Introduction to Philosophy

Dr. Anne Collins Smith

T-Th 9:30-10:45 a.m. in Forestry 205

OFFICE HOURS: Monday & Wednesday 10:30 a.m. – 12:00 noon
Tuesday & Thursday 1:00-3:30 p.m.

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Phone: 468-2327
Email: acsmith@sfasu.edu [n.b. be sure to include the "c"!]

Course description
An introduction to philosophy through the examination of prominent philosophical problems, topics and theorists. We will examine responses to the following questions:

- What is philosophy?
- How do we distinguish good reasoning from bad?
- How do we justify our knowledge claims?
- What does it mean to be a human being?
- How do we decide the right thing to do?

Program Learning Outcomes:
- This is a general education core curriculum course and no specific program learning outcomes for this major are addressed in this course.

Student Learning Outcomes:
- Students will acquire factual knowledge concerning critical thinking, epistemology, the mind-body problem, and ethics.
- Students will gain familiarity with certain fundamental philosophical questions and historically prominent conceptual systems, as well as an understanding of the progression of ideas within philosophical disciplines.
- Students will come to recognize the importance of basic philosophical issues and distinctions in their own lives, and to analyze and evaluate the choices they make in regard to these issues.

Core Curriculum Objectives
PHI 153 is part of the university's Core Curriculum. As such, the work assigned in this course recognizes the general goals of the core and the specific objectives attached to those classes designated for inclusion in the Language, Philosophy, and Culture Foundational Component Area as defined by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. More detailed information concerning the core outcomes to be assessed in this class can be found following the Course Policies section of the syllabus.

Course Materials
All necessary texts will be provided online through the D2L website for the course.

Grading Criteria
- Attendance and participation 15%
- Group discussion/presentation 1 10%
- Group discussion/presentation 2 10%
- Group discussion/presentation 3 10%
- Midterm 25%
- Final 30%
Attendance and participation:
Attendance will be taken every day by roll. It is your responsibility to make sure that your name is recorded when you are present.

Participation refers to your active engagement in class activities, including but not limited to willingness to answer questions posed by the instructor or by your classmates, as well as to ask questions of your own. Sleeping in class, using your cell phone in class, doing homework for other classes, or being disengaged from the class in any other way will lower this portion of your grade.

Group discussion/presentation
During each of the last three units (Epistemology, Mind/Body, and Ethics), we will spend time in class watching a pop culture product, such as a television show, that relates directly to the material we are covering at the time. The class will be divided into groups and each group will be given a different question to reflect on during the episode. Each group will be assigned a discussion space on D2L to use in sharing ideas and planning a group presentation. The following week, each group will take turns making a class presentation to help their classmates understand how to relate the video they saw to the material they studied. The presentation may take any format the group chooses, as long as it is not obscene or offensive, such as a PowerPoint, a game, or a skit.

- The discussion portion of the assignment will be individually graded on the basis of your contributions to the online space in preparation for the presentation. It is worth 5 points.
- The actual presentation will be graded on the correctness and completeness of the references to the source material; while creativity is not required, it may earn your group an extra point. It is worth 5 points.
- Note: You must be in attendance on the day of your group's presentation, or you will receive a zero for this portion of the assignment. Therefore, if you know that there is a day when you will not be able to be in class, let me know as far in advance as you can so that your group can be scheduled for a different day.

Typical presentation schedule:
Tuesday: Topics handed out; watch video in class.
Thursday: No class meeting; discuss online
The following week:
Tuesday: Group presentations
Thursday: Additional group presentation time if needed (e.g., if a member cannot be present, or if Tuesday's presentations run long.)

Midterm
The midterm exam will be held on Thursday, October 12. It is not likely to be rescheduled. The exam will cover the definition of philosophy, critical thinking, and epistemology. Material from group presentations on epistemology is eligible for inclusion in the exam. The exam format will be a mix of multiple-choice questions, brief definitions, short-answer essays, and mid-length essays.

Final
The final will be a take-home exam. It will be assigned on the last day of class and you will have until Wednesday of exam week to turn it in. There will be a dropbox open in D2L for you to submit the final exam, which must be in one of the following formats: .txt, .rtf, .doc, or .docx. D2L cannot read documents saved as .pages! The final exam format will consist of long-answer questions designed so that you can demonstrate how well you understand the material; you may use your class notes and the readings on D2L. Remember the rules for plagiarism!
Tentative Schedule

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<tr>
<th>Week(s)</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>August 28-September 1</td>
<td>Syllabus; definition of philosophy</td>
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<td>2-3</td>
<td>September 4-15</td>
<td>Critical Thinking</td>
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<td>4-7</td>
<td>September 18-October 6</td>
<td>Epistemology</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>October 9-13</td>
<td>Review &amp; Midterm examination</td>
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<td>9-11</td>
<td>October 23-November 10</td>
<td>The Mind-Body Problem</td>
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<td>12-14</td>
<td>November 13-December 8</td>
<td>Ethics</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>Take-home due Wednesday, September 13 at 10:30 a.m.</td>
<td>Final examination</td>
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COURSE POLICIES

Academic integrity is the responsibility of all university faculty and students. Faculty members promote academic integrity in multiple ways including instruction on the components of academic honesty, as well as abiding by university policy on penalties for cheating and plagiarism. According to the SFA policy located at http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/4.1-student-academic-dishonesty.pdf,

Academic dishonesty includes both cheating and plagiarism. Cheating includes but is not limited to (1) using or attempting to use unauthorized materials to aid in achieving a better grade on a component of a class; (2) the falsification or invention of any information, including citations, on an assigned exercise; and/or (3) helping or attempting to help another in an act of cheating or plagiarism. Plagiarism is presenting the words or ideas of another person as if they were your own. Examples of plagiarism are (1) submitting an assignment as if it were one's own work when, in fact, it is at least partly the work of another; (2) submitting a work that has been purchased or otherwise obtained from an Internet source or another source; and (3) incorporating the words or ideas of an author into one's paper without giving the author due credit.

Please note that quoting or closely paraphrasing any resource without citation is plagiarism and will be penalized. The minimum penalty for plagiarism is a score of zero (0) on the plagiarized assignment. Anyone who commits an act of cheating or plagiarism may receive a grade of F for the course, in which case the student is required to meet with the instructor to discuss the incident, and a formal Report of Academic Dishonesty will be submitted to the student's permanent file. If you feel that the instructor's determination of academic dishonesty is in error, there is an appeals process described in full at http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic-appeals-by-students-6.3.pdf.

Disability accommodations: To obtain disability related accommodations, alternate formats and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), Human Services Building, and Room 325, 468-3004 / 468-1004 (TDD) as early as possible in the semester. Once verified, ODS will notify the course instructor and outline the accommodation and/or auxiliary aids to be provided. Failure to request services in a timely manner may delay your accommodations. For additional information, go to http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/.

Withheld Grades [Semester Grades Policy (A-54)]
Ordinarily, at the discretion of the instructor of record and with the approval of the academic chair/director, a grade of WH will be assigned only if the student cannot complete the course work because of unavoidable circumstances. Students must complete the work within one calendar year from the end of the semester in which they receive a WH, or the grade automatically becomes an F. If students register for the same course in future terms the WH will automatically become an F and will be counted as a repeated course for the purpose of computing the grade point average.

Acceptable Student Behavior
Classroom behavior should not interfere with the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or the ability of other students to learn from the instructional program (see the Student Conduct Code, policy D-34.1). Unacceptable or disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. Students who disrupt the learning environment may be asked to leave class and may be subject to judicial, academic or other penalties. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including electronic, classroom, labs, discussion
groups, field trips, etc. The instructor shall have full discretion over what behavior is appropriate/inappropriate in the classroom. Students who do not attend class regularly or who perform poorly on class projects/exams may be referred to the Early Alert Program. This program provides students with recommendations for resources or other assistance that is available to help SFA students succeed.

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**General Education Core Curriculum**

This course has been selected to be part of Stephen F. Austin State University's core curriculum. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board has identified six objectives for all core courses: Critical Thinking Skills, Communication Skills, Empirical and Quantitative Skills, Teamwork, Personal Responsibility, and Social Responsibility. SFA is committed to the improvement of its general education core curriculum by regular assessment of student performance on these six objectives.

The chart below indicates the core objectives addressed by this course.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core objective</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tr>
<td>Critical Thinking Skills</td>
<td>To include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information.</td>
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<td>Communication Skills</td>
<td>To include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas though written, oral, and visual communication.</td>
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<td>Personal Responsibility</td>
<td>To include the ability to connect choices, actions and consequences to ethical decision-making.</td>
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<td>Social Responsibility</td>
<td>To include intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities.</td>
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