HU2700 – Introduction to Philosophy

Instructor: Professor Michael Bowler
Phone: 487 - 2447
Office: Walker 319B
Email: mjbowler@mtu.edu

Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 1:00 – 2:00

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 can be found online at the course blackboard page: http://www.courses.mtu.edu/

Course Prerequisites: None.

Course Requirements:

There will be two exams throughout the semester. Each will cover approximately one-half of the material for the class. The exams will consist of essay questions and will be an hour and fifteen minutes in length. On a regular basis I will give short quizzes at the beginning of class to determine whether or not you are doing the assigned reading. If you have done the reading you should have no problems doing fine on the quizzes. Finally, you will be graded on participation, i.e., asking questions which generate class discussion and participation in those discussions, 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 except in cases of officially excused absences with the prior approval of the instructor at least a week before the exam or for documented illnesses.
Grading:

The breakdown for grading purposes is as follows:

Exams: 35% a piece for a total of 70%
Quizzes: 20%
Class participation and attendance: 10%

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% – 87%</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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>70% – 75%</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>Average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CD</td>
<td>65% – 69%</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>Below average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>60% – 64%</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>Inferior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>59% and below</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>Failure</td>
</tr>
<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 is 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/aa/ 

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

January
10th  Introductions/Syllabus

Ethics – What should one do and how should one live?
12th  Are ethical principles relative?
17th  Should one be moral?
19th  Ethical Egoism
24th  Utilitarianism
26th  Kantian/Deontological Ethics
31st  Aristotelian/Virtue Ethics

Political Philosophy – What is the foundation of the state?
February
2nd   Plato's Republic
7th   Plato's Republic (continued)
9th   Winter Carnival
14th  Social Contract Theory of Government
16th  Social Contract Theory of Government (continued)
21st  In defense of the welfare state
23rd  Libertarianism
28th  Review for first exam

March
1st   First Exam
6th   Spring Break
8th   Spring Break

Philosophy of Science – What is the nature of scientific knowledge?
13th  The Deductive-Nomological Model of Science
15th  Science and Reality
20th  Science as falsification
22nd  The sociological view of science.

Philosophy of Religion – Does God exist?
April
27th  The Ontological Argument for God's existence
29th  The Teleological Argument for God's existence
3rd   The Cosmological Argument for God's existence
5th   The Cosmological Argument (continued)
10th  The argument from evil.
12th  Pascal's Wager
17th  Review for second exam
19th  Second Exam