



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 such that it has a face-to-face option but can also be completed 100% online. All lectures will be available through Canvas, all assignments can be completed there, and all graded work (papers, exams, etc.) will be submitted there. The face-to-face option involves meeting at the class’s regularly scheduled times and location, with all graded work being completed and/or submitted on Canvas. Everyone participating in the face-to-face meetings is required to follow UWSP policies regarding classroom procedures. It is NOT REQUIRED to participate in the face-to-face classes, and there is no penalty or loss of grade for not doing so.

All lecture recordings, and some of the graded work for the course, will be available on a WEEKLY rotation. Recordings of lectures, and some related assignments, will become available on the regularly scheduled days of the class (T or Th), 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 feature of the class pertains to everyone, regardless of your participation in the face-to-face meetings. It does NOT pertain to exams, which are NOT on a weekly rotation.

For all students choosing the face-to-face-option, there are very specific policies in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19. I intend to adhere to these policies strictly, so please be aware of the following guidelines:

- At all UW-Stevens Point campus locations, wearing face coverings is mandatory in all buildings, including classrooms. Any student with a condition that impacts their use of a face covering should contact the [Disability and Assistive Technology Center](#) to discuss accommodations in classes. Please note that unless everyone is wearing a face covering, in-person classes cannot take place. This is university policy and not up to the discretion of individual instructors. Failure to adhere to this requirement could result in formal withdrawal from the course.
- Classrooms must follow seating guidelines, and use a seating chart, throughout the semester.
- Please monitor your own health each day using [this screening tool](#). If you are not feeling well or believe you have been exposed to COVID-19, do not come to class; email me and contact Student Health Services (715-346-4646).
- Maintain a minimum of 6 feet of physical distance from others whenever possible.
- Do not congregate in groups before or after class; stagger your arrival and departure from the classroom, lab, or meeting room.
- Wash your hands or use appropriate hand sanitizer regularly and avoid touching your face.

Finally, as everyone is aware, in this more or less "hybrid" format it is absolutely crucial that you check your email regularly 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 in your inboxes.

Course Requirements

Lecture and Reading Quizzes

For all classes containing new content, I will post videos of lectures on the days indicated in the reading list. At the same times, assignments will become available containing two multiple-choice questions about the lectures, and sometimes also an additional assignment with a question about the readings. ALL OF THIS WILL BE FOUND IN THE "ASSIGNMENTS" AREA OF CANVAS, WITH LECTURE VIDEOS EMBEDDED IN THE QUIZ MODULES.

So, for example, on Tuesdays you'll gain access to a lecture video, and also quiz questions related to that video. Then, on Thursday, you'll gain access to the next lecture video, and also a new set of quiz questions. For each day's class there will be at least two questions about the lecture, and in some cases you will find an additional assignment (a 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 READING QUESTION. This will result in 60 total questions across the entire semester.

The lecture videos, as well as the Lecture and Reading Quizzes, will be available ONLY UNTIL MIDNIGHT ON THE FOLLOWING SUNDAY. 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.

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

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 900 words (3 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* – indicated by an “M” in my comments, includes addressing the topic questions, proper formatting and length, and submitted on time.
- (2) *Writing* – indicated by a “W” in my comments, includes writing that is clear, organized, and free from grammatical or spelling mistakes.
- (3) *Content* – indicated by a “C” in my comments, 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 each of these three areas (M, W, and C), and use the following comment codes to give feedback in the body of your papers:

Circled items indicate spelling or technical errors.

Parentheses around items will have one or more of the letters below next to them 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 short-answer and/or 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

Regardless of whether or not you are choosing to meet face-to-face, 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. You will need to TAKE NOTES ON LECTURE VIDEOS, CONSULT YOUR NOTES FOR PAPERS, and STUDY YOUR NOTES FOR TESTS. I do 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 an 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 in class, my expectation is that you will conduct yourself appropriately. This includes being generally *attentive*, and having *cell phones turned off* and *put away*. There is nothing appropriate to this course about texting friends, going over materials from other classes, or sleeping, and if you are doing any of these things, I will ask you to leave the room for the remainder of the class period (that is, if you are asked to leave, you should not return until the next class period, since coming back into the room only creates a further disruption).

In addition, everyone is required to follow UWSP's guidelines regarding COVID-19 and social distancing. Failure to do so can result in class delays, class cancellations, or (in extreme cases) students being required to withdraw from the course.

E-mail Notice

When you send me e-mail informing me of upcoming absences, I typically save the message without initially replying to it. I review my e-mails after class meetings, and reply to them at that point, so that I can inform you of anything unusual that may have gone on in class, share ppt.s (which are often being developed or adjusted just prior to class meetings), etc. This way you receive the most accurate information I can provide, even though you may not receive an immediate reply to your message.

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:

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|-------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|
| 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.

Texts

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

Reserve Materials

Some readings will be on electronic reserve, which is accessible through Canvas. 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 – held virtually on Tuesdays, 2-4, and Wednesdays, 10-12. Other days and times by appointment.

Office Location – Collins Classroom Center (CCC) #416

E-mail – cdiehm@uwsp.edu

Department Phone – 715-346-3340