



The word “philosophy” means “love of wisdom,” and in this course we will be studying the work of people who sought wisdom about many different things. We will encounter both classic and contemporary texts as we explore some of the most interesting, troubling, and maybe even amusing philosophical questions that might be asked, and the sometimes surprising answers to which various thinkers have been led. Through our readings we will be attempting to understand the problems that each author is addressing, the conclusions at which she/he arrives, and the ways in which she/he is positioned in relation to others.

Course Objectives

The over-arching objective of this course is to expose you to a wide variety of philosophical perspectives that can be found primarily in the Western intellectual tradition (though this is not the only tradition we will encounter). We will focus on a number of philosophical topics and look at various, sometimes divergent, viewpoints on these subjects. We will start by asking about the value of philosophical questioning, and then move on to more specific topics in the areas of metaphysics, epistemology, aesthetics and ethics. These include, but are not limited to: What sorts of things are real? What is the nature of the “self”? Is there such a thing as human freedom? What is love? Does life have a meaning, and if so, what is it? Our goal in asking these questions is not necessarily to answer them conclusively, but rather to get a feel for how to approach them in a careful and considerate manner.

Before you begin with all of this, however, you should understand that college education is more than technical training or memorizing information; it is a process of developing your intellectual abilities and mental talents. The study of philosophy not only emphasizes the skills of careful reading, critical thinking, and effective writing and speaking, but also the less tangible skills of understanding the views of others, looking at difficult problems from multiple perspectives, the tolerance of new ideas, and the ability to defend your own. Because philosophy is particularly good at helping you develop these skills, it satisfies the Humanities component of the university’s General Education Program, which targets the following objectives:

- Reading closely, thinking critically, and writing effectively about texts that reflect on perennial questions concerning the human condition.
- Investigating and thoughtfully responding to a variety of ideas, beliefs or values held by persons in situations other than your own.

Structure

This course is structured such that class meetings will occur face-to-face, but a portion of the graded work (i.e. the Lecture and Reading Quizzes) will take place online. All of the online graded work will become available on the regularly scheduled days of the class (T or Th), and remain available ONLY UNTIL MIDNIGHT ON THE FOLLOWING FRIDAY. After that, you will lose access to these assignments, and you will not be able to re-gain access to them. This structure does not apply to the two scheduled papers (see “Papers” description below) or the two tests (see “Tests” description below).

Course Requirements

Lecture and Reading Quizzes

For all classes containing new content, I will post assignments in Canvas containing two multiple-choice questions about the lectures. In some weeks, there will also be up to two additional assignments containing quiz questions about the readings. ALL OF THIS WILL BE FOUND IN CANVAS, IN WEEKLY MODULES THAT CORRELATE WITH THE READING LIST.

So, on a typical Tuesday, you will gain access to quiz questions related to that day's lecture. Then, on Thursday, you'll gain access to a new set of quiz questions based on that lecture. In some cases you'll find an additional one-question quiz related to the reading for that day. This means that, in the course of a typical week, you will have 4 LECTURE QUESTIONS and 1-2 READING QUESTIONS. This will result in 60 total questions across the semester. Each quiz question is worth .5% of your grade such that, cumulatively, Reading and Lecture Questions are worth 30% of your grade.

These lecture and reading questions will be available ONLY UNTIL MIDNIGHT ON FRIDAYS OF EACH WEEK. After that point, you will lose access to the assignments, and will not be able to re-gain access to them. The point of this is to provide you with some flexibility as to how and when you engage with the course materials, but you must log into Canvas each week to complete these assignments, and they cannot be made-up after Fridays at midnight.

Papers

There will be two paper assignments, based on topics I assign near the due dates. The first of these will be due around the midterm, and the second is due on the date and time of the regularly scheduled final. These papers should be about 600 words (2 pages) long, and are each worth 20% of your final grade. Altogether, then, papers are worth a total of 40% of your final grade.

All paper assignments are required to be submitted in electronic format on Canvas, and will go through an "originality check" performed by "Turnitin.com."

Paper topics will pertain to course material covered, and will require you to *reflect on* and *react to* topics we've covered (that is, not simply to repeat information or summarize the views of others). Grades for papers will be based on three criteria:

- (1) *Meeting the terms of the Assignment* – addressing the topic questions, proper formatting and length, and submitted on time.
- (2) *Writing* – writing that is clear, organized, and free from grammatical or spelling mistakes.
- (3) *Content* – content that is reflective, creative, and shows an accurate understanding of the course material.

I'll give comments indicating how you're doing in these areas, and use the following comment codes to give feedback in the body of your papers:

Circled, highlighted, or notated items indicate spelling or technical errors.

The letters below will be placed in comments to indicate...

- A = awkward grammar or phrasing
- V = vague or imprecise meaning
- U = unclear meaning
- I = incorrect or mistaken statement of an idea

Tests

There will be two tests. These are SCHEDULED TO TAKE PLACE IN CLASS AT THE DATES AND TIMES INDICATED IN THE READING LIST.

Each test will cover the material presented in the preceding section of the course. Much of the material builds off of what preceded it, so older material may appear in the second exam in the form of comparative questions, etc. The format of the tests will be multiple choice. Be aware that you will be asked to do more than repeat information in exams: answers will require critical thinking and the application of ideas. Each test is worth 15%, making this requirement worth a total of 30%.

Work Completion Policy

This course has four “major,” or increased point value, requirements: the two papers and the two tests. You must complete all four of these assignments to receive a passing grade for the course, regardless of the point total you have earned through other coursework.

Missed/Late Work

The following policy applies primarily to papers and exams: Missed or late work sometimes can be made up on the condition that you either inform me prior to an upcoming absence, or provide me with a formal, written excuse. Late work will be penalized according to the following policy: IF YOU’VE CONTACTED ME beforehand to authorize a late submission, your work will be penalized by a 2% grade reduction for every day that it’s late. IF YOU HAVE NOT CONTACTED ME beforehand to authorize a late submission, your work will be penalized by a 5% grade reduction for every day that it’s late.

Attendance

I will take attendance regularly. Anyone who misses more than the equivalent of three weeks of class (6 class periods) will automatically receive an F for the course unless you can document your absences for medical reasons or other circumstances recognized by the university. The reason for this is that your role in a philosophy class is not simply to receive information passively; it is to contribute actively to the classroom environment, and this cannot happen if you miss between 20 and 25% of the class meetings.

You will need to TAKE NOTES ON LECTURES, CONSULT YOUR NOTES FOR PAPERS, and STUDY YOUR NOTES FOR TESTS. I will not re-post course materials for paper-writing or exam study. In addition, most of the material covered in class will *not* be available from the readings, and this is a philosophy class with readings that can be complex/confusing. Lectures are places for me to try to clarify, explain, and expand upon readings, so paying attention to lectures is key.

Academic Integrity

I adhere to a strict policy on academic integrity (cheating, plagiarism, etc.). Any questions that you may have regarding academic integrity should be resolved before you turn course materials in to me. Information can be found in UWSP Chapter 14, available at: “<http://www.uwsp.edu/admin/stuaffairs/rights/rightsChap14.pdf>”. The minimum penalty for a violation of academic integrity is a failure (zero) for the assignment. In addition, all infractions will be reported to the university.

Class Conduct

While you are engaged with the class in any way, my expectation is that you will conduct yourself appropriately. If you are behaving inappropriately, disciplinary action can follow.

COVID Policy

At all UW-Stevens Point campus locations, wearing face coverings is mandatory in all buildings, including classrooms. Exemptions can be granted only by the Disability and Assistive Technology Center, which will inform me of the names of anyone not required to wear a face covering. Unless I have been informed that you have an exemption, you must wear a face covering in this class. Face coverings must be worn properly – e.g., masks must cover the nose and mouth completely – and university policy precludes me from holding the class unless everyone is wearing a face covering. This is university policy and not up to my individual discretion. Failure to adhere to this requirement could result in losing your seat in the course.

E-mail Notice

When you send me e-mail I will do my best to reply promptly. With lower-priority messages, my reply might be delayed due to the general volume of email I typically receive. If you feel the need to follow up to make sure I've gotten a message, please feel free to do so.

General Degree Requirements

This course satisfies the Humanities component of the university's general education program (GEP).

Grading

Unless stated otherwise, all work will be graded according to the following scale:

93-100 = A	90-92.9 = A-	87-89.9 = B+	83-86.9 = B	80-82.9 = B-	77-79.9 = C+
73-76.9 = C	70-72.9 = C-	67-69.9 = D+	60-66.9 = D	below 60 = F	

TWO NOTES ABOUT GRADES:

1. I'm happy to discuss any questions you may have about the grades you receive, but grades are not "negotiable" in the sense that you can simply request to have a higher grade, or request to do extra work, just to receive the grade you would prefer to receive. If you want to receive higher grades, you should put in the additional effort *before* submitting your work, such that your grade is the highest possible the first time you receive it.
2. I do not "round" grades up or down for any assignments, or for your final course grade. If you finish the semester with, for example, an 89.9, your grade will be recorded as a "B+". I do this because there is no justification for changing a grade – up or down – simply because it provides a preferable outcome. While I understand that people often like to have grades rounded up, I regard doing that as being just as arbitrary as rounding them down, and therefore, to avoid all of that, I let your numerical grade stand as the final determinant of your letter grade.

Text

Text Rental: *Classic Philosophical Questions*, ed. Robert Mulvaney (14th edition).

Reserve Materials

Many readings will be accessible through Canvas in the Weekly Modules. These are marked as "[reserve]" in the reading list. It is your responsibility to be aware of what is being read and to have work completed on time.

Other Information

Students with disabilities should contact the Office of Disability Services as soon as possible. Religious beliefs will be accommodated according to UWS 22.03 provided that you have notified me of any possible conflicts with the class.

Personal Information

Office Hours – Monday, 2-3:30; Tuesday, 3:30-5. Other days and times by appointment.
Office Location – Collins Classroom Center (CCC) #416
E-mail – cdiehm@uwsp.edu
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