

# Knowledge, Reality and Value

## CORC 1210

Prof. Kate Tullmann  
Email: ktullmann@gc.cuny.edu  
Section: MW9B  
Credits: 3.0

Semester: Spring 2013  
Classroom: 4141 Boylan Hall  
Meeting time: MW 9:30-10:45 a.m.

Office: 3316 Boylan Hall  
Office hours: 8:45-9:30 a.m. MW and by appointment

### **SYLLABUS**

#### **Introduction**

The basic questions of philosophy concern the nature of our existence and our world. Philosophy exhibits distinctive ways of understanding and thinking about these perennial human questions: "What can I know?"; "What is real?" "How should I act?" Great thinkers from the Ancient Greeks to contemporary times have attempted to answer these questions and many others. This class will focus on these three questions and other related ones. We will examine and question readings from Plato to Nietzsche, and lots in between. This class is also designed to help students develop their critical thinking skills in order advance in any academic field.

#### **Course readings**

There is no required text for this course. All readings will be made available on Blackboard. *Please make sure that you have access to Blackboard and have registered a working email address that you check often in order to receive announcements about the course!* Students are responsible for downloading and reading all of the assigned articles.

#### **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.

**Grading breakdown:**

- Writing assignments (2)... 60 pts., 20% each
- Logic quiz....15 pts., 5%
- Reading quizzes... approx. 30 pts., 10% total
- Midterm exam... 45 pts., 15%
- Final exam... 45 pts., 15%
- Participation & classroom etiquette... 45 pts., 15%

**Total: approx. 300 pts.**

## Assignments

### Writing assignments

The writing assignments will count for 40% of your final grade. The due dates are indicated by \* on the schedule below. Each writing assignment is to be typed, double-spaced, and should consist of clear, concise, well thought-out arguments.

There will be two writing assignments for the semester. I will provide a brief assignment sheet outlining the criteria and expectations for each paper before it is due. The papers should each be **no less than 3 pages**, double-spaced, with a normal size 12 font and 1" margins. You must cite references to the assigned readings in your papers. A **hard copy** of each writing assignment must be submitted at the beginning of the class at which it is due. Hand-written copies will not be accepted.

If you choose, you may submit an outline of your papers ahead of time for me to review. This must be done at least three days before the due date.

### **Late policy and emailed papers:**

Any paper not turned in on the day it is due will have 10% automatically taken off of the overall grade for the assignment. In addition, papers will receive an additional 10% off for each additional day they are late.

I will not accept emailed papers unless they are approved by me **before the paper is due—no exceptions.**

## Quizzes and Exams

### Logic quiz

I will assign a short, take-home logic quiz in the beginning of the term. This will be worth 5% of your overall grade. The same late policy applies as for the papers.

### Reading quizzes

Almost every week we will take a brief, one question quiz covering the assigned reading for the day. I will generally warn you in advance when there will be a quiz. These quizzes will amount to 10% of your final grade. **These quizzes may not be made up unless approved by me before class.**

### Midterm and final

There will be an in-class midterm and final exam, each worth 15% of your final grade. The midterm will consist of several short essays based on the epistemology and metaphysics units. The final will also consist of several short essays, based on the art and ethics units.

### **Participation & classroom etiquette**

You will be graded on your in-class participation, based on the quantity and quality of questions you raise and comments you make, in-class writing assignments, and group work. No question is too basic, or comment unwelcome! You should feel comfortable raising any issues about the topic at all. Participation counts towards 15% of your grade.

It is important that we create a classroom environment that is conducive to doing philosophy. To that end:

Please get to class on time and keep absences to a minimum. Absences will be taken note of for your overall participation grade. Keep in mind that students who frequently miss class generally do not do well in my courses.

Hurtful or disparaging comments or behavior will not be tolerated. Speaking informally but respectfully about potentially sensitive subjects is one of the important skills this course aims to develop. **The use of cell phones is not permitted.** Cell phones should not be seen or heard in class. If you must take a call, please exit the room quickly and quietly.

Eating and drinking in class is permitted so long as it is not disruptive to others. Please avoid foods with strong odors or that cannot be eaten neatly and quietly. Please make sure that all beverages have lids. If you make a mess, it is your responsibility to clean it up. If you leave trash in the classroom, eating/drinking privileges will be revoked.

Please feel free to ask for help, ask for clarification, ask me to repeat something—don't hesitate to ask! Ask questions in class, stop by my office hours or drop me an email.

### **Other information**

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

- i. 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.
- ii. 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.

iii. 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. If you cannot attend a class, quiz, or exam due to religious beliefs, please make alternate arrangements with me well in advance.

- **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.

**Tentative reading schedule Spring 2013**

All readings are posted on Blackboard under the "Course Documents" tab. Readings are subject to change.

**I. Critical Thinking & Epistemology**

**M Jan. 28<sup>th</sup>:** Syllabus; Intro to philosophy

**W Jan. 30<sup>th</sup>:** Logic

**M Feb. 4<sup>th</sup>:** Logic, cont'd

**\*\*Take home quiz assigned**

**W Feb. 6<sup>th</sup>:** Socrates & Plato

- Plato's *Apology*, full text

**M Feb. 11<sup>th</sup>:** Socrates & Plato

- Plato's Cave

**\*\*Take home quiz due in class**

**W Feb. 13<sup>th</sup>:** Rationalism

- Descartes Meditation I

**M Feb. 18<sup>th</sup>:** No class, Presidents' Day

**W Feb. 20<sup>th</sup>** (note: Monday schedule): Rationalism, cont'd.

- Descartes' Meditation II

**M Feb. 25<sup>th</sup>:** Rationalism, cont'd

- Descartes Meditation III

**W Feb. 27<sup>th</sup>:** Rationalism, cont'd

- Descartes Meditation VI

**\*\*Writing assignment #1 assigned**

**M March 4<sup>th</sup>:** Empiricism

- Locke: *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, excerpt

**W March 6<sup>th</sup>:** Empiricism, cont'd

- Hume: "Of Personal Identity"

## **II. Metaphysics & Art**

**M March 11<sup>th</sup>:** Free Will

- Ayer, "Freedom and Necessity"

**\*\*Writing assignment #1 due in class**

**W March 13<sup>th</sup>:** The problem of evil

- Swinburne, "Why God Allows Evil"

**M March 18<sup>th</sup>:** Midterm exam

**W March 20<sup>th</sup>:** Philosophy of Art

- Hume: "Of the Standard of Taste"

**March 25<sup>th</sup>—April 2<sup>nd</sup>: Spring Break**

**W April 3<sup>rd</sup>:** Philosophy of Art, cont'd

- Carroll: "Horror and Humor"

**III. Ethics**

**M April 8<sup>th</sup>:** Intro to ethics

- Rachels, "The Challenge of Cultural Relativism"

**W April 10<sup>th</sup>:** Cultural Relativism

- Prinz, "Morality is a Culturally Conditioned Response"

**M April 15<sup>th</sup>:** Consequentialism

- Mill, "Utilitarianism" excerpt

**W April 17<sup>th</sup>:** Consequentialism, cont'd

- Nozick, "The Experience Machine"

**M April 22<sup>nd</sup>:** Deontology

- Kant, "Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Morals" excerpt

**W April 24<sup>th</sup>:** Deontology, cont'd

**\*\*Writing assignment #2 assigned**

**M April 29<sup>th</sup>:** Virtue theory

- Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, excerpt

**W May 1<sup>st</sup>:** Ethics of Care

- Held, "The Ethics of Care" excerpt

**M May 6<sup>th</sup>:** Moral Perspectivism

- Nietzsche "On Truth and Lie"

**\*\*Writing assignment #2 due in class**

**W May 8<sup>th</sup>:** Moral Perspectivism cont'd

- Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, excerpt

**M May 13<sup>th</sup>:** Applied ethics

- Singer, "Rich and Poor"

**W May 15<sup>th</sup>:** Review for final exam

**Final exam: Friday, May 24<sup>th</sup>, 1-3:00 p.m.**