

# **The Self and Society**

## **CORC 3109**

Prof. Christine Vitrano  
Email: [cvitrano@brooklyn.cuny.edu](mailto:cvitrano@brooklyn.cuny.edu)  
Section: MW2  
Code: 3798

Semester: Spring 2013  
Classroom: 3117 Boylan Hall  
Meeting time: M/W 2:15-3:30  
Credits: 3.0

Office: 3315 Boylan Hall  
Office phone: 718-951-5000 ext. 6212  
Office hours: M/W 12:30-2:00 and by appointment

Philosophy Department: 3308 Boylan Hall  
Department Web Site: <http://depthome.brooklyn.cuny.edu/philo/>  
Department Secretary: Linda Dwyer

### **SYLLABUS**

#### **Introduction**

This course will focus on the philosophical questions that arise when we consider the self and its relation to society. Our readings and class discussions will address such issues as how to establish our personal identity, the nature of justice, and whether we are capable of bearing personal responsibility for our actions. We shall approach these issues by considering the work of both classic and contemporary philosophers.

#### **Course Objectives**

1. Students will understand philosophical literature, past and present, and will acquire a critical appreciation of their contribution to the life of the individual and society.
2. Students will improve their writing skills by explaining, exploring, and critically examining philosophical theories and arguments relating to the self and society.
3. Students will improve communication skills by explaining orally philosophical theories and arguments in the area of ethics.
4. Students will develop an openness to having their beliefs challenged, and learn to comprehend and appreciate the beliefs of others.
5. 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.

## Required Text

There is one required text that will supply all the readings for this course. The textbook has been ordered at the Brooklyn College Bookstore (located in the basement of Boylan Hall). It is also available at large retail bookstores, and internet bookstores.

Lowell Kleiman and Stephen Lewis, eds.  
*Philosophy: An Introduction Through Literature*  
Paragon House, 1998  
ISBN 1557785392

**Note:** Used copies of this text can be purchased online and are generally cheaper. There will also be a copy of the textbook placed on reserve in the library.

## Course Requirements and Grading

**Exams: 75%** There will be three in-class exams, two during the semester and one at our scheduled time during finals week. The exams will focus on the material we cover in class, which will be based primarily on the readings. They will be closed-book, closed-note exams with short essay questions. There will be a review session the week prior to each exam and I will provide you with a study guide. Each exam will be worth 25% of your final grade.

**Writing Assignments: 25%** There will be 12 short writing assignments based on the readings for the week. The assignments are designed to help you critically examine what you have read and develop your writing skills. I will hand out topics for each writing assignment that will focus on some issue raised in the reading. You are free to ask questions, raise objections or offer your opinion in these writing assignments. Most importantly, the assignments should show me that you have completed the reading and given it some critical thought.

The assignments must be typed, double-spaced, and should be approximately 1-2 pages in length. Hand-written assignments will not be accepted – no exceptions. The assignments will not receive letter grades, but will be graded on a pass or fail basis. Unacceptable assignments will not receive credit, but you will have the opportunity to redo the assignments and resubmit them for credit.

You are permitted to skip two writing assignments without penalty. You must complete 10 assignments to receive full credit (which is equivalent to an A for 25% of your final grade).

Students who complete all 12 of the assignments will receive extra credit. Anyone completing less than 10 assignments will be penalized one-third of a letter grade for each missed assignment (meaning, 9 assignments = A-, 8 assignments = B+, 7 assignments = B, etc.).

The writing assignments must be submitted in class each week. Assignments will not be accepted by email – no exceptions. The due dates are listed on the reading schedule. If you miss class when an assignment is due, you may submit the assignment when you return to class. Otherwise, late assignments will not be accepted, unless there is a special circumstance and you receive permission.

**Class Participation and Attendance:** Attendance will be taken at the start of each class by means of a sign-in sheet. Attendance is important, because the writing assignments will only be accepted in class. Please do not email me missed assignments; I will not accept them. Also be aware that the readings may change, and I will make the relevant announcements about such changes in class each week.

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

### **Course Expectations**

To do well in this course, you are expected to attend class, do the readings, take the exams, and complete all of the writing assignments.

You are strongly encouraged to participate in class discussions, and to bring questions or comments on the readings. I will go over all of the reading material in lecture, but you do not have to bring your textbooks to class each week. Be aware that some of the readings are quite dense and may take some time (and effort) to get through. Please allow yourself sufficient time to read through all of the articles and to think through the relevant issues.

Your final grade for this course will be calculated according to the percentages listed above and will not be based on a curve. Be aware that I do not offer or accept additional extra credit assignments. Please do not ask if you can do extra work to elevate your grade.

If you arrive late to class or you must leave early, please be discreet and try to minimize the disruption. Excessive lateness will not be tolerated. Eating and drinking during class is permitted if done quietly, but try to be courteous to those around you. Cell phones must be turned off and put away during class. Please do not take them out during class.

If you have a disability or there is some reason you may not be able to complete your course work, please let me know as soon as possible.

If you miss an exam without notice, it is your responsibility to contact me about making it up. However, if I have already handed back the exam to the class and you still haven't taken it, you will not be permitted to do a make-up. If you foresee any conflicts, please contact me as soon as possible.

### **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.

## Reading Schedule

This list is only tentative and it is your responsibility to keep up with any changes. It is expected that you will have completed the reading by the date listed. All of the readings are from our textbook *Philosophy: An Introduction Through Literature*. The readings are listed by the author's last name followed by the article's title. Due dates for the writing assignments (WA's) and the exams are also listed.

January 28	Introduction to the course
January 30	Kafka, <i>The Metamorphosis</i> <b>(WA#1 due)</b>
February 4	Plato, <i>Phaedo</i> <u>and</u> Descartes, <i>Meditations on First Philosophy</i> (pp. 32-37)
February 6	Ryle, <i>Descartes' Myth</i> <b>(WA#2 due)</b>
February 11	Locke, <i>The Prince and the Cobbler</i>
February 13	Hume, <i>Of Personal Identity</i> <b>(WA#3 due)</b>
<b>February 18</b>	<b>President's Day – College Closed</b>
February 20	(Monday Schedule) Quinton, <i>The Soul</i>
February 25	Quinton, <i>The Soul</i> <b>(WA#4 due)</b>
<b>February 27</b>	<b>Exam #1</b>
March 4	Spelman, <i>Woman as Body</i> <b>(WA#5 due)</b>
March 6	Kripke, <i>Naming and Necessity</i>
March 11	Zemach, <i>Looking Out for Number One</i> <b>(WA#6 due)</b>
March 13	Zemach, <i>Looking Out for Number One</i>
March 18	Zemach, <i>Looking Out for Number One</i>
March 20	Crane, <i>An Experiment in Misery</i> <u>and</u> Dos Passos, <i>The House of Morgan</i> <b>(WA#7 due)</b>
<b>March 25</b>	<b>Spring Break</b>
<b>March 27</b>	<b>Spring Break</b>

<b>April 1</b>	<b>Spring Break</b>
April 3	Plato, <i>The Republic</i>
<b>April 8</b>	<b>Exam #2</b>
April 10	Mill, <i>On the Connection Between Justice and Utility</i> <b>(WA#8 due)</b>
April 15	Mill, <i>On the Connection Between Justice and Utility</i>
April 17	Rawls, <i>A Theory of Justice</i> <b>(WA #9 due)</b>
April 22	Rawls, <i>A Theory of Justice</i>
April 24	Smart, <i>Distributive Justice and Utilitarianism</i> <b>(WA #10 due)</b>
April 29	Smart, <i>Distributive Justice and Utilitarianism</i>
May 1	Sophocles, <i>Oedipus the King</i> <b>(WA #11 due)</b>
May 6	D'Holbach, <i>Are We Cogs in the Universe?</i>
May 8	Schlick, <i>The Free Will-Determinism Issue is a Pseudoproblem</i> <b>(WA #12 due)</b>
May 13	Campbell, <i>Is "Free Will" a Pseudoproblem?</i>
May 15	Campbell, <i>Is "Free Will" a Pseudoproblem?</i>

**Final Exam: Monday, May 20th from 1:00 p.m – 3:00 p.m.**