Introduction to Philosophy
HU 2700

Instructor
Tom Vosecky
Office, 141 Walker
Office Hours, 11-12 MWF
(and by appt.)
Office Phone, 487-3272
E-mail: tevoseck@mtu.edu

Fall 2009
Fisher 127 (15-0127)
Section 01, 0305-0355

Cell phones, Blackberries, iPods, or PDAs are not to be used in the classroom.
Turn them off.

“Philosophy aims at the logical clarification of thoughts... Without philosophy thoughts are, as it were, cloudy and
indistinct: its task is to make them clear and give them sharp boundaries”
Bourdieu, Outline pg. 30, citing Wittgenstein, Tractatus Logico-philosophicus, 2nd ed., London: Routledge and
Kegan Paul, 1971 Pg. 49

Required Texts and Materials
• Palmer, Donald
  Looking at Philosophy: The Unbearable Heaviness of Philosophy Made Lighter
  (Fifth Edition, 2009)
• Photocopying or printing of various assignments, handouts.

Now an introduction to [philosophy] does not take place by reading [philosophical] literature and noting what is established
therein... Rather, concrete work on the matters themselves must be the way to gain an understanding of [philosophy]... Our
lectures do not intend to train you to be [philosophers]; on the contrary, the authentic task of a course in philosophy at a
university is to lead you to a scientific questioning within your own respective fields. Only in this way is the question of
science and life brought to a decision, namely by first learning the movement of scientific work and, thereby, the true inner
sense of scientific existence.
Adapted from Heidegger, Plato’s Sophist, reconstructed lectures given in 1924-5, pg. 6-7

Purpose
The general purpose of this course is to provide you with an introduction to the history, theory and use of philosophy in
written and oral forms.
• Philosophy’s history in the west is generally said to span more than 2500 years, originating with the ancient
  Greeks. We will look at—and question—that history as a starting point for our discussions.
• Through the years, various authors have offered explanations of what philosophy “is,” and how it “works.”

More specifically, by the end of the semester you will be:
• Familiar with the history of philosophy
• Able to identify some of its central theories
• Aware of philosophy’s influence in other fields
• Able to recognize philosophy’s value in everyday life

Course Requirements
You are expected to actively read all the assigned material prior to class. Active reading means responding to the text by
making marginal notes of questions or reactions, underlining passages you find important, and so on. You will bring your
copy of the reading to class.
In addition to actively reading the material, you will write questions or observations about the material and bring them to
class. This does not require mastery of the material, instead it is intended to promote class discussion. These will be turned
in at the end of class, and count toward your participation grade.

All human beings by nature desire to know. — Aristotle
Course Design
The semester be divided into five parts. For each part you will be required to write one or more documents aimed at appropriate audiences. You will be given a detailed assignment sheet for each project, but here is a summary of what to expect:

I. Early History
For the first four weeks, we will investigate some of the early themes in philosophy. Beginning with the Greeks, we will follow the changes in how philosophy was understood and used in various areas.
Pages 1-109  (August 31st—September 25th)

II. Middle Years
During these three weeks, we will continue our investigation of philosophy in the middle ages.
Pages 109-234  (~September 28th—October 16th)

III. Modern Philosophy
For the next five weeks, we will explore how philosophy is seen and used in more recent times. We will also look at some methods of argumentation. Pages 235-415  (~October 19th—November 20th)

IV. Philosophy in Action
For the final two weeks you will apply what you have learned by developing a philosophical argument of your choice, using one of the methods covered in class. You will also present your work orally during the last week of class.  (~November 30th—December 11th)

Grading
Grades will also be based on three areas:

- Two quizzes (approx weeks 5 and 10): 30%
- Two papers (approx. weeks 7 and 14): 50%
- Participation (all semester): 20%

Participation means attending class prepared to be involved in an active discussion of the readings. To help with this, you will write out questions/observations before each class. You will turn these in at the end of class.

Late Assignments will not be accepted without prior approval.

Attendance Evaluation
In addition to the above assignments, you will be evaluated on your performance as a member of the class. The expectation here is that you will participate in class discussions, attend class regularly and participate fully in group projects. However, if you are sick or have a previously arranged commitment let me know in writing (email). In the case of a previously planned commitment, just give me a short memo explaining the conflict in advance. Consistent lack of attendance can result in the loss of a letter grade over the semester.

Course Policy on Academic Integrity
Plagiarism and cheating are serious academic offenses. Plagiarism can be defined as “knowingly copying another’s work or ideas and calling them one’s own or not giving proper credit or citation,” and the policy covers copying sections or entire papers from printed or electronic sources as well as handing in papers written by students for other classes or purchasing academic papers. Plagiarism and cheating are not only dishonest but they cheat you out of learning. If you ever have any questions about this issue, or about how to cite someone else’s work properly, please talk with me or consult a coach in the Writing Center.

University Policy on Academic Integrity, Discrimination and Harassment
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.
Academic Integrity: http://www.studentaffairs.mtu.edu/dean/judicial/policies/academic_integrity.html
Affirmative Action: http://www.admin.mtu.edu/aao/
Disability Services: http://www.admin.mtu.edu/urel/studenthandbook/student_services.html#disability

CAVEAT:
There will possibly be modifications to this syllabus as the semester progresses.