All human beings by nature desire to know.

—Aristotle

We cannot learn philosophy; for where is it, who is in possession of it, and how shall we recognize it? We can only learn to philosophize, that is, to exercise the talent of reason, in accordance with its universal principles, on certain actually existing attempts at philosophy, always, however, reserving the light of reason to investigate, to confirm, or to reject these principles in their very sources.

—Immanuel Kant

Everything that philosophers have handled, for thousands of years now, has been a conceptual mummy; nothing real escaped their hands alive. They kill and stuff whatever they worship, these gentlemen who idolize concepts; they endanger the life of whatever they worship. In their view, death, change, and age, like procreation and growth, are objections—refutations, even. That which is, does not become; that which becomes, is not.

—Friedrich Nietzsche

In the course of this semester, we will become better acquainted with certain elements of the Western philosophical tradition. We shall do this through engaging in critical thought concerning questions with which philosophy has long been occupied. Such questions include: What is the nature of reality? How is this reality known? Is knowledge possible? What constitutes a good, indeed the best, life for a human being? What is the best way to collectively organize ourselves and to regulate the relations between us? Our approach to these questions will be historical. We will examine what philosophers have said on these questions; why they have made the claims the make; and whether they have good reasons for making these claims.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Republic, Plato (Translated by G.M.A. Grube, Hackett Publishing)
Nicomachean Ethics, Aristotle (Hackett Publishing)
Discourse on Method, René Descartes (Hackett Publishing)
The Communist Manifesto, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels (Bantam Classics)
The Gay Science, Friedrich Nietzsche (Translated by Walter Kaufmann, Vintage Books)
Between East and West, Luce Irigaray (Columbia University Press)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Your success in this class will depend upon regular class attendance—which involves more than your physical presence—as well as keeping up on the assigned reading. However, while regular class attendance and sustained reading of the assigned material are necessary conditions for success, they are not sufficient conditions for your success. The material that we will engage is
not something that can be mastered by oneself nor can it be learned without patient and sustained attention. Thus, listening attentively to lectures and videos, actively participating in the process of asking and answering questions—those of the authors we will read, those of your classmates, as well as your own—and taking the time to reflect upon what you have read and heard will also be required if you are to get the most out of this class and the material that will engage us.

Your progress in this class will be assessed in several ways. There will be two exams—one midterm and the other at the end of the semester. Each exam will determine 33% of your final grade. These will be essay exams. The material for these exams will be drawn from the assigned readings, from lectures, and from videos that we will watch in class. The midterm exam will be a take-home exam. The second exam will take place during the Final Exam Period.

In addition to these exams, there will be frequent, unannounced quizzes. These quizzes will cumulatively account for 34% of your final grade. These quizzes will not require mastery of the assigned readings, but will expect a familiarity that can only be gained from a close and patient reading of the texts.

No late work will be accepted. Nor will there be an opportunity for extra credit.

NOTE

MTU complies with all federal and state laws and regulations regarding discrimination, including the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). If you have a disability and need a reasonable accommodation for equal access to education or services at MTU, please call Dr. Gloria Melton, Associate Dean of Students, 487-2212. For other concerns about discrimination, you may contact your advisor, department chair, or the Affirmative Action Office (487-3310).

PROPOSED READING SCHEDULE

Week One:
1. January 15: Introduction
2. January 17: Plato—An Introduction

Week Two:
1. January 22: Plato—Republic, 327-354c
2. January 24: Plato—Republic, 368c-376c, 414b-417b

Week Three:
2. January 31: Plato—Republic, 484-511e

Week Four:
1. February 5: Plato—Republic, 514-521b (514-541b)
2. February 7: Winter Carnival
Week Five:
1. February 12: Aristotle—Nicomachean Ethics, 1094a-1096a10, 1097a15-1103a10
2. February 14: Aristotle—Nicomachean Ethics, 1103a10-1108b35, 1109b30-1115a5

Week Six:
1. February 19: Aristotle—Nicomachean Ethics, 1129a-1130a15, 1131a10-1143b15
2. February 21: Aristotle—Nicomachean Ethics, 1176a30-1181b25

Week Seven:
1. February 26: The Fracturing of the Sphere of Culture
2. February 28: The Transition from the Pre-modern to the Modern (Take-Home Exam Due)

Week Eight:
1. Spring Break
2. Spring Break

Week Nine:
2. March 14: Kant—What is Enlightenment?

Week Ten:
1. March 19: Marx—The Communist Manifesto, Sections I-II
2. March 21: Marx—The Communist Manifesto, Sections III-IV

Week Eleven:
1. March 26: Nietzsche—The Gay Science, pp. 32-38, 73-90, 92-98, 100-103

Week Twelve:
1. April 2: Nietzsche—The Gay Science, pp. 167-188, 190-192, 194-198

Week Thirteen:
2. April 11: Irigaray—Between East and West, pp. vii-xiv, 1-19,

Week Fourteen:
1. April 16: Irigaray—Between East and West, pp. 49-71
2. April 18: Irigaray—Between East and West, pp. 73-91

Week Fifteen:
1. April 23: Irigaray—Between East and West, pp. 93-119
2. April 25: Irigaray—Between East and West, pp. 121-145

Week Sixteen:
1. April 30: Review
2. May 2: No Class

Week Seventeen:
1. Final Exam