Syllabus for Philosophy 125C: Great Philosophers (SEC 01)
T/R: 10:00 – 11:30 am
Professor: Shannon Spaulding
TA: Jeff Dauer

Contact Information

Office: 101 Wilson Hall
Office Phone: (314) 935-9531
Office Hours: Tuesday 2:00 – 4:00 pm, or by appointment

Email: sspauld@artsci.wustl.edu

Course Description

In this course we focus on some of the most important texts in the history of Western philosophy in order to discuss a wide range of central philosophical problems. Among the philosophers we will study are Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Hume, and Kant. Our goal is not just to appreciate the genius of some great philosophers but also to grapple with the current philosophical problems they have bequeathed to us.

Each member of this class is expected to come to his or her own conclusions and defend them as best s/he can. You are not graded on what your opinion is. You are graded on your ability to reason through, argue for, defend, and express your ideas clearly and cogently. Consequently, a primary goal of this course is to teach you how to analyze arguments – to dissect and evaluate them – and to learn the tools and methods of reasoning needed for such an analysis.

Required Texts (available at the Campus Bookstore)

Plato, Five Dialogues, Hackett Publishing Company, 2nd Edition
Descartes, Meditations on First Philosophy, Hackett Publishing Company, 3rd Edition
Kant, Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals, Hackett Publishing Company, 3rd Edition

Note: Many of these texts are available online for free. The reading assignments will be based on the pagination of the books listed above. Should you choose to access the reading assignments online instead of purchasing the books, you are responsible for figuring out the corresponding passages for each reading assignment. In addition, I shall assign articles not from the texts above. I shall make those articles available to you prior to the reading assignments.

Graded Assignments

You will have to write six reaction papers. A reaction paper should be no longer than a page and a half, and preferably just a page. In this paper you should:
1. Interpret an argument from the text, being clear about its premises and conclusions
2. Defend or criticize the argument with an argument of your own.

These papers will be due every other week. If your last name begins with a letter between or including A-L then your first paper will be due on the first Tuesday. Otherwise, your first paper will be due on the second Tuesday. I will announce in class the topics of the papers. Papers are due IN CLASS unless you have made special arrangements with the TA BEFOREHAND. The six papers are worth 48% of your final grade. Every paper must be turned in for any paper to count towards your final grade.

There will be two exams -- the first covering material from the first half of the course and the second covering material from the second half. Each exam is worth 26% of your final grade. The first exam will be on Thursday, October 13 and will cover all material up until that date. The second exam will be December 20 from 6-8 pm and will cover material subsequent to the first exam. The exams will consist of short essay questions.

**A Few Guidelines**

Turn off your cell phones when you come to class.
Do not read the newspaper, do Sudokus or crosswords in class.
Do not play on facebook, check email, or otherwise surf the internet during class.
Try your best not to be late. If you have trouble getting here on time because you are walking here from across campus, then please talk to me about it. Otherwise, chronic lateness will affect your final grade.
If you fall asleep once in this class, I will embarrass you in front of the class. If you fall asleep twice, we will need to have a talk about appropriate behavior in class. If you fall asleep three times or more, then I will deduct points off your final grade. If you need sleep, there are far better places to get it than in my classroom, both in terms of comfort and of your final grade.

**Late Work Policy**

Late work will be accepted with a penalty of five (5) points per day. Work that is turned in later than one week from the due date will receive a zero (0). Extensions will be granted on a case-by-case basis and only for a sufficiently good reason (I reserve the right to judge whether a given reason is sufficiently good). Work must be turned in in class. I do not accept written work over email.

**Attendance Policy**

Every day at the beginning of class the TA will send around a sign-in sheet that you must sign. You are responsible for signing this sheet. Attendance and participation are basic requirements for succeeding in this class. Your participation in class benefits you and other students, and it makes class interesting. For reasons of personal health and/or sanity, it may be necessary to take a day or two off during the semester. Of course, too many absences will affect your final grade (missing more than four classes is “too many,” except in cases of health or family emergencies).
Disabilities

I urge any student who has physical or learning disabilities that will affect class attendance or performance to speak with me during the first week of class. We will work with the Student Disabilities Services to accommodate your needs.

Contact Policy

My office hours are for your benefit, so please use them. I am always willing to make appointments to meet if my office hours are not conducive to your schedule. E-mail is the best way to contact me. Usually, you can expect a speedy response. As a rule, however, you should always allow 24 hours for a response to an email. If I have not responded within 24 hours, feel free to send me a “friendly” reminder.

Should you feel uncomfortable discussing the content or the teaching of this course with me, please feel free to contact Kit Wellman, the chair of the Philosophy department. His email address is kwellman@artscl.wustl.edu.

Policy on Written Work

All written work must be typed and double-spaced with one-inch margins on all sides using either Times New Roman, 12 point font or a similar font and type size. All typed assignments with multiple pages must be stapled. I am not responsible for lost pages of unstapled papers. Seeing that your work is complete and well organized is your responsibility and is part of handing in a finished product. Unstapled papers will automatically be lowered by ½ of a letter grade (five points).

Plagiarism

Plagiarism consists in using others' words or ideas and passing them off as your own. Never copy the words of another without putting them in quotation marks and citing the source. If you paraphrase a source, you still have to cite it. Spotting plagiarism is actually very easy, and if I catch you doing it you will receive a zero on the assignment and an F in the course. Furthermore, for any case of plagiarism, I will push for the severest penalty allowed by the university (namely, expulsion). Please consult the “Academic Integrity Policy” that is published by the Dean of Students Office for guidelines on how to avoid plagiarism.