**Humanities Department**

Course Syllabus

Spring 2014

**HU 2700: Introduction to Philosophy**

Instructor: Dr. Alexandra Morrison  
Office: Walker 340  
Office Telephone: 487-2612  
E-mail: lamorris@mtu.edu  
Office Hours: MW 1:00-2:30  
Class Location: Minerals and Materials Engineering Building U115  
Class Times: MWF 8:05-8:55am

**Course Description**

In this course you will be introduced to basic philosophical problems through some of the most influential works in the history of philosophy. Beginning with Sophocles' play Antigone we will consider the origins of philosophy and the sorts of questions that animate philosophical discourse. Shifting our attention to one of the first great works in philosophy, we will, through a careful investigation of Plato's *Republic*, address the questions of social justice, the nature of personal identity, and the role of philosophy in personal and social life. At the core of Plato's philosophy is the idea that education is crucial to human flourishing and that this education must involve a radical questioning of one's prejudices, received opinions, comforting beliefs in order to pursue truth in its own terms. Plato thus thinks that, far from being a matter of simply learning facts or information, real education must involve a *peripatetic* (a conversion, or a turning-around, a reorientation). For Plato this "turning-around" is a kind of self-transformation. Subsequent philosophers whose work we will also encounter in this course understand this "turning-around" in different ways: for Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592) the philosophica. life involves constant critical self-examination; for Rene Descartes (1596-1650), philosophy involves a turning-inward to find the foundations of all knowledge in one's own mind, rather than in the data of sensation; for Karl Marx the self is to be understood as a social being whose full development requires a more radical kind of turning-around—a revolutionary transformation of society and its institutions. We will focus on the question of self-transformation and revolution as we move from the ancient to the modern world seeing how different philosophers, in different contexts, address the basic problems of education, truth, morality, and social life. We will also discuss the ways in which these texts continue to challenge our assumptions about ourselves, about human flourishing or happiness. Finally, this course will provide a preliminary orientation into the nature of philosophical argumentation and the ways in which arguments should be analyzed.
Course Goals

Students should develop their capacities to read unfamiliar texts, analyze and synthesize arguments and articulate them clearly in writing and in conversation. These are the foundational skills that students must acquire to become critical thinkers. But “critical thinkers” are also actively engaged ethical citizens and this requires that students begin developing the self-reflection necessary for a rich personal and social life. This kind of self-reflection is also one of the central concerns of several of the philosophers we will be reading.

The course materials and assignments aim to help students fulfill the University Student Learning Goal 4: Creative and Critical Thinking -
http://www.mtu.edu/assessment/program/university-learning-goals/Goal%204
d.xml

Course Requirements: It is imperative that students keep up with the schedule of readings so they are able to follow the lectures and participate in class discussions. Learning requires that students actively engage with the material. Readings must be completed before class. Students who are more than five minutes late will be marked absent. Students must bring the reading materials to class. Failing to do so will affect your participation grade (0.5 point will be deducted per class if you show up without hard copies of your reading material). If you are physically absent from class, it is your responsibility to get notes from your classmates or make an appointment to talk with the professor. If you miss a class and come to meet the professor you must read the material before that meeting.

Required Course Texts (available at the bookstore):


** All additional reading materials necessary for the class will be made available by the professor either in hard copy or posted on CANVAS.

WEEK 1
Wed. Sept. 3 – Introduction – What is Philosophy?
Fri. Sept. 5 – Sophocles’ Antigone Scenes 1-4 pp. 3-39
WEEK 2
Mon. Sept. 8 – Sophocles’ Antigone Scenes 5-8 pp. 39-63
Wed. Sept. 10 – Secondary Source (posted on Canvas Modules)
Fri. Sept. 12 – Plato, Republic, Book 1 (lines 327a-344c)

WEEK 3
Mon. Sept. 15 – Plato, Republic Book 2
Wed. Sept. 17 – Plato, Republic Book 3 (386-403c)
Fri. Sept. 19 – On-line Tutorial Discussion #1 (during class time on line)

WEEK 4
Mon. Sept. 22 – Plato Republic Book 3 (403c-417b)
Wed. Sept. 24 – Plato Republic Books 4 and 5
Fri. Sept. 26 – 

WEEK 5
Mon. Sept. 29 – Plato, Republic Book 6 & 7
Wed. Oct. 1 – Plato, Republic Book 8
Fri. Oct. 3 – On-line Tutorial Discussion #2

WEEK 6
Mon. Oct. 6 - Plato, Republic Book 9
Wed. Oct. 8 – Plato, Republic Book 10
Fri. Oct. 10 – Secondary Source on Plato (posted on Canvas Modules)

WEEK 7
Wed. Oct. 15 – Montaigne, Selected Essays, Book 1 ch.1, ch. 20
Fri. Oct. 17 – On-line Tutorial Discussion #3

WEEK 8
Mon. Oct. 20 – Montaigne, Selected Essays, Book 1 ch. 26, ch. 31
Wed. Oct. 22 – Philosophy and Death Film: The Seventh Seal
Fri. Oct. 24 – Film: The Seventh Seal

WEEK 9
Mon. Oct. 27 – Montaigne, Selected Essays. Book II, ch. 11, ch. 17
Fri. Oct. 31 – Secondary Source (posted on Canvas Modules)
WEEK 10
Mon. Nov. 3 – Descartes, Meditations on First Philosophy, Med. 1
Wed. Nov. 5 – Descartes, Meditations on First Philosophy, Med. 2
Fri. Nov. 7 – On-line Tutorial Discussion #4

WEEK 11
Mon. Nov. 10 -- Descartes, Meditations on First Philosophy, Med. 3-5
Wed. Nov. 12 -- Descartes, Meditations on First Philosophy, Med. 6
Fri. Nov. 14 – Secondary Source (posted on Canvas Modules)

WEEK 12
Mon. Nov. 17 - Marx, The German Ideology
Fri. Nov. 21 – Marx & Engels, Communist Manifesto, pp. 157-186

WEEK 13- THANKSGIVING BREAK
Mon. Nov. 24, Wed. Nov. 26, Fri. Nov. 28

WEEK 14
Mon. Dec. 1 – Marx & Engels, Communist Manifesto, pp. 157-186
Wed. Dec. 3 – Secondary Source
Fri. Dec. 5 – On-line Tutorial Discussion #5

WEEK 15
Mon. Dec. 8 – reading in contemporary philosophy TBA
Wed. Dec. 10 – reading in contemporary philosophy TBA
Fri. Dec. 12 –

Grading Scheme
Attendance - 5%
Argument Evaluations - (4 Evaluations x 5 points each) – 20%
On-line Tutorial Discussions (5 Discussions x 2 points each) - 10%
On-line Reading Quizzes (5 Quizzes x 4 points each) – 20%
Test - 20%
Final Exam - 25%
Assignments: Details will be posted on our course site on CANVAS. Assignments will also be electronically submitted on this same site.

Reading quizzes: It is critical that you keep up with the readings and this is especially true in a philosophy class. As an extra incentive for students to read (and read carefully) there will be reading quizzes that must be completed online before the class for which the reading is assigned. You will have 48 hours to complete the quiz and you will be able to re-write the quiz keeping your highest grade.

Class participation/tutorial discussion: Students in this course are strongly encouraged to come to each class prepared to ask questions about the readings. Your active participation in these discussions will count toward your final grade in the course. Student comportment during class and tutorial discussions must be mature and

Late Assignment Policy: Late assignments will be reduced a fraction of a grade (e.g. from B to B-) for each week, or part thereof, up to two full grades (e.g. from B to D). All late papers will be graded without comments.

Course Policies

Academic Integrity is essential to a student’s education. Plagiarism, Cheating, Fabrication and Facilitating Academic Dishonesty are offences that will not be tolerated. Plagiarism—loosely defined as the presentation of the work of another author as if it were your own—will not be tolerated. If you are unclear about how to cite your sources properly, you are urged to discuss the matter with your professor before submitting an assignment. Academic regulations and procedures are governed by University policy. Academic dishonesty cases will be handled in accordance with the University policy. See http://www.mtu.edu/dean/conduct/policy/academic-integrity/. If you have questions about plagiarism that are not resolved after reading the policy, ask me for help.

Class Attendance is mandatory. Three excused or unexcused absences are permitted; it is your responsibility to notify the instructor if you cannot be in class. More than three unexcused absences can result in a lowering of the final course grade, and additional unexcused absences may result in a grade of F being recorded for the entire course. See http://www.mtu.edu/dean/conduct/policy/attendance/ for more information.

Late Policy: All papers and assignments must be submitted on the Course Canvas site within the specified time. Papers submitted as email attachments will not be graded except in cases where prior arrangements have been made. Late papers will be reduced 10% of the assignment grade for each week, or part thereof, of lateness, up to 30%. Late assignments will be graded without written comments. Students are always welcome to discuss their work with the professor during office hours or at another scheduled time.

Disabilities

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

Disability Services: http://www.admin.mtu.edu/urcl/studenthandbook/student_services.html#disability


Assessment: Please note that student work products (exams, essays, projects, etc.) may be used for purposes of university, program, or course assessment. All work used for assessment purposes will not include any individual student identification.