

Course Title: Cross Disciplinary Philosophy: Life Themes
Course Code: PHIL 210
Credit Hours: 3

Location: Classroom 1, Main building
Instructor: Alan Blum or Ioannis Georganas or Barry Tagrin
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Office Hour: by appointment
Office location: by appointment

Syllabus

Course Description:

This course is designed to explore and evaluate our personal sources of knowing, believing, and existing. Rather than a traditional survey of philosophers and their writings, the course calls upon each student to examine where his/her moral, ethical, spiritual, political and romantic belief systems originate: how and why we lead our lives the way we do. Fundamental to this Life Themes course is a challenge to preconceived notions of what we accept as truth and, in particular, preconceived notions of "correctness" in morality, ethics, taboo, loyalty, sacrifice, sex, family relations, and even what we eat.

Course Details:

This course is designed to explore and evaluate our personal sources of knowing, believing, and existing. It is certainly not the purpose of the course to change anyone's belief system. But it is the intent of our guided inquiry to encourage students to open their minds to explore the genesis of their own and others' belief systems.

The start to this class is the construction of a "family philosophy tree." Students are asked to explore the roots of their ideas and beliefs, to see what influences have affected them the most: for example, established school texts, the Bible, peer pressure and rock music, our first date, our dreams of money and fame. To explore and expand our knowledge of experience and knowing, we will look at contrasting beliefs and experiences to our own. (In conjunction with the latter, students are encouraged to visit with and interview members of the Greek community, journey into remote villages and experience first hand the ethics and nature of life in the Cycladic countryside--thus obtaining a direct interactive experience of a culture whose communal, religious, and artistic philosophical "templates" are both deeply rooted and at the same time in a state of flux due to the influences of an ever-encroaching global pressure.)

Readings, forming the basis of analysis, will include a survey of major philosophical formulations, starting with the classical era of the Greek progenitors, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, across the spectrum of ideas and social and cultural development, into the modern

age and present-day contemporary manifestations of major religious and non-religious belief systems. Epistemology, with its focus on analyzing the nature of knowledge, including the ways that knowledge relates to truth and belief, will form the basis by which we examine the question “What do people really know?” Elements of moral philosophy, including currently important issues of Cultural Relativism, subjectivism in Ethics, and the connections between morality and religions, will be examined with special attention to one’s actual daily relations with others, and society in general.

Writing Components:

Students are to keep an organized, personal journal of thought, leading towards self-examination and discovery. In addition to weekly response papers, students will be required to turn in three major papers of length, on: 1.) A personal examination of one’s major likes and dislikes, their impact on others, and the development of the patterns, which condition or at least impact on these attitudes, 6 - 8 pages. 2.) Are there absolute moral rules that you follow? What are they and why? How could they change? 6 - 8 pages. 3.) The *Flash Point* final. 10 - 12 pages. Identify and examine five major experiences whose impact on your life has created substantial behaviour-controlling patterns, and experiences that have actually “created” your personality.

Class discussion is essential, and students will be encouraged to engage in all manner of analysis and interaction. In a cooperative, supportive student-teacher atmosphere, an attempt will be made to help students make real progress in understanding the nature and significant factors of their lives. All students will be required to attend all project excursions to major classical sites relevant to birth of classical Greek philosophy and its relationship to the mythology of its time.

Course Objectives:

- *Students will examine recurring personal patterns of behavior.
- *Students will study and debate traditional philosophical theories and ethical manners.
- *Students will be introduced to the diversity and complexity of moral beliefs.
- *Students will examine the impact of social media, music, peer and parental pressure.
- *Students will seek to identify major experiences that have shaped their personalities.

Learning Outcomes:

- Understand the impact of family views, environment, peer opinions and effects of social media upon one’s personal development
- appreciate with a view towards tolerance the contrary ethical and moral attitudes of others
- effectively differentiate the essential focus of varying established philosophies
- gained insight into substantial formative experiences affecting their present patterns of personality
- developed the vocabulary and manners to engage in rhetorical conversations

Evaluation and Grading:

Letter grades will be calculated as follows:

*Attendance and discussion: 20%

*Personal journal: 20%

*First written assignment 15 %,

*Second written assignment 15 %,

*Final Paper: 30%

Attendance and Make-up Work, Late Work Policy, Grading Scale, Academic Integrity Policy and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) policies:

Students are required to abide by HISA's Academic policies first introduced and explained at the school and class orientation. See the attached policy sheet.

Selected Readings from Required Texts

The Elements of Moral Philosophy, James Rachels, McGraw-Hill, 2007

The History of Philosophy, Martyn Oliver, Metro Books, 1997

Problems of Knowledge, Michael J. Williams, Oxford Press, 2007