University of West Florida

Fall 2012

Introduction to Philosophy

PHI 2010
Garrett Howard

An Introduction to Philosophy through Film...
University of West Florida
Fall 2012
Introduction to Philosophy
Online course

PHI 2010
Instructor: Garrett Howard
Office: Bldg. 50, Rm. 231-A.
Office Hours: Monday: 9-10 and 2:30 -3:30 and Wednesday: 9-10 and 2:30 – 5:30
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Textbook: THERE IS NO TEXT BOOK FOR THIS COURSE!!!!
All required readings will be made available in the form of Adobe Acrobat documents on the course’s E Learning web page!!!
YAY!!! You have easily saved 100 bucks in text book costs!

Course Description:
This course will provide an introduction to Metaphysics, Epistemology, Ethics and our human condition through the lens of contemporary cinema.

“Films can be used to do philosophy in many ways. They can be used as illustrations of philosophical problems; as ways of testing philosophical theories; as ways of running philosophical thought experiments; as suppliers of interesting puzzles or phenomena, things in need of philosophical examination; as ways of getting clear about the significance of philosophical issues, or ways of getting clear about philosophical possibilities.”

--Damian Cox and Michael P. Levine
Yes, that’s me… in my office… I’m the guy next to Gollum.

**Course Description:**
This course will provide an introduction to Philosophy through an examination of Metaphysics, Epistemology, Ethics and the human condition.

**Course Format:** This course is entirely via the internet. From the course home page you will access all links for: assignments, chat sessions, discussion boards; and links to additional course material content and resources. The instructional modules, discussion boards and Essay Exams are designed to allow students to devise a schedule and a pace of study that will fit their personal schedule within a weekly time frame.

**Discussion boards:** This feature allows students to interact and share thoughts, questions and ideas in regard to the assigned reading materials and essay assignments. The primary goal of the discussion boards is to assist the student in building a basic understanding of the philosophical questions, concepts, problems and arguments encountered in the assigned readings and lecture material. In turn, this will provide the student with the knowledge and tools needed to engage in the essay exams.

**Films:** Some of you might be somewhat familiar with the story lines of the films listed in our syllabus. However, if you are not familiar with a particular film, it is recommended you should locate, borrow or rent the DVD, and view the film. This course will take cinema as beginning point for the discussion of philosophy.
Think 'til it hurts

In this portion of the course, we will discover that doing philosophy begins with the art of asking questions about life and the world...

Topics for our discussion boards and our essay assignments will include the following...
Epistemology, Skepticism and Total Recall

On our discussion boards, students will be encouraged to ask fundamental questions about the nature of human knowledge. How do we know when something is real or true? How can we be certain about the things we think to be true? In addition, questions posed by the philosopher, Rene Descartes will be explored in the Sci Fi Classic TOTAL RECALL!
Issues and questions regarding the nature of existence and reality will be raised. What is real?

Many philosophical questions regarding the nature of reality will focus on characters and ideas found in the classic science fiction film, THE MATRIX.
In this portion of the course, our discussion boards will confront questions and problems regarding the nature of mind. In other words, What is a mind? What is consciousness? What are the metaphysical foundations of mind? In this section, we will direct our discussion to Steven Spielberg’s Film, *AI*
Personal Identity

Philosophical issues and questions regarding the nature of self identity will be raised. What does it mean for a person to say: “I know myself”? How does a person build and maintain a notion of self identity? Is the self composed of a substance that endures over time? Can we really know who we are? Is the self real? Is our notion of self identity a fictional construct?

In this section of the course we will turn our attention to Christopher Nolan’s film, MEMENTO
Questions about ethics and morality will be explored. For example: is ethical knowledge possible? How does one know they are doing the morally correct thing? How do you know you are doing the right thing and for the right reasons? Is it possible to do the right thing for the wrong reasons? More importantly… is Batman an ethical agent? Such questions will be examined in Christopher Nolan’s film, The Dark Knight.
# Grades and Grading criteria

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>GRADES</th>
<th>POINTS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Essay Exams</td>
<td>500</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Discussion boards</td>
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*Grades and Extra credit--As a policy, I do not allow for extra credit.*

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
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<td>95-100</td>
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<td>A-</td>
<td>90-94</td>
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<td>B+</td>
<td>88-89</td>
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<td>B</td>
<td>80-87</td>
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Essay Exam I (250 points) and Essay Exam II (250 points)

Students will be provided with a list or menu of possible topics from which they can choose the topic or topics for their essay. All topics are taken directly from the assigned readings (see list below). There will be two essay assignments. Each essay assignment will have a minimum length requirement of 4 full typed pages (double spaced). Students will have three weeks to work on each of the essay assignments before submitting their papers.

Essay Grading Criteria:

Form: (a) Unity of thought and Coherence of Expression. (b) Sentence and paragraph variety, (c) grammar and spelling.

Content: Reporting is a concise demonstration of your acquaintance with the material. (This will fulfill the minimum requirement for a “C”). Analysis is the ability to compare, contrast, or critically evaluate the material. (This will fulfill the minimum requirement for a “B”). Synthesis is a demonstration of your ability to adequately develop your thesis (or main idea), and to produce a sound conclusion. (This will fulfill the minimum requirement for an “A”).

Gordon Rule: Since this is a Gordon Rule course, in order to get a “C” or better, the student must submit 4,000 written words. The exams each contain specific instructions regarding style, format and length. So, if you follow the guidelines, you will easily meet the requirement. Students must rely upon the textbook and lecture material for all writing assignments.

Discussion Board Participation: Your activity on the discussion boards is what determines your participation grade. There will be on-going discussion associated with every subject area. You are expected to read the appropriate material in the text, and answer each question on the discussion board associated with that material. The minimum expectations for any subject area are: answer each question posed, read the responses of other students, post a response to at least one other student, engage in rational discourse. The discussion boards are a tool for enhancing the knowledge of all by inviting every student to share their insights. Students should feel free to ask questions about concepts you may not understand. All postings should be respectful in tone and rational in content.

Discussion board 1: Epistemology, Skepticism and Total Recall (100 points)
Discussion Board 2: Metaphysics and the Matrix (100 Points)
Discussion board 3: AI and the Philosophy of Mind (100 points)
Discussion Board 4: Memento and Personal Identity (100 points)
Discussion Board 5: The Dark Knight and Ethics (100 points)

Course Goals and Objectives: (1) To provide a historical overview of classical and modern approaches to philosophy, (2) To provide students with the opportunity to: examine, and evaluate basic philosophical concepts, (3) Examine the theories, questions and arguments that are relevant to the discussion of contemporary philosophy.
Student learning outcomes:
(1) Clearly identify and define the central theories, concepts and questions encountered in the field of Philosophy.
(2) Compare, contrast, and critically evaluate concepts and arguments,
(3) demonstrate the ability to derive cogent insights and conclusions,
(4) Display an understanding of the material’s relevance in a discussion of contemporary moral and ethical issues

- **Late Exams** automatically receive a penalty of a loss of one letter grade. Papers submitted fourteen days beyond the deadline will not receive a grade or credit.

The Disability Resource Center
Students with a documented disability who require specific examination or course related academic accommodations should contact the Student Disability Resource Center (SDRC) by email at sdrc@uwf.edu or by phone at (850) 474-2387.

Plagiarism.
Plagiarism is an extremely serious issue to me. It strikes at the very heart of the intellectual enterprise in which we are mutually engaged, and undermines all of our collective efforts. As a result, I take all suspected cases of plagiarism seriously, and will punish them to the extent that the University of West Florida policies allow, which include failure for the assignment, failure for the course, and recommendation of further action by university administration. Briefly, plagiarism is the failure to accurately and openly provide citations for the ideas and words used in your written assignments. This includes lifting quotations without credit from books, magazines, and newspapers or other printed material as well as “borrowing” from the Internet. It also includes presenting ideas as your own when they have in fact been derived from another source. The University’s plagiarism policy can be found in the Student Handbook under “Expectations for Academic Conduct” (available online at http://www.uwf.edu/uwfmain/stuHandbk/).

CAPSTONE COURSE INFORMATION
All Philosophy Majors must complete a “Capstone Course” project before graduation. If this course is to be designated as your Capstone Course, please speak with the instructor as soon as possible. By the end of second week of classes, speak to your instructor about your interest using that course for your Capstone Project. If the instructor accepts, fill out and submit the Capstone Declaration form in office declaring project and topic area(s). No designations for Capstone Course status will be accepted after the third week of class.