

Basic Problems in Philosophy: The Good Life Spring 2019

Description

This introductory course offers a wide-ranging exploration of basic philosophical problems including the problem of truth, knowledge, the good, beauty, and justice, among others, all under the overarching theme of “the good life.” The goal of this course is not simply to cover certain textual material, but to engage in a critical reflection on questions that have a significant importance to human life. To that end, we will critically examine works by important figures of the history of philosophy from antiquity to the present.

Required Texts (available at the bookstore)

- W. E. B. DuBois. *The Souls of Black Folk*. Dover, 1994. ISBN: 978-0-486-28041-7
- Plato. *The Symposium*. Translated by Christopher Gill. London: Penguin Classics, 1999. ISBN: 978-0-140-44927-3
- Sor Juana Inés. *Poems, Protest, and a Dream: Selected Writings*. Translated by Margaret Sayers Peden. Penguin Classics, 1997. ISBN: 978-014044703
- John Stuart Mill. *Utilitarianism*. Translated by George Sher. Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 2001. ISBN: 978-0-87220-606-9

Other Texts (available online through Canvas)

- Aristotle: *Nicomachean Ethics*
- Confucius: *Analects*
- Descartes: *Discourse on the Method*
- John Dewey: “Existence as Precarious and as Stable” and “Experience, Nature, and Art”
- William James: “Attention,” “The Will to Believe,” and “On a Certain Blindness in

Human Beings”

- Martha C. Nussbaum: “Patriotism & Cosmopolitanism”
- Thomas W. Pogge: “Eradicating Systemic Poverty”
- Paul W. Taylor: “The Ethics of Respect for Nature”

Assignments and Grading

- Attendance: 5%
- Participation: 15%
- Short paper #1: 15%
- Short paper #2: 20%
- Final paper abstract: 10%
- Final paper presentation: 10%
- Final paper: 25%

Attendance: Students should arrive on time and bring a hard or electronic copy of the texts under discussion to each session. Attendance at all class meetings is required unless absence is justified.

Participation: Students should prepare for all class sessions by attentively reading the assigned material. There are two ways by which the participation requirement can be met. Other procedures suggested by the students might be considered upon consultation with the instructor:

- *Active participation in class:* It includes asking questions, making comments, engaging in conversation with other students, highlighting interesting aspects of the texts, or pointing at difficulties in their interpretations, among others. Classroom discussion should be respectful to everyone and relevant to the topic under discussion.
- *Active participation beyond class:* Those students who, during the week, have barely participated or have not participated at all are required to send a brief comment (between 150 and 200 words) about the readings of that week. This can be a summary, an analysis, or a discussion of the whole text or of a specific section. These comments need to be sent by email on Friday of that week. It is responsibility of the student to determine whether participation beyond class is needed.

Papers: Students are required to submit two short papers and one final, longer, paper throughout the semester. Each of these papers must be submitted through Canvas (as a Word or PDF document) the day are due. They must include a clear and explicit title, the student's name, course number, date, and page numbers. Please use a standard 12-points serif font, 1 inch margins, and double space between lines. No late papers will be accepted unless the student has made a previous arrangement with the instructor.

The instructor will not review full drafts of papers but student are allowed and encouraged to discuss the content, direction, purpose, or thesis of each of these papers during office hours.

- *Short paper 1:* Students must submit a 5 pages *expository* paper discussing at least two authors among those covered during the previous weeks.
- *Short paper 2:* Students must submit a 5 pages *argumentative* paper discussing at least two *new* authors among those covered during the previous weeks. This paper must contain a clear thesis statement and offer a properly developed argument in its support.
- *Final paper:* Students must submit a 8 to 10 pages *argumentative* paper discussing at least two *new* authors among those covered during the course. This paper must contain a clear thesis statement and offer a properly developed argument in its support. Additionally, students must identify and include the name of at least three venues in which this paper could be presented or published (although it is not required that the paper is actually presented or published), for example, undergraduate conferences, workshops, undergraduate journals, newspapers, magazines, or blogs, among others.

Abstract and presentation: In preparation for the final paper, students must submit a 150 to 200 words abstract (through Canvas as a text entry) explaining its main purpose, central thesis, and basic argument. After receiving feedback from the instructor, students will prepare a final version of this abstract and present it in class in a 5 minutes talk. The rest of the students will have opportunity of providing constructive comments and suggestions.

Course Policies and Important Information for Students

The Honor Code: The Honor Code is in effect throughout the semester. By taking this course, you affirm that it is a violation of the code to plagiarize, to deviate from the teacher's instructions about collaboration on work that is submitted for grades, to give false information to a faculty member, and to undertake any other form of academic misconduct. You affirm that if you witness others violating the code you have a duty to report them to the honor council:

<http://catalog.college.emory.edu/academic/policies-regulations/honor-code.html>

Citation and plagiarism: All texts submitted must be the student's own original work. The student must make sure that all quotations and paraphrased ideas are fully and accurately cited. All cases of plagiarism will be reported to the Honor Council without exception. For proper citation procedures visit:

http://guides.main.library.emory.edu/citing_your_sources

Use of electronic devices: The use of certain electronic devices (such as laptops and tablets, but not phones) is allowed provided they are used responsibly for purposes related to class work and as a way of improving the learning process. All devices must be set on "airplane mode" during class. Random web surfing, checking emails, accessing social media, or playing video games is strictly prohibited.

Academic support and resources: There is a variety of resources available to students. To learn more, visit the following websites and/or consult the instructor:

- Access and Disability Resources:

If you have a documented disability and have anticipated barriers related to the format or requirements of this course, or presume having a disability (e.g. mental health, attention, learning, vision, hearing, physical or systemic), and are in need of accommodations for this semester, please contact the Office of Accessibility Services (OAS) and the instructor.

<http://college.emory.edu/oue/student-support/students-with-disabilities/index.html>

- Counseling and Psychological Services:

Emory University's Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS) provides free, confidential services for students including: initial assessments, crisis intervention, community referrals, brief individual, couples, and group counseling, consultation, community outreach services, and educational workshops.

<http://studenthealth.emory.edu/cs/index.html>

- English as a Second Language (ESL Program):

The ESL Program supports Emory College students who speak English as a second language both directly (through tutoring as well as through academic support resources for non-native speakers) and indirectly (through the collaborative partnerships that the Program has established with other programs throughout the College). *<http://college.emory.edu/oue/student-support/esl-program/index.html>*

- General Support for Students:

The Office for Undergraduate Education offers programs to support student learning. These include mentoring, coaching, and tutoring services for individuals and small groups. *<http://college.emory.edu/oue/student-support/index.html>*

- Writing Support and Peer Tutoring (Emory Writing Center):

Tutors in the Emory Writing Center Program are available to support Emory College students as they work on any type of writing assignment, at any stage of the composing process. Tutors can assist with a range of projects, from traditional papers and presentations to websites and other multimedia projects. Students who are non-native speakers of English are welcome to visit either the Writing Center tutors or the ESL tutors. All other students in the college should see Writing Center tutors. *<http://writingcenter.emory.edu>*

Schedule:

Date	Reading	Notes
Week 1: Jan 15, 17, 18	Confucius: <i>Analects</i> . I, II, IV, VII, XII, XV (32 pp.)	Jan 15: Introduction
W 2: Jan 22, 24, 25	Plato: <i>The Symposium</i> (65 pp.)	
W 3: Jan 29, 31, Feb 1	Plato (cont.) + Aristotle: <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> . Books I, II, III, VI (50 pp.)	
W 4: Feb 5, 7, 8	Aristotle (cont.)	Feb 5: Writing workshop
W 5: Feb 12, 14, 15	Descartes: <i>Discourse on the Method</i> (41 pp.)	Feb 12: Short paper #1 due
W 6: Feb 19, 21, 22	Sor Juana Inés: <i>The Answer</i> (38 pp.)	
W 7: Feb 26, 28, Mar 1	Mill: <i>Utilitarianism</i> (64 pp.)	
W 8: Mar 5, 7, 8	Mill (cont.)	Mar 8: Writing workshop
W 9: Mar 12, 14, 15	---	No classes (Spring break)
W 10: Mar 19, 21, 22	DuBois: <i>The Souls of Black Folk</i> : Forethought, I, II, VI, XI, XIV (50 pp.)	Mar 19: Short paper #2 due
W 11: Mar 26, 28, 29	James: “The Will to Believe,” and “On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings” (43 pp.)	
W 12: Apr 2, 4, 5	Dewey: “Existence as Precarious and as Stable” and “Experience, Nature, and Art” (54 pp.)	
W 13: Apr 9, 11, 12	Dewey (cont.) + Nussbaum: “Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism” (21 pp.)	
W 14: Apr 16, 18, 19	Pogge: “Eradicating Systemic Poverty” (19 pp.) Taylor: “The Ethics of Respect for Nature” (22 pp.)	Apr 16: Abstract due
W 15: Apr 23, 25, 26	---	Students’ presentations
TBD	---	Final paper due