



PH 125 *Introduction to Philosophy* (3) Winter 2001

Instructor: Terry Fach (for picture, see Calgary Transit buses)

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Class Schedule: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 11:15 – 12:30 p.m.

Office Hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 12:30 – 2 pm

I. About this class...

Most people have no clear understanding of what philosophy's subject matter is all about. Many take their first impression of philosophy from what they have heard other people say, and often these are not flattering comments. Is the study of philosophy just "a bunch of head-games"? Will it be dangerous for someone with deep religious beliefs? Will it deal with topics that have relevance for the practical matters of our lives?

In the coming weeks we will consider these questions and others as we investigate both the history of Western philosophy as well as some traditional philosophical problems. The lectures, class discussion, and assigned readings will show why some of these problems have resisted easy solution down through the ages. More importantly, they will help class members to develop valuable intellectual skills and resources, and to better orient their lives.

The examinations, quizzes, and written assignments are designed to encourage careful listening, reading, and reflection, and to measure the student's progress over the course of the term.

"Philosophy, when superficially studied excites doubt;
when thoroughly explored it dispels it." (Francis Bacon)

II. Course Goals

1. an improved understanding of the concepts, problems, and methods of philosophy.
2. An improved ability to think critically—and sensitively—about some traditional problems of philosophy.

3. Increased self-confidence and self-knowledge through reflection, reading, and discussion.
4. Development of critical reading and discussion skills.

III. Textbooks

The required textbook for this course is:

Core Questions in Philosophy, 3rd ed., by Elliott Sober

Other readings will be assigned and will be either handed out in class or put on "reserve" in the library.

IV. Course Requirements

1. Two Essays

Two short essays will be assigned over the term. (No research papers will be assigned in this course.) Essay topics will be announced in class 2 - 3 weeks before the essay is due; each essay topic is based on an article or topic covered in lectures and readings. Although this essay is to be only 5 - 7 pages in length (typed or word-processed, 1.5 or double-spaced), it is expected that they will be very carefully written, with particular attention to style and argument quality. This essay is worth 20% of the final grade. See "Appendix A" (attached) for further guidelines.

Essay 1 due dates: **February 26** (graded, with comments)
 March 5 (graded, no comments)

Essay 2 due dates: **April 2** (graded, with comments)
 April 9 (graded, no comments)

Important: Please turn in one copy of your essay (keeping one copy for yourself) to my mailbox no later than 5:30 p.m. on the day that it is due.

2. Mid-Term Examination

Based on class lectures and readings, this exam tests knowledge basic terms and concepts, important arguments, and a few important names and dates. Format will be both short answer and essay-style questions.

Examination date: **February 15, 2001**

3. Final Examination

There will be a final examination in the April examination period worth 40% of the final grade. This examination will include both short-answer questions and longer essay questions, and will be based completely on material covered by the class lectures and assigned readings. It is, therefore, highly advisable to attend

class regularly, ask questions if you do not understand lecture material, and to take careful and extensive notes.

Final Grade Breakdown

Term work/exam	Total %	Score
Essay 1	20	
Essay 2	20	
Mid-Term Exam	20	
Final Examination	40	
TOTAL	100	

Grading Criteria

It goes without saying that some of the grading done in a course like this depends on the critical judgement of the marker. That does not mean that the standards of good writing and argumentation are entirely a matter of individual preference. Part of what you will learn in a class like this one is the set of standards used by academics teaching in this discipline. If you have questions about what lies behind the assignment of a particular grade, or if the comments on an assignment leave you uncertain as to what you would need to do to improve it, please consult me and I will be happy to discuss the matter with you.

What follows is a rough guide to grading criteria used in this course:

An **A** essay or examination answer is free from most stylistic, technical and factual errors, demonstrates an excellent grasp of the subject matter, is exceptionally well-organized and well-argued, and exhibits a fair degree of originality (where that is required).

A **B** essay or examination answer is free from most stylistic, technical and factual errors, demonstrates a good grasp of the subject matter, is well-organized and well-argued beyond the level of mechanical repetition of text or lecture material and shows some promise of originality.

A **C** essay or examination answer contains some stylistic, technical or factual errors, demonstrates an average grasp of the subject matter, but in a repetitive and mechanical fashion, and exhibits some elementary organizational and argumentative ability but without any evidence of originality.

A **D** essay or examination answer contains excessive stylistic, technical or factual errors, fails to demonstrate a grasp of the subject matter in even a routine or mechanical fashion, is poorly organized and void of argument and originality.

The following chart matches letter grades with a brief description and percentages:

A+	Exceptional	96-100
A	Excellent	91-95
A-		86-90
B+	Very Good	82-85
B	Good	75-81
B-		72-74
C+	Satisfactory	68-71
C	Adequate	63-67
C-		60-62
D+		56-59
D	Marginal	50-59
F	Failure	49% and below

V. Other Matters

1. Late or Incomplete Term Work

Assignments are expected on the day that they are due. No term work can be submitted for credit after the last day of classes. No essay will be accepted after a due date unless approved in advance by the instructor.

2. Class Attendance and Preparation

All students are expected to attend class regularly and to prepare for lectures and discussions. Those unable or unwilling to attend regularly or undertake this preparation cannot expect to do well in the course and should consider other options.

Students will regularly be asked to form "Discussion Groups" in order to reflect and share understandings gained by careful reading of assigned material. Obviously, coming to class unprepared for these discussions will result in a waste of your own time. Moreover, you will miss out on an opportunity to contribute to your peers' efforts to learn and grow in their understanding.

3. Contacting the Professor

As a half-time instructor at NUC I am not usually available to NUC students on every weekday. **Please note that my office hours this term are Tuesdays and Thursdays, 12:30 – 2:00 p.m.** If these are inconvenient times, you may reach me by telephone (voice-mail) at Nazarene University College (571-2550 ext. 29). If you cannot meet me during office hours, I can arrange to see you at another time that is mutually convenient. You can also reach me by e-mail: terry.fach@cnaz.ab.ca

APPENDIX A - 'SHORT ESSAYS'

Assignments should consist in a written response of no more than seven pages (1750 words) to the question(s) set. Responses should show acquaintance with relevant material in the textbooks and classroom discussions (if relevant). It may be necessary to consult other general works (e.g. readings placed on Reserve in the library, Reference works), but papers will normally require only modest amounts of research.

I prefer that responses be typed or printed, 1.5 or 2 line spacing with reasonable margins. Neat handwriting may be accepted, with similar spacing. Essay writing conventions should be observed as appropriate; e.g., you should acknowledge sources of quoted or borrowed material. Style should be appropriate to what would appear in a *Globe and Mail* comment page, i.e. not merely conversational, but not unduly formal. Responses should be aimed at a reader who is intelligent and interested in the topic, but should not assume familiarity with academic philosophy.

Papers will be graded mainly on (1) the clarity with which things are expressed (which includes everything from individual statements up to the overall progress of the reasoning), (2) the plausibility of assumptions, (3) the use and (where appropriate) the explanation of relevant concepts and distinctions, (4) the logical correctness of arguments. Errors in spelling and grammar will be marked, and will affect the grade where they affect clarity.