

# Knowledge, Reality, and Value

## CORC 1210 SYLLABUS

Prof: Amanda Bryant  
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Sect: TR2B  
Code: 0118

Semester: Spring 2013  
Room: 4145 B  
Time: 2:15-3:30pm  
Credits: 3.0

Office Hours: Thursdays, 1-2pm or by appointment  
Office: 3316 B

### Introduction

This course will demonstrate what philosophy is and how to do it by examining historical and contemporary responses to paradigmatically philosophical questions, including the following:

- What is knowledge and can I have it? If so, how?
- Rationally, ought I to believe in God?
- How ought I to live? How do I decide what to do?

### Learning Objectives (from the Philosophy Department)

- 1) Students will improve critical thinking by developing skills of explaining, critically examining, and responding to philosophical theories, issues, and claims in the philosophical areas of epistemology, metaphysics, and ethics.
- 2) Students will improve writing skills by explaining, exploring, and critically examining philosophical theories, issues, concepts, and arguments relating to the philosophical areas of epistemology, metaphysics, and ethics clearly in writing.
- 3) Students will improve communication skills by explaining orally philosophical theories, issues, claims, concepts, and arguments relating to the philosophical areas of epistemology, metaphysics, and ethics.
- 4) Students will improve skills of interpreting and evaluating philosophical writings.
- 5) Students will develop an openness to having their beliefs challenged, will learn to hear and comprehend the views of others, and to entertain objections to their own views.
- 6) Students will be able to explain several classic ethical theories, to compare and contrast ethical theories, and to apply these to justify conclusions relating to concrete moral issues.
- 7) Students will acquire a familiarity with and an understanding of some classic and contemporary philosophical literature and some fundamental philosophical issues, and will be able to explain important contributions to the history of philosophy and their relation to present viewpoints.
- 8) Students will be able to explain several classic epistemological theories, and to compare and contrast theories of what knowledge is and how it is acquired.
- 9) Students will be able to show that issues may be regarded from multiple viewpoints, and will be able to present reasons in support of each viewpoint.
- 10) Students will improve reasoning skills and ethical decision making skills by acquiring an understanding of ethical theories and philosophical concepts that will enable them to develop their own opinions on conceptions and practices of moral interaction and democracy.
- 11) Students will develop a conceptual foundation for future learning by exploring philosophical theories and arguments and will acquire related critical thinking and communication skills.

## Required Text

*Philosophical Inquiry: Classic and Contemporary Readings*. Eds. Jonathan Adler and Catherine Elgin. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co, 2007. ISBN 978-0-87220-867-4.

## Course Requirements

*Participation*: You are expected to attend class regularly and contribute to discussion. Repeated, unexcused absences and latenesses will affect your grade negatively.

*Quizzes*: You will be given frequent pop quizzes that test your comprehension of the readings. These are designed to make sure that you are doing the readings ahead of time and attending class regularly. These are credit/no credit, and I will count 10 of them (there will be 12-15 total). There are no make-up quizzes — if you miss a quiz for any reason, you cannot receive credit for that quiz.

*Short papers*: You will write two short papers, 2-4 pages in length, due in class Mar 05, 2013 and May 02, 2013. Topics will be distributed well in advance of the due dates. These papers are not subject to revision.

*Midterm exam*: There will be an in-class midterm exam on Apr 16, 2013.

*Final exam*: This exam is mandatory, and it will be cumulative. It will be held May 24, 2013, from 1-3pm, location TBD.

## Grading

|                  |     |
|------------------|-----|
| Participation:   | 5%  |
| Quizzes:         | 10% |
| 1st short paper: | 15% |
| 2nd short paper: | 20% |
| Midterm exam:    | 20% |
| Final exam:      | 30% |

Note:

- There will be no extra credit given
- Final grades will be curved

## Letter Grades

|    |         |    |        |    |        |    |        |   |       |
|----|---------|----|--------|----|--------|----|--------|---|-------|
| A+ | 90-100% | B+ | 77-79% | C+ | 67-69% | D+ | 57-59% | F | 0-49% |
| A  | 85-89%  | B  | 74-76% | C  | 64-66% | D  | 54-56% |   |       |
| A- | 80-84%  | B- | 70-73% | C- | 60-63% | D- | 50-53% |   |       |

# **My Policies**

## **Course Expectations**

I expect you to attend class regularly, to exhibit appropriate classroom behavior (discussed below), to do the readings before attending class, to participate in class discussions, and to complete and submit all of the course requirements as outlined above, on or before the due dates listed above (unless I have granted you an extension).

## **Classroom Behavior**

- Be respectful: we may discuss topics that are controversial, about which some people hold strong opinions. We should be critical of the views of others, but never malicious or belligerent. This should be an environment in which we may all feel comfortable contributing to discussion
- Give your attention to whomever has the floor (this involves not having side-conversations, not texting, not Facebooking, and so on)
- Please arrive in a timely manner. If you must be late, try to enter the classroom in the least distracting manner possible
- Please do not bring food to class if it will be distracting to others
- Cell phones, laptops, and other noise-making devices should be silenced

## **Attendance**

I will take attendance at the beginning of each class. If you arrive after I take attendance, remind me after class has finished (not during class) to mark you down as late. Repeated, unexcused absences and latenesses will affect your grade negatively.

If you must miss class, please let me know beforehand. In order to excuse your absence, you must present me with appropriate documentation that demonstrates your reason for missing class.

You must be present for all exams. Make-up exams will only be given to students with sufficiently-documented extenuating circumstances.

## **24-Hour Rule**

When I hand back an assignment or exam, I will not discuss your grade with you until a period of at least 24 hours has passed. Do not contact me about your grade (by email or in person) until after that point. This is for my benefit and for yours.

## **Email**

If you choose to email me, please do so in a judicious manner. If you have a logistical question, consult the syllabus and/or essay assignment first. If you have a substantive question about course content that may require a lengthy response, avail yourself of my office hour. Be advised that I do not discuss grades via email. If you wish to discuss a grade, you must make an appointment with me.

### **Academic Dishonesty**

Know what it is and don't do it. If you are having trouble completing an assignment or studying for an exam, be sure to come see me as soon as possible, and I will do my best to help you.

Academic dishonesty need not be malicious — it can be completely unintentional. Make sure that you cite your sources thoroughly, whether you are quoting somebody or simply paraphrasing an idea of theirs.

I will report all cases of academic dishonesty to the head of my department and to the college's Academic Integrity Officer.

### **Late Assignments**

Unless you have some well-documented excuse and my prior permission, late assignments will be subject to the following penalty:

5% deducted on the first day of lateness, 2% additional deduction for each subsequent day of lateness (including weekends). If you fail to hand in an assignment, your grade for that assignment will be 0.

## **Brooklyn College Policies**

### **Academic Integrity**

The faculty and administration of Brooklyn College support an environment free from cheating and plagiarism. Each student is responsible for being aware of what constitutes cheating and plagiarism and for avoiding both. The complete text of the CUNY Academic Integrity Policy and the Brooklyn College procedure for implementing that policy can be found at this site: <http://www.brooklyn.cuny.edu/bc/policies>. If a faculty member suspects a violation of academic integrity and, upon investigation, confirms that violation, or if the student admits that violation, the faculty member **MUST** report the violation.

### **Disability Services**

In order to receive disability-related academic accommodations, students must first be registered with the Center for Student Disability Services. Students who have a documented disability or suspect they may have a disability are invited to set up an appointment with the Director of the Center for Student Disability Services, Ms. Valerie Stewart-Lovell at 718-951-5538. If you have already registered with the Center for Student Disability Services, please provide me with the course accommodation form and discuss your specific accommodation with me immediately.

### **Nonattendance Because of Religious Beliefs**

Please be aware of the NY State Education Law, which provides that:

1. Any student in an institution of higher education who is unable, because of their religious beliefs, to attend classes on a particular day or days shall, because of such absence on the particular day or days, be excused from any examination or any study or work requirements.

2. It shall be the responsibility of the faculty to make available to each student who is absent from school, because of religious beliefs, an equivalent opportunity to make up any examination, study or work requirements which they may have missed because of such absence on any particular day or days.
3. Any student who is aggrieved by the alleged failure of any faculty or administrative officials to comply in good faith shall be entitled to maintain an action or proceeding in the supreme court of the county in which such institution of higher education is located for the enforcement of their rights.

Lastly: all students should read carefully and thoroughly the 2012-2013 Brooklyn College Bulletin, especially pp. 27-74, for a complete listing of academic regulations of the College.

## **Reading Schedule**

Note: This reading schedule is subject to revision at my discretion.

### **Introduction**

Jan 29: Overview of Syllabus; What is Philosophy? (no reading)

Jan 31: Introductory Logic (no reading)

### **Epistemology**

Rationalism/Empiricism; Skepticism:

Feb 05: Descartes, Meditations Part I, pp. 50-52

Feb 07: Descartes, Meditations Part II, pp. 52-56

Feb 12: NO CLASS (Lincoln's Birthday)

Feb 14: TUESDAY SCHEDULE

Descartes cont'd (no additional reading)

Feb 19: Hume, An Enquiry Into Human Understanding (Sections II, IV), pp.175-183

Feb 21: Hume, An Enquiry into Human Understanding (Section V), pp. 183-189

Feb 26: NO CLASS

Feb 28: G.E. Moore, "A Defence of Common Sense" (see Blackboard)

Justified True Belief:

Mar 05: FIRST PAPER DUE

Ayer, The Problem of Knowledge (see Blackboard)

Mar 07: Gettier, "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?", pp. 43-44

### **Metaphysics**

The Question of God:

Mar 12: Aquinas, "The Five Ways", pp. 711-712

Mar 14: Paley, "The Design Argument", (see Blackboard)

Mar 19: Hume, "Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion" (Sections II), pp. 719-724  
Mar 21: Hume cont'd, and Mackie, "Evil and Omnipotence", pp. 757-763

Mar 26: NO CLASS (Spring Break)  
Mar 28: NO CLASS (Spring Break)  
Apr 02: NO CLASS (Spring Break)

Apr 04: Mackie cont'd (no additional reading)  
Apr 09: Pascal, "The Wager", pp. 784-786  
Apr 11: Overflow and Review  
Apr 16: MIDTERM EXAM

## **Ethics**

### Relativism:

Apr 18: James Rachels, "The Challenge of Cultural Relativism" (see Blackboard)

### Divine Command Theory:

Apr 23: Plato, Euthyphro, pp. 450-458

### Deontology:

Apr 25: Kant, Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals, pp. 474-492  
Apr 30: Kant cont'd (no additional reading)  
May 02: SECOND PAPERS DUE  
Kant cont'd (no additional reading)

### Utilitarianism:

May 07: Mill, "Understanding and Defending Utilitarianism", pp. 493-502  
May 09: Mill cont'd  
May 14: Pojman, "Strengths and Weaknesses of Utilitarianism" (see Blackboard)  
May 16: Overflow and review

Final Exam: Friday May 24, 2013, 1-3pm, location TBD