HU2700 – Introduction to Philosophy

Instructor: Professor Michael Bowler  
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Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 3:30 – 4:30 and by appointment

Course Description:

This course will be a broad introduction to philosophical issues. We will examine some of the more important issues in Philosophy including: Should one be moral or not, or what is the good life? If one should be moral what is it to be moral? Is democracy the most just form of government? Does science really give us knowledge of the world around us, or with regard to knowledge does science hold a privileged position? Does God exist? and is the existence of God compatible with the fact that there is evil in the world? We will be reading selections from both the great philosophers of the tradition and also contemporary authors to give us a feel for the issues at stake. In addition, we will have discussions about more concrete issues that will hopefully allow us to apply the theories we have learned. Hopefully this will give you a broad overview of philosophical issues and also allow you to learn what some of the great philosophers in the western philosophical tradition have had to say about important philosophical topics.

Course Objectives:

By the end of the course students will have a working knowledge of many of the key issues of philosophical concern, an acquaintance with the views of both contemporary and historical philosophers on such topics, and an ability to think philosophically about those themes both abstractly and as they relate to their contemporary, concrete versions.

Required Texts:

All readings are online at: [http://www.hu.mtu.edu/~mjbowler/HU2700_spring_06.html](http://www.hu.mtu.edu/~mjbowler/HU2700_spring_06.html)

Username: student  
Password: student

Course Requirements:

Class participation is a must and will be facilitated by class presentations/debates throughout the semester. For these presentations you will work in a group and present before the class. There will also be a midterm and a final exam. In addition, there will be regular quizzes on the readings, usually on the Tuesday of a given week. Thus, it is imperative that you do the required readings before coming to class on Tuesday. Finally, you will be graded on participation, which is a must, and attendance. Excessive absences will be guaranteed to negatively affect your grade. Promptness is expected as a general rule. If you are consistently late to class your grade will be negatively affected. No make-up exams will be given or late papers accepted except for documented officially excused absences (e.g., documented illness, documented athletic participation, etc.)
Grading:

The breakdown for grading purposes is as follows:

Class participation/attendance: 5%
Quizzes: 10%
Class presentation/debate: 30%
Midterm: 25%
Final: 30%

Academic Honesty:

Students are absolutely required to adhere to the Academic Integrity Policy of Michigan Tech, copies of which are available at student affairs. Any violation of this policy will be forwarded to the dean of students. Plagiarism, especially from the Web, is of particular concern. Anything you copy directly or paraphrase from another source, whether that source be electronic, paper, or flesh and blood, that source must be cited. If you have any questions or doubts in a particular case I would be more than happy to discuss that case with you and to clarify what counts as a violation of academic integrity.
Course Itinerary:

January
10th  Introduction/Syllabus
12th  What is philosophy? Plato's *Apology*
17th  Are ethical principles relative?
19th  Should one be moral? Plato's *Republic* (1st selection)
24th  **First class presentation.** Just doing business: “The Donald” or Ben and Jerry? Should unethical businesses be hired or fired?
30th  **First class debate,** The ethics of business

February
2nd   Kant. *The Metaphysics of Morals* / R.M. Hare
9th   Mill, *Utilitarianism*
14th  Winter Carnival Recess
16th  **Second class presentation,** Let ’em fry or let ’em stew? Is capital punishment ever justified?
21st  **Second class debate,** The ethics of capital punishment
23rd  What is the best form of government? Plato, *Republic*
28th  **Third class presentation,** “Puff”: Magic dragon or fugitive reptile? Should drugs be legalized?

March
2nd   **Third class debate,** The ethics of drug legalization.
7th   Spring Break
9th   Spring Break
14th  Midterm review
16th  Midterm
21st  What is the nature of science? Smart, “Physics and Reality”
23rd  Kuhn, “Scientific Revolutions”
28th  **Fourth class presentation,** Science: Myth-maker or fact-finder? What does science give us?

April
4th   Does God exist?, Anselm/Paley
6th   Aquinas/Copleston
11th  Hume, the problem of evil
      Pascal’s Wager
13th  **Fifth class presentation,** Pascal’s wager: A good bet or problem gambling?
18th  **Fifth class debate,** Pascal’s wager: A good bet or problem gambling?
20th  Final review

Final Exam: Tuesday, April 25th from 3:00 – 5:00 PM