. Life as a Mission
 - 6. Life as Art
- II. The Search for Truth
 - A. What Is True?
 - 1. Empirical Truth
 - 2. Necessary Truth
 - B. Rationalism and Empiricism
 - C. The Presuppositions of Knowledge
 - 1. Innate ideas
 - 2. Skepticism
 - D. Knowledge, Truth and Science
 - 1. Hypotheses and Theories
 - E. The Nature of Truth
 - 1. The Coherence Theory of Truth
 - 2. The Pragmatic Theory of Truth
 - F. Rationality
 - G. Subjective Truth and the Problem of Relativism
- III. Concepts of Divinity
 - A. Gods and Goddesses
 - 1. History of Goddess Worship and the Subsequent Rise of Patriarchal Religions
 - B. Traditional Western Concepts of God
 - 1. Transcendence
 - 2. Immanence
 - 3. Totally Immanent: Pantheism
 - 4. Universal Spirit
 - 5. Process
 - 6. Transcendent Creator: Deism
 - 7. Unknown Object of Faith
 - 8. Moral Being
 - C. The Problem of Evil
 - 1. Denial of God
 - 2. Two Kinds of Evil: Moral and Nonmoral
 - 3. Denial of Evil
 - 4. The Aesthetic Totality Solution
 - 5. The Free-Will Solution
 - 6. Justice in the Afterlife
 - 7. God's "Mysterious Ways"
 - D. Faith and Reason: Ways of Believing
 - 1. The Cosmological Argument

- 2. The Argument from Design
- 3. The Ontological Argument
- 4. Rational Faith
- 5. Pascal's Wager
- 6. Irrational Faith as Mere Belief
- IV. The Nature of Reality
 - A. What Is Most Real?
 - 1. The Reality Behind Appearance
 - 2. Dreams, Symbolisms, and Reason: What is Real?
 - 3. The Basis of Metaphysics
 - B. The First Metaphysicians
 - 1. Thales
 - 2. The Pre-Socratic Materialists
 - C. Early Non-Physical Views of Reality
 - 1. Plato's Forms
 - 2. Aristotle's Metaphysics
 - D. Mind and Metaphysics
 - 1. Rene Descartes
 - 2. Baruch Spinoza
 - 3. Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz
 - E. Idealism
 - F. Teleology
 - G. Metaphysics and the Everyday World
- V. Self
 - A. The Essential Self
 - B. Self as Body, Self as Consciousness
 - 1. The Self and Its Emotions
 - 2. The Egocentric Predicament
 - C. The Mind-Body Problem
 - 1. Behaviorism
 - 2. Identity Theory
 - 3. Functionalism
 - 4. The Self as a Choice
 - 5. No Self, Many Selves
 - 6. The Self as Social
 - 7. Self and Relationships
- VI. Freedom
 - A. Freedom and the Good Life
 - 1. Why Is Freedom So Important to Us?
 - 2. What is Freedom?
 - B. Free Will and Determinism
 - 1. The Role of Consciousness
 - 2. *Soft* Determinism
 - 3. In Defense of Freedom
- VII. Beauty
 - A. Beauty and Truth
 - B. Enjoying Tragedy
 - C. Arguing about Taste
 - D. Art, Ethics and Religion
 - E. The Aesthetics of Popular Culture and Everyday Life
- VIII. Philosophy, Sex, Race and Culture

- A. Epistemological and Metaphysical Foundations of Other Cultures
 - 1. South Asian
 - 2. East Asian
 - 3. Middle Eastern
 - 4. Hispanic
 - 5. Native American
 - 6. African
- B. Sexual Politics from an Epistemological and Metaphysical Viewpoint
 - 1. The Rise of Feminist Philosophy
 - a.) Women and Nature
 - b.) Plato: Patriarch or Early Feminist?
 - c.) Reason vs. Passion in Ethics: The Ethics of Care
 - d.) Feminist Epistemology and Feminist Science

4. Methods of Instruction:

Activity: Films, podcasts, music.

Critique: Instructor will offer spontaneous oral critiques of student comments during class discussions as well as written critiques of assigned essays.

Discussion: Class discussion will be conducted intermittently at appropriate intervals during the lecture presentations.

Lecture: Instructor will lecture, using the Socratic Method and class discussion.

5. Methods of Evaluation: Describe the general types of evaluations for this course and provide at least two, specific examples.

Typical classroom assessment techniques

Exams/Tests -- Three multiple choice unit exams and one final exam. (Examples are found below in section on Additional Assessment Information.)

Papers -- One five-page critical analysis of a major theme of a religion studied in class. (Examples are found below in the section on Additional Assessment Information.)

Class Work -- Participation in discussions.

Home Work -- Readings, outside research and essays.

Class Performance -- 3 multiple choice tests and one final exam as described below.

Final Exam -- Exam will consist of 100 multiple choice questions and one essay.

Additional assessment information:

Examples of multiple choice questions:

1. Simone de Beauvoir said, "A man never begins by presenting himself as an individual of a certain sex; it goes without saying that he is a man." [Example: NVC has a baseball team (all males) and a "women's baseball team". We have "women writers", but males are simply "writers".] Below are some analogical extrapolations to de Beauvoir's observation. Which one does NOT belong?

- a. Susan Sontag said, "In our culture, men are seen, and women are looked at."
- b. Girls are often praised if they can throw a baseball or football like a boy does; on the contrary, boys are ridiculed if they throw a ball like a girl.
- c. In our culture, women can wear pants or a skirt. A man cannot wear a skirt without social criticism.
- d. Women can give birth and men cannot.
- e. None of the above.

2. Who wrote the following? "Nietzsche declares that it is the philosopher who is the most likely to be wrong about the nature of knowledge, since he always thinks of it in the form of congruence, love, unity, and pacification. [But] if we truly wish to know knowledge, to know what it is, to apprehend it at its root, in its manufacture, we must look not to philosophers but to politicians - we need to understand the relations of struggle and power"

- a. Jurgen Habermas.
- b. Friedrich Nietzsche.
- c. Willard Quine.
- d. Michel Foucault.
- e. Soren Kierkegaard.

Examples of essay questions:

1. Describe Epictetus' encounter with the skeptic who categorically rejected the use of reason and logic in argument, then evaluate Epictetus' reply to the skeptic applying epistemological and metaphysical tools learned in class.

2. Compare and contrast the following two quotes. Be sure to apply the epistemological and metaphysical tools learned in class.

a.) "The Self of everyday [man] is the they-self, which we distinguish from the authentic self, that is, from the self which has been taken hold of in its own way." Martin Heidegger, 1927

b.) "When people are free to do as they please, they usually imitate each other."
Eric Hoffer, 1955

Letter Grade or P/NP

6. Assignments: State the general types of assignments for this course under the following categories and provide at least two specific examples for each section.

A. Reading Assignments

Dividing up chapters in both books in sync with the 18 week semester, the entirety of each book must be read by end of semester.

B. Writing Assignments

1.) Compare and contrast and then critically evaluate the following quotes, one from Buddha and the other from Hermann Hesse. Be sure to apply the classical epistemological and metaphysical tools learned in class to your analysis.

"There is nothing that can be called a 'Self', and there is no such thing as 'mine' in all the world."

Buddha (6th century BCE)

"In reality, every self is far from being a unity; it is a constellation of selves a chaos of forms, of states and stages, of inheritances and potentialities. Man is an onion made up of a hundred layers, a texture made up of many threads."

Hermann Hesse, 1932

2.) Summarize and critique one essential theme in Simone de Beauvoir's classic book, *THE SECOND SEX*, and apply it to a personal situation in your life demonstrating the efficacy or inefficacy of applying it in the contemporary world.

C. Other Assignments

Keep a journal of thoughts that occur throughout the semester.

7. Required Materials

A. EXAMPLES of typical college-level textbooks (for degree-applicable courses) or other print materials.

Book #1:

Author: Martin, Robert M.

Title: Epistemology: A Beginner's Guide (Beginner's Guides)

Publisher: Oneworld Publications

Date of Publication: 2010

Edition: Latest

Book #2:

Author: Van Inwagen, Peter

Title: Metaphysics

Publisher: Westview Press

Date of Publication: 2014

Edition: Latest

B. Other required materials/supplies.