

# **Knowledge, Reality and Values**

## **CORC 1210**

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Section: EM6  
Code: 0614

Semester: Spring 2013  
Classroom: Boylan 4145  
Meeting time: Monday 6:30PM-9:00PM  
Credits: 3.0

Office: Philosophy Department Adjunct Office Boylan 3316  
Office hours: TBD (To be determined), by appointment for now.

### **SYLLABUS**

#### **Introduction**

Philosophy's distinctive ways of understanding and thinking about perennial human questions: "What can I know?"; "What is real?"; "What is right and wrong?" This course will cover the basic introduction to a number of major debates in epistemology, metaphysics, and value theory.

#### **Learning Objectives**

- 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.

### **CUNY Policy on 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.

### **CUNY Policy on 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.

### **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

## Required Text

I will provide you with all the necessary assigned works online. Please come to class with a printed-out copy of the readings, or on an electronic device (laptop, iPad, kindle, etc.).

## Course Requirements and Grading

Your final grade is composed of the following:

- Two in-class exams: midterm exam (15%); final exam (20%); total (35%).
- Blog posts are worth (30%)
- In-class participation (10%)
- Two short papers 2-3 pages (no max; minimum of 600 words)  
first paper (10%); second paper (15%); total (25%)

## Course Expectations

Come to **class** on-time. Do the reading. Yes, some of the assignments can be hard to understand, and you might have to go back and re-read sections to get it. You can ask me about it in the forum, or in class. I recommend taking notes as you read. These will help you with your blog posts, your papers, and your exams. Underline quotes and passages you think are important. You might want to mark a “!” next to something interesting, and mark a “?” for things you find puzzling. Number an author’s points. You don’t have to agree with everyone we read, or to agree with everything they say. However, if you disagree, think about your reasons, because I will ask you *why*. You will need to back up your arguments. We only meet once a week, so it’s very important that you don’t miss class.

Please do your **blog posts**! And make them good. I can’t stress this enough. They are almost 1/3 of your grade. Also, since we only meet once a week, this is the way I see that you are doing the reading beforehand and it’s a way for you to engage with the material outside of class. Don’t be afraid to ask me questions—whether in class, outside of class, or online, in emails or in the forum. I take your top 10 posts. You can post several times per week, but I will only take the top 2 from any week. You should get an email back from me telling you your score for your post. It goes from 0-3 in .5 increments.

For your **papers**, I have an *open prompt*. That means you can write on anything that we read, but you need to get your topic approved by me. You need to give me your question and thesis statement, this is worth 10%. If you can, I recommend giving me a short outline of the paper you are planning to write. I also do a *peer-review system*. That means you turn in a draft of your paper **without your name** and then I will send you two papers from people in the class, anonymously, to give comments on. Comments are worth 10%. Then you hand-in a final draft for me to grade. Hand in papers electronically via email, in .doc format.

For **Exams**, both midterm and final, I give reviews outside of class. I highly recommend going to those. I also require that students break up into groups and write sections of a study guide for the exam, which then becomes the class-wide study guide.

## Course Schedule

KNOWLEDGE (Epistemology)	
WEEK 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction; Syllabus</li> <li>• What is Philosophy? Why is it useful? Logic as the structure of thinking.</li> </ul>
WEEK 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plato, <i>The Symposium</i> (excerpts)</li> </ul>
WEEK 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• René Descartes, <i>Meditations I and II</i></li> </ul>
WEEK 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• René Descartes, <i>Meditations VI</i></li> <li>• Andy Clark and David Chalmers, “The Extended Mind”</li> </ul>
WEEK 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• David Hume, <i>Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding</i> (excerpts)</li> </ul>
REALITY (Ontology)	
WEEK 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• David Hume, “On Personal Identity”</li> <li>• Jon Perry, <i>A Dialogue on Personal Identity and Immortality</i> (excerpt)</li> <li>• <b>PAPER #1 DRAFT DUE for PEER REVIEW</b></li> </ul>
WEEK 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fyodor Dostoevsky, <i>Brothers Karamazov</i> “Rebellion” and “The Grand Inquisitor”</li> <li>• <b>PAPER #1 FINAL DRAFT DUE</b></li> </ul>
WEEK 8	<b>MIDTERM EXAM</b>
<i>Spring Break</i>	
VALUES (Ethics)	
WEEK 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Go over Midterm</li> <li>• J. S. Mill, <i>On Liberty</i> Chapter 1, 2, 3 (excerpts)</li> </ul>
WEEK 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• J. S. Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i>. Chapter 1 and 2.</li> </ul>
WEEK 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Robert Nozick, “The Experience Machine” (excerpt)</li> <li>• Peter Singer, “Famine, Affluence, and Morality” (excerpt)</li> <li>• Onora O’Neill, “On Public Reason” (excerpt)</li> </ul>
WEEK 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Immanuel Kant, <i>Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals</i>. Chapters I and II. (excerpts)</li> <li>• <b>PAPER # 2 DRAFT DUE for PEER REVIEW</b></li> </ul>
WEEK 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i>, Book I, II, II (excerpts)</li> <li>• <b>PAPER #2 FINAL DRAFT DUE</b></li> </ul>
WEEK 14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Friedrich Nietzsche, <i>Beyond Good and Evil</i> (excerpts)</li> </ul>
FINAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>FINAL EXAM</b></li> </ul>