

PHI 101 Sec. 12  
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**Introduction to Philosophy SWS** MWF 9-9:50 MAK..  
Office Hours:  
'and by appointment  
(616) 331-3158

**Course Texts:**

Plato *Five Dialogues* (Hackett)  
Confucius *Analects* (Handout)  
Descartes *Meditations* (Hackett)  
Beauvoir *Second Sex* (Borde/Malovany-Chevallier Translation, Vintage)  
Coetzee *The Lives of Animals* (Handout)

**Course Description:**

In this course we will focus on some of the central themes and activities in philosophy through close readings of five classic texts—Plato’s *Dialogues*, Confucius’ *Analects*, Descartes’ *Meditations*, Nietzsche’s *Beyond Good and Evil*, and Simone deBeauvoir’s *The Second Sex*—as well recent story by Nobel Prize winner John Coetzee. Each text is in a different genre, is from a different cultural period, and raises a number of classic philosophical questions such as: What does it mean to be moral? Is anything eternally true? What would the ideal society be like? Are there reasons for thinking God exists? Is anything more important than freedom? How are we shaped by our interactions with others? Does life have meaning? Do we have a moral obligation to non-human animals? The topic for the final weeks of the course will be decided upon by the class. There may be additional texts required for those weeks.

**Course Method:**

Philosophy is best done in conversation. The greater variety of ideas we can draw on the better we will be able as a class to come to some reliable insights on philosophical questions. Therefore although there will be some lectures to set the stage for the discussion, the majority of the class time should be spent in discussion. This means that students must come to class ready to discuss—having read carefully the material, at least once, and bring prepared to raise and address issues found in the text. Since discussions cannot be made up, attendance and participation are important parts of the grade. The daily attendance/participation grade is: F-not in class; D-in class unprepared; C-in class, prepared, not participating in discussion; B-in class, prepared, participating in discussion; A-in class, prepared, significantly contributing to the discussion. Over six absences will result in the maximum grade being a C. Computers are not allowed in the classroom as they tend to take attention away from the focus of the discussion—responding articulately to the ideas of other students informed by the assigned readings.

**Course Assignments:**

In addition to the reading and participation requirements, there will three tests, a comprehensive final exam, and nine, one-page discussion papers. Of these nine discussion papers, only the top seven grades will be counted towards the final grade. Since the papers are for the discussion on the day they are due, they will not be accepted late. A longer paper, that will include a revision of an earlier paper, will be due the final Monday of class. A minimal requirement for university level papers is that they are typed, double-spaced, 12 pt Times or Times/New Roman font, with 1 inch margins. They should also be proofread carefully for typos. A typo policy applies to all papers: the grade on the papers will be

lowered one grade (for example, from an A- to a B+ on the long papers, from an A to a B on the discussion papers) for every four typos. Typos include grammatical errors, spelling errors, improper use of gendered pronouns, and failure to properly cite a quotation. Failure to cite is different from plagiarism. Plagiarism is a sign that the student has lost his or her sense for the point of going to college. A plagiarizing student is expected to drop the class; a meeting will be scheduled with the student and someone from the Dean of Students office. Finally, if you have disabilities that require special accommodation you should speak to Prof. Vessey as soon as possible at the start of the term.

### **Foundation: Philosophy and Literature**

This course fulfills a foundation general education requirement for the philosophy and literature. Here is what the catalogue says about such classes:

Literary and philosophical works represent an ongoing conversation about the fundamental ideas and values that shape cultures and civilization. To participate fully in this conversation requires knowledge both of those works that are recognized as defining the history of the conversation, and of works that offer original or critical additions to it in the present. Through the study of great works of Philosophy and Literature, students will come to understand more clearly their own response to the world and to the ideas that give it form and comprehensibility.

Courses in this category will introduce students to the interpretation of a significant body of literary or philosophical work, and assist them in the careful reading, discussion, and analysis of primary texts.

#### *Content Goals*

All courses in the Philosophy and Literature category include the following content:

1. The introduction of philosophy or literature as a "way of knowing"; an examination of principles and questions that define the field and its contributions to human knowledge and civilization;
2. A consideration of the relationship between the works discussed, the cultures in which they were created, and the human concerns they illuminate;
3. The critical analysis and interpretation of one or more primary texts as a major portion of course content.

#### *Skills Goals*

Introduction to Philosophy emphasizes two skills goals:

1. *Ethical Reasoning*: Ethical reasoning is a decision-making process based on defining systems of value. People with a general education recognize ethical issues in a variety of settings and contexts, identify different systems of ethical reasoning (including disciplinary and professional ethical systems), and assess the consequences of those choices in different contexts. This enables them to understand and evaluate different systems of ethical reasoning.
2. *Written Communication*: Written communication is the practice of creating and refining messages that educated readers will value. People with a general education use thoughtful writing processes to develop effective written materials for a variety of audiences and purposes, entering larger discussions by using formats and conventions that are important to their readers.

**SWS:**

Students in Section 12 get SWS credit as long as they have completed WRT 150 with a C or better and as long as they get a C or better in this class.

**Grade Breakdown:**

Attendance and Participation:	20%
Tests:	30%
Final Exam:	10%
Discussion Papers:	30%
Longer Revised paper:	10%

**Course Schedule:**

## Week 1

1. Mon. Jan 9	Introductions
2. Wed Jan 11	Plato <i>Apology</i> 17a–26b
3. Fri. Jan 13	Plato <i>Apology</i> 26b–42a Discussion Paper #1

## Week 2

4. Mon. Jan 16	No Class MLK Day
5. Wed. Jan 18	Plato <i>Euthyphro</i>
6. Fri. Jan 20	Plato <i>Meno</i>

## Week 3

7. Mon. Jan 23	Plato <i>Crito</i> Discussion Paper #2
8. Wed. Jan 25	Background to Confucius
9. Fri. Jan 27	Confucius <i>Analects</i> I–V

## Week 4

10. Mon. Jan 30	Confucius <i>Analects</i> VI–X Discussion Paper #3
11. Wed. Feb 1	Confucius <i>Analects</i> XI–XV
12. Fri. Jan 31	Confucius <i>Analects</i> XVI–XX

## Week 5

13. Mon. Feb 3	Review Test 1
14. Wed. Feb. 5	Test 1
15. Fri. Feb. 7	Background to Descartes

Week 6

16. Mon. Feb. 10      Descartes "Letter of Dedication", "Preface", "Synopsis"  
   Discussion Paper #4
17. Wed. Feb. 12      Descartes Meditation I
18. Fri. Feb. 14      Descartes Meditation II

Week 7

19. Mon. Feb. 17      Descartes Meditation III  
   Discussion Paper #5
20. Wed. Feb. 19      Descartes Meditation IV
21. Fri. Feb. 21      Descartes Meditation V

Week 8

22. Mon. Feb. 24      Descartes Meditation VI  
   Discussion Paper #6
23. Wed. Feb. 26      Introduction to Marx and Engels
24. Fri. Feb. 28      No Class

SPRING BREAK!

Week 9

25. Mon. March 10      Marx/Engels Communist Manifesto pt.1  
   Discussion Paper #7
26. Wed. March 12      Marx/Engels Communist Manifesto pt.2
27. Fri. March 14      Review Test 2

Week 10

28. Mon. March 17      Test 2
29. Wed. March 19      Introduction to Existential Phenomenology
30. Fri. March 21      Beauvoir *The Second Sex*, "Introduction"

Week 11

31. Mon. March 24      Beauvoir *The Second Sex*, Chp. I "Biological Data"  
   Discussion Paper #8
32. Wed. March 26      Beauvoir *The Second Sex*, Chp. XXI "Woman's Situation and Character"
33. Fri. March 28      Beauvoir *The Second Sex*, Chp. XXIII "The Woman in Love"

Week 12

34. Mon. March 31      Beauvoir *The Second Sex*, Chp. XXV "The Independent Woman"

Discussion Paper #9

35. Wed. April 2 Beauvoir *The Second Sex*, "Conclusion"  
36. Fri. April 4 Coetzee *The Lives of Animals*

Week 13

37. Mon April 2 Coetzee *The Lives of Animals*  
Discussion Paper #10  
38. Wed. April 9 Review Test 3  
39. Fri. April 11 Test 3

Week 14

40. Mon April 14 Writing Workshops  
41. Wed. April 16 Writing Workshops  
42. Fri. April 18 Review Final Exam/ Conclusions/Evaluations

Tue. April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 8:00-9:50 Longer Revised Paper Due/FINAL EXAM