



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.

### Course Structure

This course is structured to be completed 100% online. Other than the textbook, all lectures and course materials will be available through Canvas, all assignments will be completed there, and all graded work will be submitted there.

All lecture materials, and some of the graded assignments, will be available on a WEEKLY rotation. Recordings of lectures and related assignments will become available on MONDAY MORNINGS at 9 a.m., and remain available ONLY UNTIL MIDNIGHT ON THE FOLLOWING SUNDAY. After that point, you will lose access to both the lectures and the related assignments, and the next week’s cycle will begin. You will not be able to re-gain access to these materials after their windows close on Sunday nights. This does NOT pertain to papers or exams, which are NOT on a weekly rotation.

During one of your regularly scheduled class periods each week, you will have the OPTION of attending an online DISCUSSION session (see schedule below). These meetings are OPTIONAL – you do not have to attend, no portion of your grade depends on them, and no new course material will be presented in them. The purposes of these sessions is to allow you an opportunity to discuss what you are learning, ask questions about the materials you are working through, and to interact with me and your classmates in a way that you will likely find helpful. I will send invitations to attend these meetings via email a few minutes before each meeting. I strongly recommend that if you choose to attend, you (a) COME PREPARED WITH QUESTIONS or COMMENTS, and (b) BE PREPARED TO TALK AND BE VISIBLE through your camera,

SCHEDULE: Section 2 – Tuesdays from 2:00-3:15 p.m.

Section 1 – Thursdays from 12:30-1:45 p.m.

Finally, as everyone is aware, in this online format it is crucial that you regularly check your email, and “Announcements” in Canvas, for updates and information regarding the class. I will do my best to keep messages clear and succinct, but some information will need to be communicated this way, so you need to keep up with messages.

### **Course Requirements**

#### **Lecture and Reading Quizzes**

For all classes containing new content, I will post videos of lectures titled as indicated in the reading list. Each of these will have two associated 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, ORGANIZED BY WEEK, WITH LECTURE VIDEOS EMBEDDED IN THE QUIZ MODULES.

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 entire semester. Each quiz question is worth .5% of your grade such that, cumulatively, Reading and Lecture Questions are worth 30% of your grade.

The lecture videos, as well as the Lecture and Reading Quizzes, will become accessible on Monday mornings at 9.a.m., and be available ONLY UNTIL MIDNIGHT ON SUNDAY at the end of the week in which that material is scheduled. After that point, you will lose access to both the lectures and the questions, and the next week’s cycle will begin. You will not be able to re-gain access to these materials. The point of this is to provide you with some flexibility as to how and when you engage with the course materials, while also making sure that you engage with the class on at least a weekly basis. You must log into the course each week to complete these assignments, and they cannot be made-up after Sundays 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* – includes addressing the topic questions, proper formatting and length, and submitted on time.

(2) *Writing* – includes writing that is clear, organized, and free from grammatical or spelling mistakes.

(3) *Content* – includes content that is reflective, creative, and shows an accurate understanding of the course material.

In the online format it is difficult to give detailed feedback on writing. To the extent that I can, I'll try to 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, the second of which is your final exam. These are "take-home" tests that **NEED TO BE TURNED IN ONLINE, BY THE SPECIFIC CLASS DATES AND TIMES INDICATED IN THE READING LIST** – they are **NOT ON A WEEKLY ROTATION**. If you are unable to access Canvas when the submission windows are open, **YOU MUST MAKE ARRANGEMENTS WITH ME TO SUBMIT TESTS OUTSIDE THEIR DESIGNATED TIMES**.

Tests will consist of essay questions, and must be your own original work. Your submissions will go through an "originality check" performed by "Turnitin.com."

Each test is worth 15% of your final grade. Combined, therefore, tests are worth a total of 30% of your final grade.

### **Missed/Late Work**

With online work submissions, 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**

You should engage class regularly. Failure to engage will almost certainly result in missed assignments and in missing information that is important for papers and exams. Attendance at the **OPTIONAL** discussion sessions is **NOT** mandatory, nor is it graded.

You will need to **TAKE NOTES ON LECTURE VIDEOS, CONSULT YOUR NOTES FOR PAPERS, and STUDY YOUR NOTES FOR TESTS**. I will not re-post lecture videos 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 Policy**

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.

### **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 (14<sup>th</sup> edition).

### **Reserve Materials**

Many readings will be provided by me, and accessible through Canvas in the module titled "Reserve Readings." 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 – beyond the live option discussion times indicated above, I will hold additional office hours virtually on Thursdays from 4-5. Other days and times by appointment.

Office Location – Collins Classroom Center (CCC) #416

E-mail – [cdiehm@uwsp.edu](mailto:cdiehm@uwsp.edu)

Department Phone – 715-346-3340