Course Information

Philosophy (PHI) 1301.09 - Introduction to Philosophy
10:50pm — 12:05pm Tuesday & Thursday
Education Complex Building, Room 2.502

Department of Philosophy
University of Texas Rio Grande Valley
Fall 2018

Faculty Information

Dr. Cynthia M. Paccacerqua
Liberal Arts Building South, Room 357 3:00pm — 5:00pm Thursday
cynthia.paccacerqua@utrgv.edu

What You Will Learn

Philosophy is a distinct field of inquiry. In this course we will survey select texts in order to explore the following central philosophical concern: the nature of a person’s relation to self, others, in the context of our membership in civil society, the political state, and the human-natural world for the purpose of achieving justice. This means that we will learn how our basic understanding of what it means to be human affects our justifications for the types of ethical, cultural and political communities we form and the consequences that follow from these. Some distinct types of relationships are revealed in concrete forms: presuppositions about others, pattern of behaviors, cultural habits, language as well as the our institutionalization of knowledge, rights, law, political constitutions, hierarchies of value, distribution of power and treatment of nature as a whole. The diverse impacts of the latter concrete formations will reveal the place of the human being within a complex system of interdependence that forces us to consider the conditions necessary for us to conduct fulfilling lives within a framework of justice.

In order to do this we will acquire an understanding of the intellectual attitude proper to the field of philosophy. With this foundational skill we will then move forward towards the course’s main philosophical concern.

By spending a semester answering these questions, you will acquire the knowledge necessary to think philosophically and systemically, which means you understand these basic facts:
1. Your judgments about human nature and relations reflect your personal values and learned experience
2. Acting on your judgments affects the lives of others
3. There are trade-offs to all life decisions, adjudicating value and creating social hierarchies and life possibilities.

Thinking philosophically and systemically is empowering and can help you become a reflective, independent-minded citizen who makes decisions to increase your wellbeing and that of others. Perhaps when you put all the new knowledge together, realizing positive, life enhancing change requires simultaneous action in both of these spheres, you will be closer to asking and answering: How can I contribute?

I divide the course into the following modules:

**Introduction:** What is Philosophy? Contemporary Perspectives, Guiding Questions & Basic Skills

- **Justice, the Soul, and Universal Truth** - Plato in Ancient Greek Philosophy
- **Justice, the Soul, and Concrete Embodied Truth** - Gloria Anzaldúa’s Borderlands Philosophy
- **Justice, Moral Value, and the Racial Contract** - Charles Mills in Real Contemporary Philosophy

My goal is to teach you more about philosophical inquiry, problems, and contributions of particular thinkers by the end of the semester than you know today. You will be well-versed in the different foundational theories and concepts as well as their relevance to personal experiences or social issues of the day.

**How You Will Learn**

To learn answers to those questions listed above, I recommend that you be an active student while in class and be a prepared student before each class. I expect you to complete the reading assignment prior to class and to arrive prepared to take notes. I encourage you to raise questions and to discuss topics of interest during class. Please keep in mind that note taking during lectures is extremely important to gathering information that I use to assess your knowledge. I assume this course can be conducted in the spirit of full academic freedom but also with civility and courtesy directed toward all. Accordingly, any member of this course may express any serious idea, point
of view, and/or partake in a serious learning environment without extraneous conversation or noise. Your seat in this course is expensive, so please respect others around you and the academic learning environment.

Being an Active Student

An active student in a lecture-based class means that you take notes on a continual basis while in class and be engaged in how I present material and answer various questions. I help in this process of note taking by supplying power point or lecture outlines for module. These lecture outlines are vague, and are meant to be a chronological guide to class sessions. You should be able to walk out of each class knowing what I said about each topic/question on the lecture outline. I expect these outlines to act as the lecture-material study guide for each exam.

Being a Prepared Student

You will be prepared for class if you perform these tasks: (1) read the assigned pages before class, (2) take notes on those readings before class, and (3) review/rewrite your notes after class. By doing these three activities before and after each class, it will make being an active listener and note taker while in class much easier. My expectation is that you will learn the material best if you read it, write about it, hear it, and then study it. A good guideline for your preparation time is three hours of study time for every hour spent in class (in fact, this ratio is the origin of the three credit-hour course). Resulting from this semester-long course, you will be more skillful in listening, note taking, reading, writing, and test taking, which will help you during your college career.

Reading & Other Resource Material on Blackboard

There are two main forms of material.

First, there are required readings I provide on Blackboard. These required readings can consist of book chapters and articles from academic journals, magazines, and newspapers. You are required to bring these readings in hardcopy to class.

Second, there are required videos or films that are either made available for free on Blackboard or in class, or available for rent, purchase, or by subscription through streaming services.

Other Resource Material on Blackboard

I provide ample material on Blackboard to help you succeed in this course. They are organized in folders with descriptive titles - Modules, Required Readings,
Supplemental Materials, Study & Writing Resources. It is your responsibility to become familiar with the materials included and keep up with additions and/or changes within them.

I provide the readings, lecture outlines/power point slides, and guides to key terms for each module. I strongly advise that you print all the readings, lecture outlines/power point slides and key terms guides and bring them to class. These outlines/power point lectures and key terms will help you take notes on important lecture material that will be on the examinations. As I wrote above, the lecture outlines serve as a study guide for all lecture material. I also provide you with practice questions meant for you to understand the nature and difficulty of my examinations. I strongly advise that you understand all the practice questions before each examination. If you want to learn and succeed in this course, then I strongly advise that you familiarize yourself with the lecture outlines, practice questions, and all of the material on Blackboard.

How You & I Understand Your Progress Toward Learning

An understanding of your progress toward learning must involve an assessment showing me what you have learned. I assess your knowledge in this course using multiple-choice and essay examinations. I reserve the right to alter the course schedule, reading assignments, and all policies if necessary. You are responsible for keeping all work I return to you if any disputes should arise. I follow university policy for instances of cheating and/or plagiarism. If more than one student is involved, then all students in the case will be subject to university sanction. I do not curve any grades, but I may offer some extra credit opportunities for those who attend class.

Examinations: Points & Policy

I provide five multiple-choice examinations and five essay examinations for a total of 300 points. All of these examinations will appear on Blackboard well before their respective due dates.

Multiple-Choice/Quiz Examinations

The first multiple-choice examination is worth 10 points; the other four multiple-choice are worth 20 points each for a grand total of 90 points for the semester. You must take all the multiple-choice examinations on Blackboard. With the exception of the first, you will only be allowed to take the multiple-choice examinations once. You must complete each multiple-choice examination in one sitting; once you start the multiple-choice examination you must finish it in the time allotted. You will receive a zero for all
questions that you do not answer. You are responsible for finding a secure and stable internet connection to take the multiple-choice examinations. You must complete the multiple-choice examinations by the due dates. If you do not complete the multiple-choice examinations by their respective due dates, then you will receive a zero on those multiple-choice examinations. I will not accept late multiple-choice examination scores under any circumstances. If you ask me to grade a late multiple-choice examination, then you are asking me to break the policy on this syllabus. I reserve the right to decide whether circumstances dictate violating my late-exam policy and how that policy will be violated (e.g., how many points will be deducted). I follow university policy for instances of cheating and/or plagiarism. All other instructions for the multiple-choice examinations will appear on Blackboard.

Essay Examinations

The other five essay examinations are worth 40 points each for a **grand total of 200 points**. The questions for each essay examination will appear on Blackboard. You must upload your typed answers to the appropriate folder on Blackboard by the due date. All other instructions for the essay examinations will appear with the questions on Blackboard. I do not grade essays completed after the due date. If you ask me to grade a late essay, then you are asking me to break the policy on this syllabus. I reserve the right to decide whether circumstances dictate violating my late-essay policy and how that policy will be violated (e.g., how many points will be deducted). I follow university policy for instances of cheating and/or plagiarism. My grading criteria appears below.

Miscellaneous/In-Class Pop Assignments

The remaining **10 points** to reach the grand total of 300 points for the entire semester are reserved for ad hoc assignments completed in class that may arise during the semester due to particular course needs or in response to social events worthy of exploration. Since these assignments are tied to in-class engagements and are not announced in advance, here is where your class attendance matters for achieving the highest possible points for the semester. If you are not in class, you simply cannot earn the remaining points. I do not grade accept and grade such assignments after the class meeting. If you ask me to do so, then you are asking me to break the policy on this syllabus. I reserve the right to decide whether circumstances dictate violating missed assignment policy and how that policy will be violated (e.g., how many points will be deducted). I follow university policy for instances of cheating and/or plagiarism. **Please note** that in the case that no such work is assigned, any unassigned points will be automatically counted towards your total points for the entire semester.
My grading criteria:

**A:** An original essay that displays commitment and engagement with the course material. It is clear and concise with ample, detailed evidence from the readings on the syllabus. The essay combines the material uniquely and accurately, which means that the essay separates itself from close to all other student essays. Of course, the essay will meet all of the formal specifications (for example, length, citations, bibliography), will not have any spelling or grammatical mistakes, and will have logical connections between paragraphs. These essays typically receive 40 out of 40 total points, or in some cases of innocuous typos or minor bibliographic formatting issues the essay will receive 39 or 38 out of 40 total points.

**A-:** The essay is similar to an A essay in several respects, but has some minor flaws that detract from its originality. The essay has relatively minor flaws within the formal specifications of the essay, and/or mistakes with spelling and grammar. These essays receive 37 or 36 out of 40 total points.

**B+:** A good essay, but fails short of combining the material in a thorough manner. The essay shows promise, but fails to provide the level of detail and logical connections associated with an A essay. There is nothing inaccurate in the essay. The essay may have a few more flaws than an A- essay within the formal specifications of the essay, and/or mistakes with spelling and grammar. There are logical connections between all paragraphs, and the use of evidence is appropriate but not as detailed as an A- or A essay. These essays receive 35 out of 40 total points.

**B:** A good essay, but may have a few inaccurate statements. The essay may have a few more flaws than a B+ essay within the formal specifications of the essay, and/or mistakes with spelling and grammar. Some of the logical connections may be flawed (or missing), and the use of appropriate evidence may be missing. These essays receive 34 or 33 out of 40 total points.

**B-:** A potentially good essay, but the essay includes inaccurate statements or falls short of the completeness of a B essay. The essay will have more flaws than a B essay within the formal specifications of the essay, and/or mistakes with spelling and grammar. Some of the logical connections may be flawed (or missing), and the use of appropriate evidence may be missing. These essays receive 32 out of 40 total points.

**C+:** The essay has foundational problems in its accuracy and organization, and fails to meet some of the formal specifications. A C+ essay is read with some difficulty. A C+ essay fails to cite many of the readings in the syllabus and fails to answer the questions in full. These essays receive 31 or 30 out of 40 total points.
**C or lower:** There are too many problems to list. To earn below a C, the essay fails to follow the directions and shows a lack of effort. If some minimal effort was expended, then those essays receive 28 or 29 out of 40 total points depending on the type and amount of problems. Essays that show a lack of minimal effort will receive 27 or less out of 40 total points.

**Grading Scale for Points Earned**

A = 270 - 300  B = 240 - 269  C = 210 - 239  D = 180 - 209  F = 000 - 179

**Tentative Examinations Due Dates**

Tuesday, September 25 (1pm) Tuesday, September 25 (1pm)
Tuesday, October 16 (1pm) Tuesday, October 16 (1pm)
Tuesday, November 6 (1pm) Tuesday, November 6 (1pm)
Tuesday, November 27 (1pm) Tuesday, November 27 (1pm)
Thursday, December 13 (5pm) Thursday, December 13 (5pm)

**Administrative Policies Required to Appear on All Syllabi**

**Students with Disabilities**

If you have a documented disability (physical, psychological, learning, or other disability which affects your academic performance) and would like to receive academic accommodations, please inform your instructor and contact Student Accessibility Services to schedule an appointment to initiate services. It is recommended that you schedule an appointment with Student Accessibility Services before classes start. However, accommodations can be provided at any time. Brownsville Campus: Student Accessibility Services is located in Cortez Hall Room 129 and can be contacted by phone at (956) 882-7374 (Voice) or via email at accessibility@utrgv.edu. Edinburg Campus: Student Accessibility Services is located in
108 University Center and can be contacted by phone at (956) 665-7005 (Voice), (956) 665-3840 (Fax), or via email at accessibility@utrgv.edu.

Scholastic Integrity & Academic Honesty

I follow university protocol when confronted with academic dishonesty. If you engage in academically dishonest behavior, as defined in the Student Conduct Code, then you will be subject to a failing grade on the assignment/exam, a failing grade for the course, and referred to the Dean of Students’ office for possible expulsion from the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. Here is the official statement from the university: As members of a community dedicated to Honesty, Integrity and Respect, students are reminded that those who engage in scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and expulsion from the University. Scholastic dishonesty includes but is not limited to: cheating, plagiarism, and collusion; submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person; taking an examination for another person; any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student; or the attempt to commit such acts. Since scholastic dishonesty harms the individual, all students and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced (Board of Regents Rules and Regulations and UTRGV Academic Integrity Guidelines). All scholastic dishonesty incidents will be reported to the Dean of Students.

Sexual Harassment, Discrimination, & Violence

In accordance with UT System regulations, your instructor is a “responsible employee” for reporting purposes under Title IX regulations and so must report any instance, occurring during a student’s time in college, of sexual assault, stalking, dating violence, domestic violence, or sexual harassment about which she/he becomes aware during this course through writing, discussion, or personal disclosure. More information can be found at www.utrgv.edu/equity, including confidential resources available on campus. The faculty and staff of UTRGV actively strive to provide a learning, working, and living environment that promotes personal integrity, civility, and mutual respect in an environment free from sexual misconduct and discrimination.

Email & Use of Technology

Please be advised all email correspondence between students and faculty should be conducted only through the UTRGV email server. You must obtain my permission to make audio recordings of my lectures. You are not allowed to make video recordings of my lectures.
Attendance

Students are expected to attend all scheduled classes. UTRGV’s attendance policy excuses students from attending class if they are participating in officially sponsored university activities, such as athletics; for observance of religious holy days; or for military service. Attendance will not be taken in this course.

Course Drops

According to UTRGV policy, students may drop any class without penalty earning a grade of DR until the official drop date. Following that date, students must be assigned a letter grade and can no longer drop the class. Students considering dropping the class should be aware of the “3-peat rule” and the “6-drop” rule so they can recognize how dropped classes may affect their academic success. The 3-peat rule refers to additional fees charged to students who take the same class for the third time. The 6-drop rule refers to a Texas law dictating that undergraduate students may not drop more than six courses during their undergraduate career. Courses dropped at other Texas public higher education institutions will count toward the six-course drop limit.

Mandatory Course Evaluation Period

Students are required to complete an online evaluation of this course, accessed through your UTRGV account (https://my.utrgv.edu/home); you will be contacted through email with further instructions. Students who complete their evaluations will have priority access to their grades. Online evaluations will be available later in the semester, please check your email.

Administrative Dates

Thursday, August 30: Last day to add a class or register for Fall classes
Friday, August 31: This is the last day to withdraw (drop all classes) for an 80% refund.
Wednesday, September 12: Last day to drop without it appearing on your transcript.
Monday, September 17: This is the last day to withdraw (drop all classes) for a 50% refund. Wednesday, November 14: Last day to drop (DR grade) a class or withdraw (grade of W).