Spring 2017

Philosophy 490—001

Seminar

Paradoxes and the Limits of Reason

**Professor:**

Charles Joshua Horn, Ph.D.

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Office Hours : MW, 1:00pm—2:00pm

<http://charlesjhorn.webstarts.com/index.html>

**Course Information:**

Class Time: MW, 2:00pm—3:15pm

Class Location: CCC 126

**Course Description:**

Which came first, the chicken or the egg? Can God create a rock that he could not lift? Can time have a beginning? Paradoxes like these reveal that human reason can sometimes lead us to contradictory conclusions. But how can this be? It has long been a basic assumption in philosophy that reason, when applied correctly, can reveal fundamental truths about reality, knowledge, the nature of right and wrong, and so on. But, if paradoxes reveal limits to reason, what are those limits? Is there a way to solve paradoxes in order to save reason itself? In general terms, the senior capstone will examine the preconditions for doing philosophy, and how to best practice philosophy upon graduation.

**Texts:**

Purchase:

1. *A Brief History of the Paradox: Philosophy and the Labyrinths of the Mind*

Roy Sorenson

Oxford University Press

ISBN: 978-0-19-517986-6

1. *Paradoxes, 3rd Ed.*

R.M. Sainsbury

Cambridge University Press

ISBN: 978-0-521-89632-0

1. *Paradox*

Margaret Cuonzo

MIT Press

ISBN: 978-0-262-52549-7

**Course Goals:**

By carefully examining the conditions for practicing philosophy, students will develop critical thinking skills by engaging, analyzing, and evaluating texts in order to write well, speak articulately, and argue persuasively. Students will be able to demonstrate skills, processes, and resources needed to make a successful transition from college to the world beyond.

**Expectations:**

Students are encouraged to attend every class and remain for the entire time. Students must complete the necessary readings prior to class and be prepared for discussion and participation. Students will treat other students with respect. This means, turning off all electronic devices (cell phones, laptops, tablets, etc.) and addressing their peers in a respectful tone. It is important to note that the nature of this class will inevitably result in disagreements among colleagues; however, it is essential to maintain respect toward one another despite disagreement. Failure to meet any of these expectations could, and probably will negatively influence your final grade.

Additionally, this course will utilize the Desire2Learn online system to facilitate certain aspects of the class. It is required that you check in with D2L regularly to find class updates, submit assignments, check your grades, etc.

**Grading Criteria:**

Late work will never be accepted unless an extension has been granted by Dr. Horn prior to the due date. Extensions will only be granted in extreme circumstances. Additional prompts will be given out in class for each major assignment.

Final grades will be based upon (1) *one resume/curriculum vitae* worth 10%, and (2) *two course introductions* worth 10% each, and (3) *one oral presentation of thesis* worth 20%, and (4) *one critical commentary* worth 20%, and (5) *one thesis* worth 30%. Assignments turned in late will *not* be accepted unless prior arrangements have been made with the professor.

1. Resume/Curriculum Vitae must be submitted in class on May 1, 2017 and also submitted to the D2L Dropbox by May 1, 2017 at 2:00pm.
2. Each student must individually introduce two readings from the course schedule. Each presentation should last around 10-15 minutes. The presentation is *not* a summary of the material. Instead, it is a way to offer your own analysis about the reading. Presentations will be chosen on the first day of class. Students must provide a handout for the rest of the class for their presentation. The handout *is not* a summary of the reading, but an outline of your presentation.
3. During the last three weeks of class, students will orally present their thesis to the rest of the class. Each student will have roughly 25 minutes to present their work. Additional details will be provided on a prompt and rubric closer to the end of the course.
4. During the last three weeks of class, students will provide written/oral commentary on another student’s thesis. The commentary must be 750—1000 words and the oral presentation should last roughly 10 minutes. The written commentary must be submitted to the D2L Dropbox by Wednesday, May 17, 2017 by 2:30pm.
5. The thesis must be submitted to the D2L DropBox by Wednesday, May 17, 2017 by 2:30pm. Essays turned in after the deadline will *not* be accepted. The essay should be between 4,500—5,000 words (roughly 18—20 pages). Additional requirements will be provided on a prompt and rubric closer to the end of the course.

Students will be permitted four unexcused absences. Any absence after four will result in a 5% deduction from the overall grade. Attendance is taken at the beginning of class, so if students are late, they will not be counted present for the day.

Final grades in the course will be based on the following scale.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **A Range**  **(90—100%)** | **B Range**  **(80—89%)** | **C Range**  **(70—79%)** | **D Range**  **(64—69%)** | **F Range**  **(0—63%)** |
|  | B+ (87—89) | C+ (77—79) | D+ (67—69) | F (<63) |
| A (94—100) | B (84—86) | C (74—76) | D (64—66) |  |
| A- (90—93) | B- (80—83) | C- (70—73) |  |  |

**Academic Integrity:**

Cheating, fabrication, plagiarism or helping others to commit these acts will not be tolerated. Academic dishonesty could result in severe disciplinary action including, but not limited to, failure of the student assessment item or course, and/or dismissal from the University.

**Course Schedule:**

January 23 Syllabus/Course Introduction

**Unit I: Contemporary Analysis of Paradoxes**

January 25 A New Way to Think About Paradoxes Cuonzo, 17—42

January 30 How to Solve Paradoxes Cuonzo, 43—135

February 1 Paradoxes Lost? Cuonzo, 137—208

**Unit II: Paradoxes as a Way to Think About Philosophy**

February 6 Zeno’s Paradoxes: Space, Time, and Motion Sainsbury, 4—21

February 8 Moral Paradoxes Sainsbury, 22—39

February 13 Vagueness: The Paradox of the Heap Sainsbury, 40—68

February 15 Acting Rationally Sainsbury, 69—89

February 20 Are Any Contradictions Acceptable? Sainsbury, 150—159

**Unit III: Historical Tour of Paradoxes**

February 22 Anaximander and the Riddle of Origin Sorenson, 1—18

February 27 Parmenides on What is Not Sorenson, 28—43

March 1 No Class

March 6 Socrates: The Paradox of Inquiry Sorenson, 58—70

March 8 The Megarian Identity Crisis Sorenson, 71—82

March 13 Aristotle on Fatalism Sorenson, 116—129

March 15 Augustine’s Pragmatic Paradoxes Sorenson, 162—176

March 20 No Class—Academic Holiday

March 22 No Class—Academic Holiday

March 27 Aquinas: Can God Have a Biography? Sorenson, 177—186

March 29 Leibniz’s Principle of Sufficient Reason Sorenson, 237—251

April 3 Hume’s All-Consuming Ideas Sorenson, 252—267

April 5 The Common Sense of Thomas Reid Sorenson, 268—283

April 10 Kant and the Antinomy of Pure Reason Sorenson, 284—302

April 12 Russell’s Set Sorenson, 316—332

**Unit IV: Cap to the Capstone**

April 17 Thesis Peer Workshop

April 19 Resume/Vita Workshop

April 24 Thesis Presentations

April 26 Thesis Presentations

May 1 Thesis Presentations

May 3 Thesis Presentations

May 8 Thesis Presentations

May 10 Thesis Presentations

\*The Professor reserves the right to adjust the course schedule to best satisfy the needs of the class.\*