PL 00502  Introduction to the Basic Problems of Philosophy  
Summer II, 2013

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Schedule (class times and day(s):  TTH 6:15-9:15   Room: Stokes 103N

Boston College Mission Statement

Strengthened by more than a century and a quarter of dedication to academic excellence, Boston College commits itself to the highest standards of teaching and research in undergraduate, graduate and professional programs and to the pursuit of a just society through its own accomplishments, the work of its faculty and staff, and the achievements of its graduates. It seeks both to advance its place among the nation's finest universities and to bring to the company of its distinguished peers and to contemporary society the richness of the Catholic intellectual ideal of a mutually illuminating relationship between religious faith and free intellectual inquiry.

Boston College draws inspiration for its academic societal mission from its distinctive religious tradition. As a Catholic and Jesuit university, it is rooted in a world view that encounters God in all creation and through all human activity, especially in the search for truth in every discipline, in the desire to learn, and in the call to live justly together. In this spirit, the University regards the contribution of different religious traditions and value systems as essential to the fullness of its intellectual life and to the continuous development of its distinctive intellectual heritage.

Course Description

Among the chief concerns of philosophers—whether ancient, early modern or near contemporary—are questions about the good, the beautiful and the true, what constitutes a “good” life, the nature of knowing and the existence of God. The course aims to provide students with a representative sample of thinkers from each epoch and an exploration of how they differ and agree as they pursue common questions.

Text(s)/Readings (Required)
Plato, The Trial and Death of Socrates (includes Euthyphro, Apology and Crito)
Plato, Gorgias
Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics
Descartes, Discourse on Method
On line: selections from Rousseau, Murdoch and Langer

Text(s)/Readings Suggested (for reference purposes)
Alasdair MacIntyre, A Brief History of Ethics

Course Objectives

1. The course will provide students with a broad overview of ancient philosophy and glimpses into early modern and contemporary thought.
2. The course will develop a student’s ability to read a text critically
3. The course will, via an in-class writing assignment, help to develop a student’s ability to write critically.
4. By topic, the course involves the study of ethics although it cannot hope to develop ethical capacity, other than a humble regard for other persons and cultures.

5. By design, the course works across cultures, and time-periods, and includes the work of women as well as men, and thus should evoke a sensitivity to both one’s own culture and time and those of others.

**Grading**

1. Careful reading and thoughtful participation (20%)
2. Plato exam 3/13 (35%)
3. In class writing exercise (10%)
4. Final exam (35%)

*WCAS Grading System*

The undergraduate grading system consists of twelve categories: A (4.00), A- (3.67), excellent; B+ (3.33), B (3.00), B- (2.67), good; C+ (2.33), C (2.00), C- (1.67), satisfactory; D+ (1.33), D (1.00), D- (.67), passing but unsatisfactory; F (.00), failure; I (.00), incomplete; F (.00), course dropped without notifying office; W (.00), official withdrawal from course. The graduate grading system is A (4.00), A- (3.67), Excellent; B+ (3.33), B (3.00), good; B- (2.67), C (2.00), passing but not for degree credit; F (.00), failure.

Grade Reports. All students are required to log into the web through Agora to access their semester grades. Students must utilize their BC username and password to log on. If your username or password is not known, the Student Learning and Support Center in the O’Neill Library Computer Center will issue a new one. The SLSC requires a valid picture ID (a BC ID, driver’s license or passport) to obtain your password.

**Important Policies**

http://www.bc.edu/content/bc/schools/advstudies/guide/academicinteg.html

Scholarship and Academic Integrity

It is expected that students will produce original work and cite references appropriately. Failure to reference properly is plagiarism. Scholastic dishonesty includes, but is not necessarily limited to, plagiarism, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, cheating on examinations or assignments, and submitting the same paper or substantially similar papers to meet the requirements of more than one course without seeking permission of all instructors concerned. Scholastic misconduct may also involve, but is not necessarily limited to, acts that violate the rights of other students, such as depriving another student of course materials or interfering with another student’s work.

Request for Accommodations

If you have a disability and will be requesting accommodations for this course, please register with either Dr. Kathy Duggan (dugganka@bc.edu), Associate Director, Connors Family Learning Center (learning disabilities or AHD) or Dean Paulette Durrett, (paulette.durrett@bc.edu), Assistant Dean for students with disabilities, (all other disabilities). Advance notice and appropriate documentation are required for accommodations.
For further information, you can locate the disability resources on the web at http://www.bc.edu/content/bc/libraries/help/tutoring/specialservices.html.

Attendance
Class attendance is an important component of learning. Students are expected to attend all classes and to arrive by the beginning of and remain for the entire class period. When an occasion occurs that prevents a student from attending class, it is the student’s obligation to inform the instructor of the conflict before the class meets. The student is still expected to meet all assignment deadlines. If a student knows that he or she will be absent on a particular day, the student is responsible for seeing the instructor beforehand to obtain the assignments for that day. If a student misses a class, he or she is responsible for making up the work by obtaining a classmate's notes and handouts and turning in any assignments due. Furthermore, many instructors give points for participation in class. If you miss class, you cannot make up participation points associated with that class. Types of absences that are not typically excused include weddings, showers, vacations, birthday parties, graduations, etc. Additional assignments, penalties and correctives are at the discretion of the instructor. If circumstances necessitate excessive absence from class, the student should consider withdrawing from the class. In all cases, students are expected to accept the decision of the instructor regarding attendance policies specific to the class.

Consistent with our commitment of creating an academic community that is respectful of and welcoming to persons of differing backgrounds, we believe that every reasonable effort should be made to allow members of the university community to observe their religious holidays without jeopardizing the fulfillment of their academic obligations. It is the responsibility of students to review course syllabi as soon as they are distributed and to consult the faculty member promptly regarding any possible conflicts with observed religious holidays. If asked, the student should provide accurate information about the obligations entailed in the observance of that particular holiday. However, it is the responsibility of the student to complete any and all class requirements for days that are missed due to conflicts due to religious holidays.

There may be circumstances that necessitate a departure from this policy. Feel free to contact the WCAS at 617-552-3900 for consultation.

Deadlines
Assignments are due at the beginning of the class period on the specified dates. Late assignments will be graded accordingly. The calendar immediately below indicates what we will be considering in class on that date.
Course Calendar (readings and topics for in-class lecture and discussion)

6/25: Introduction

6/27: Euthyphro

7/2: Gorgias

7/9: Gorgias

7/11: Apology

7/16: Plato Exam

7/18: Aristotle Books 1 & 2; in-class writing assignment

7/23: Aristotle Books 3, 7 & 8

7/25: Descartes and Rousseau: selections

7/30: Art, music and self-transcendence: Langer and Murdoch

8/1: Final exam (two hours)