

WILLIAM RAINEY HARPER COLLEGE
LIBERAL ARTS DIVISION
GENERAL COURSE OUTLINE

PHI Course Prefix	105 Course Number	Introduction to Philosophy Course Title	3-0 (Lec-Lab)	3 Semester Hours
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Principles and problems of philosophy as seen in different schools of thought. Topics: validity of human knowledge; nature of reality; mind and body; free will and determinism; moral and aesthetic values; and religious belief. IAI H4 900

TOPICAL OUTLINE

There are alternative methods of organizing the subject matter of philosophy. No one of these methods is used universally, and no one method is universally successful; each has its strengths and its weaknesses:

- I. To study philosophy historically, one could begin with the Greeks and continue to the present. Major strength: the student gains an overall perspective that is quite useful; he/she also sees how philosophers depend on each other, and he/she sees how modern philosophy depends on older figures. Major weakness: since either a textbook or a book of selected readings would most likely be used, the student fails to see how the total work of a Plato for a Descartes fits together; the student seldom sees how a thinker argues for his position, and as a result the student often gains the impression that philosophers are men who hold interesting (if irrelevant) opinions that have no real supporting bases. Furthermore, although studying philosophy historically need not necessarily imply that content is stressed over the activity of doing philosophy, the tendency to merely learn facts about philosophy must be guarded against in this approach.
- II. To study selected works from a few great philosophers. Major strength: the student sees how a thinker has argued for his positions and cannot be dismissed unless one can find counter arguments; also, the student gains in the ability to see the relations between ideas. Major weakness: the student will often identify "philosophy" with the work of one or two men; also since the number of men studied is limited, the exposure of the student is limited to just a few of the major problems of philosophy; and of the major problems that the student does study, the number of alternative solutions is limited; another weakness with this method is that the student fails to obtain an overall view of the subject, and he/she usually lacks a sense of the interdependence of philosophers.
- III. To study selected problems that have been important in the tradition. In this case a textbook can be used. The typical text will discuss nine or ten major problems of philosophy, list all the alternative solutions, and then give the arguments for those positions. Major strength: the student usually gains a better grasp of the vocabulary and sees more philosophical territory; the learner sees the importance of argumentation. Major weakness: the beginner is introduced to neither an historical position as in I, nor to the interconnected total thought of a major thinker as in II; furthermore, the novice often leaves with the impression that philosophy is a subject that deals with a lot of problems with a bewildering variety of arguments leading he's not sure where. Care must be taken to relate philosophical argumentation to broader questions that concern the student's own life and experience.
- IV. A variety of the combinations of these methods, each trying to avoid the weaknesses of the individual methods.

METHODS OF PRESENTATION

1. Lecture
2. Discussion
3. Small group work
4. Student presentations

5. Student debates

STUDENT OUTCOMES: (*The student should . . .*)

1. communicate philosophical ideas and issues orally
2. identify and explain how philosophical concepts inform discussions of real-world issues
3. demonstrate an awareness of philosophical issues in at least the following areas: epistemology, metaphysics, and ethics.
4. identify and explain the main arguments, ideas, or questions of three thinkers, including at least one from outside the western philosophical canon.
5. apply distinct philosophical perspectives to a discussion of real-world issues.
6. analyze and defend judgments about philosophical claims in the face of competing judgments
7. demonstrate an understanding of the weaknesses of one's own view.
8. demonstrate an understanding of the strengths of a view with which one disagrees.
9. demonstrate the use of three primary texts in service of the above outcomes.
10. write a total of at least ten pages (of approximately 300 words each) of college level writing in support of the above outcomes.

METHODS OF EVALUATION (some of the following)

1. Quizzes
2. Exams (may be oral)
3. Written reading responses
4. Debates
5. Homework
6. Class activities
7. Participation

SOME SUGGESTED TEXTBOOKS/INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

Kleiman, Lowell and Lewis, Stephen. *Philosophy: An Introduction Through Literature*
Paragon House, 1998 ISBN: 1557785392

Lawhead, William. *The Philosophical Journey: An Interactive Approach* 6th Edition.
McGraw-Hill, 2013 ISBN: 0078038340

Wolff, Robert P.. *About Philosophy* 11th Edition. Prentice Hall, 2011 ISBN: 0205194125

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Semester Fall Year 2015