

CORC 1210 Section MW8 CC: 0104
Spring 2013 Instructor: Alex Kiefer

Room 4141B Mon & Wed, 8-9:15am
Office: 3316B, W 9:30-10:30am

Knowledge, Reality and Values: Course Syllabus

READ THIS

when in doubt before emailing me with questions, please

This syllabus, *along with all reading materials* (except where available for free elsewhere online), will be posted to BlackBoard. Please check there for updates to the syllabus and for all other course documents. There is no required textbook.

Course description: This course will introduce students to Western philosophy and its characteristic goals, methods, and problems. During the course we will consider topics within three historically central areas of philosophical research: ethics (the philosophy of morality), epistemology (the philosophy of knowledge), and metaphysics (the philosophy of being).

Reading assignments: The main assignment for the course is to read each of the assigned texts and write a brief (~250 words) weekly email to me in response to it, prior to class discussion. Below is a list of our class meetings. Readings listed under each set of dates must be done before the class meeting on that date. The emails are due in my inbox no later than noon each Tuesday, and should discuss the reading being discussed that Wednesday. We will try to stick to this plan as closely as possible but the schedule is subject to revision. “**Wn**” to the right of an assignment on the schedule below indicates that the *n*th writing assignment is due that day.

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| M 01.28.13 | Introduction | |
| W 01.30.13 | Rachels, “Egoism and Moral Scepticism” (no writing assignment due) | |
| M 02.04.13 | Plato, “Apology” | |
| W 02.06.13 | “Apology” continued | W1 |
| M 02.11.13 | Lepore, “Meaning and Argument” | |
| W 02.13.13 | More on logic (no writing assignment due) | |
| M 02.18.13 | COLLEGE CLOSED | |
| W 02.20.13 | Descartes, “Meditations” | W2 |
| M 02.25.13 | “Meditations”, continued | |
| W 02.27.13 | “Meditations”, continued | W3 |
| M 03.04.13 | Locke, “Of Identity and Diversity” | |
| W 03.06.13 | Dennett, “The Self as Narrative Center of Gravity” | W4 |
| M 03.11.13 | Ayer, “Freedom and Necessity” | |
| W 03.13.13 | “Freedom and Necessity”, continued | W5 |
| M 03.18.13 | Turing, “Computing Machinery and Intelligence” | |
| W 03.20.13 | “Computing Machinery and Intelligence”, continued | W6 |
| M 03.25.13 - T 04.02.13 | SPRING BREAK | |
| W 04.03.13 | Aristotle, “Nicomachean Ethics” | W7 |

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| M 04.08.13 | Mill, "Utilitarianism" | |
| W 04.10.13 | "Utilitarianism" continued | W8 |
| M 04.15.13 | Kant, "Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals" | |
| W 04.17.13 | "Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals" continued | W9 |
| M 04.22.13 | Clifford, "The Ethics of Belief" | |
| W 04.24.13 | James, "The Will to Believe" | W10 |
| M 04.29.13 | Hume, "An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding" | |
| W 05.01.13 | "An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding" continued | W11 |
| M 05.06.13 | Kripke, "On Rules and Private Language" | |
| W 05.08.13 | "On Rules and Private Language" continued | W12 |
| M 05.13.13 | Paradoxes (readings to be announced) | |
| W 05.15.13 | Final exam review | |

Final exam: Monday May 20, 8-10am, room to be determined

Grades: Grades will be determined as follows (no extra credit, no exceptions):

Writing assignments: 60% of grade. There are 12 emails due total. These will be graded on a pass/fail basis. The *best 10* emails submitted will then be used to calculate an overall grade for writing assignments by calculating the percentage of passing grades out of 10 (so, if you pass 7 assignments out of 10 your grade will be 70%, or a C-). More than 10 passing emails yield a grade of A+. The best way to get a good grade is of course to attempt all 12, so that you can fail two without hurting your overall grade.

Attendance & participation: 15% of grade. B is default; more than five absences means a drop in grade for each day missed (i.e. A to A-). Participate in class discussions in order to get a grade higher than a B. Absences will be excused with a doctor's note or for religious holidays only. Please don't ask me to bend this rule.

Final exam: 25% of grade. Exam format: Multiple choice, true/false. More information as the final exam approaches. Some review materials will be made available prior to exam. Grades for the exam will be based on a curve, but overall course grades will not be.

Submitting email responses: Please submit responses to readings via email to alexbkiefer@gmail.com. (Note: Please don't email me at the Brooklyn College address listed on BlackBoard, because I don't use that address.) Just include the text in the body of the email; no attachments necessary or desired.

Plagiarism: Don't do it. This is the easiest way to fail the course. Plagiarism is taking another's thoughts and presenting them as your own, period. Even if you simply look up the definition of a word, if you include this information in your writing you must cite the source immediately after the source is used. This includes Wikipedia. Ask me if you have questions about how to do this, and please see Brooklyn College's "Policy on plagiarism & 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 the violation, the faculty member MUST report the violation.

Center for 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 your professor with the course accommodation form and discuss your specific accommodation with him/her.

Course Objectives:

By the end of the course, students should:

- 1) 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) 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) Improve communication skills by explaining orally philosophical theories, issues, claims, concepts, and arguments relating to the philosophical areas of epistemology, metaphysics, and ethics,
- 4) Improve skills of interpreting and defending views on philosophical texts,
- 5) Develop an openness to having beliefs challenged, learn to hear and comprehend the views of others, and to entertain objections to one's own views,
- 7) Acquire a familiarity with and an understanding of some classic and contemporary philosophical literature and some fundamental philosophical issues