Philosophy 1020: Introduction to Philosophy 2015-16
Department of Philosophy, Western University

Lectures

Tuesdays and Thursdays 9.30-10.30, SSC 2050; Plus one one-hour tutorial per week

Instructor

Prof. Dennis Klimchuk; StvH 4140; klimchuk@uwo.ca

Office hours: Tuesday 11-12, Wednesday 10-11.

Description

A survey of a number of the central questions of philosophy. We will focus on the first three in the first term and the second three in the second, though one theme of the course will be how the issues raised by these questions interact with one another.

1. *God and the problem of evil* (Does God exist? How can we know? How is the existence of God compatible with suffering and evil in the world, if it is?)

2. *Ethics* (By what standard(s) ought we distinguish between good and bad, and permissible and impermissible actions? To whom do we owe moral obligations?)

3. *Political philosophy* (On what basis can the state claim a right to compel citizens to do what they otherwise might not or refrain from doing what they otherwise might? What role ought the state to play in ensuring the material well-being of its citizens?)

4. *Metaphysics* (Is the world made up of particular things only? Does the world come sorted into categories or are the distinctions we draw among kinds of things and persons socially constructed?   What does it mean to say that something caused something else?)

5. *Epistemology* (What does it mean to say that someone knows something? That a claim is true?)

6. *Aesthetics* (What kind of thing is a work of art? A musical composition? In what sense can art represent? Are standards of beauty objective or subjective?)

<u>Objectives</u>

This course has two main objectives. The first is to introduce students to a number of core issues in philosophy and to some historically and conceptually significant answers to enduring philosophical questions concerning, for example, the existence of God, the principles of morality and justice, and the nature of reality and of knowledge. The second is to help students develop the skills philosophy requires: careful reading, critical thinking, and clear writing.

<u>Text</u>

All the reading material will be available on-line, either on the course webpage, through the library, or on the web (instructions for accessing all of these will be provided).

<u>Evaluation</u>

Participation in tutorials: 10%

4 short (750 word) essays (2 per term). In each term the first paper will be worth 10% and the second 15%, so: 2 x 10% + 2 x 15% = 50%

Two non-cumulative exams (in the exam periods at the end of each term): 2 x 20% = 40%*

*subject to following qualification:

Each term there will be a short, ½ hr mid-term exam. It will be meant to serve as a means for you to see how well you are understanding the material in the term to that point.

You need not write this exam.   However, if you do, and you are happy with the result, you may elect to have it count for 5% of the 50% of your grade that will be determined in the term in which you write it. In that case, the end of term exam for that term will count for only 15% of your final grade. You will make this election at the end of term exam.

<u>Auditing</u>

Students wishing to audit the course should consult with the instructor prior to or during the first week of classes.

The **Department of Philosophy Policies** which govern the conduct, standards, and expectations for student participation in Philosophy courses is available in the Undergraduate section of the Department of Philosophy website at http://www.uwo.ca/philosophy/undergraduate/policies.html.It is your responsibility to understand the policies set out by the Senate and the Department of Philosophy, and thus ignorance of these policies cannot be used as grounds of appeal.

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/ for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.