HU2700 – Introduction to Philosophy

Instructor: Professor Michael Bowler
Office: Walker 323
Phone: 487 - 2447
Email: mjbowler@mtu.edu

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 – go to online syllabi and then go to HU2700 – Introduction to Philosophy

Username: student
Password: student

Course Prerequisites: None

Course Requirements:

There will be class presentations/debates throughout the semester. For these presentations you will work in a group and present before the class. There will two exams, one mid-semester and one at the end of the semester. They first exam will cover material from the beginning of class up until the exam and the second exam will cover material from after the first exam to the end of the semester. In addition, there
will be regular quizzes on the readings, usually on the Tuesday of a given week. Quizzes will cover the reading for the entire 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. If you are consistently late to class your grade will be negatively affected. No make-up exams or quizzes will be given 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: 15%
Class presentation/debate: 30%
Two exams: 25% each for a total of 50%

Grading System:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Grade points/credit</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93% &amp; above</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AB</td>
<td>88% - 92%</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>Very good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>82% - 86%</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BC</td>
<td>76% - 81%</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>Above average</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>70% - 75%</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>Average</td>
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<tr>
<td>CD</td>
<td>65% - 69%</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>Below average</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>60% - 64%</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>Inferior</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>59% and below</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>Failure</td>
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<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Incomplete; given only when a student is unable to complete a segment of the course because of circumstances beyond the student's control. A grade of incomplete may be given only when approved in writing by the department chair or school dean.</td>
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<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>Conditional, with no grade points per credit; given only when the student is at fault in failing to complete a minor segment of a course, but in the judgment of the instructor does not need to repeat the course. It must be made up within the next semester in residence or the grade becomes a failure (F). A (X) grade is computed into the grade point average as a (F) grade.</td>
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Course Policies:

Please be courteous and respectful to everyone within the classroom. This includes, but is not limited to:
Turning off all electronic devices before coming to class (which includes: Cell phones, blackberries, PDAs, computers, etc.), not talking with others during class, not reading newspapers or other materials during class, not eating during class, etc., etc. Come to class ready to participate and pay attention and remember that your fellow students are trying to do the same.

Plagiarism:

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.

University Policies:

Academic regulations and procedures are governed by University policy. Academic dishonesty cases will be handled in accordance the University's policies.

If you have a disability that could affect your performance in this class or that requires an accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act, please see me as soon as possible so that we can make appropriate arrangements. The Affirmative Action Office has asked that you be made aware of the following:

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

Academic Integrity: http://www.studentaffairs.mtu.edu/dean/judicial/policies/academic_integrity.html

Affirmative Action: http://www.admin.mtu.edu/aaao/

Disability Services: http://www.admin.mtu.edu/urel/studenthandbook/student_services.html#disability
Course Itinerary:

September
2nd  Introductions/Syllabus
4th   Are ethical principles relative?
9th   Should one be moral? Plato's *Republic* (1st selection)
11th  Should one be moral? Plato's *Republic* (continued)
16th  **First class presentation**, Just doing business: "The Donald" or Ben and Jerry? Should unethical businesses be hired or fired?
18th  **First class debate**, The ethics of business
23rd  Mill, *Utilitarianism*
25th  Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals* / R.M. Hare
30th  What is it to be moral? Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*

October
2nd   **Second class presentation**, Let 'em fry or let 'em stew?
    Is capital punishment ever justified?
7th   **Second class debate**, The ethics of capital punishment
9th   What is the best form of government? Plato, *Republic*
14th  Dewey, *Democracy/Mill, On Liberty*
16th  **First Exam**
21st  **Third class presentation**, “Puff”: Magic dragon or fugitive reptile?
    Should drugs be legalized?
23rd  **Third class debate**, The ethics of drug legalization.
28th  What is the nature of science? Smart, "Physics and Reality"
    Popper, “Philosophy of Science: A personal report”
30th  Kuhn, “Scientific Revolutions”

November
4th   Finish Smart, Popper and Kuhn
6th   **Fourth class presentation**, Science: Myth-maker or fact-finder?
    What does science give us?
11th  **Fourth class debate**, The nature of science and its role in society.
13th  Does God exist? Ontological argument (Anselm), begin teleological argument (Paley)
18th  Finish teleological argument (Paley), begin cosmological argument (Aquinas)
20th  Finish cosmological argument (Aquinas)
27th  Thanksgiving break
29th  Thanksgiving break

December
4th   **Fifth class presentation**, Pascal’s wager: A good bet or problem gambling?
9th   **Fifth class debate**, Pascal’s wager: A good bet or problem gambling?
11th  **Second Exam**