



Texas State University – San Marcos
Philosophy and Critical Thinking
PHIL 1305 / Fall 2011



Dr. Alejandro Bárcenas
Senior Lecturer

Office: Psychology Building 102G

Office hours: MW 11:00am – 12:30pm; MW 2:00pm – 3:00pm

Email: abarcenas@txstate.edu

Course Web Page: latinamericanhistory.net/phil1305.html

1305.16. 9:00 am - 9:50 am MWF, College of Education 03041

1305.17 10:00 am - 10:50 am MWF, Freeman Aquatic Biology 00102

1305.18 5:00 pm – 6:20 pm MW, Derrick Hall 00113

Course Description:

This class is a survey of general philosophical problems with a view toward developing thinking skills and criteria about the meaning and content of knowledge, belief, justice and morality.

Course Objectives:

The objectives of the course are (1) to introduce the student to the nature of philosophy; (2) to explore some of the perennial questions of metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, and political thought; (2) to develop the student's own thinking about the meaning of life and (3) to strengthen the student's skills as a clear thinker.

Core Curriculum Learning Outcomes:

After completion of PHIL 1305, students will be able to demonstrate improvement in their critical and moral thinking skills as well as demonstrate the foundational and synoptic nature of philosophical inquiry.

Honor Code: As members of a community dedicated to learning, inquiry, and creation, the students, faculty, and administration of our university live by the principles of the Texas State University – San Marcos Honor Code. These principles require all members of this community to be conscientious, respectful, and honest. See, <http://www.txstate.edu/effective/upps/upps-07-10-01.html>

Students with Special Needs: We are prepared to accommodate students whose special academic needs have been documented by the Office of Disability Services. Such students should identify themselves at the beginning of the term.

Absence Policy: Students are expected to attend all classes. Students may be excused if they must miss class for reasons such as serious illness and participation in University-sponsored activities. In all cases, the instructor will decide whether an excuse is acceptable. Students should seek prior approval concerning the validity of an excuse. If a student misses an examination but has no valid excuse, the student will receive a failing grade on the examination.

Contact: The preferred methods to contact me are either to see me personally or to email me. Please do not use email unless is strictly necessary.

Course Bibliography:

- John Chaffee. *The Philosopher's Way: Thinking Critically About Profound Ideas*. New York: Pearson, 2010. ISBN-13: 9780205776993.

Grade:

20% Quizzes.

25% (x 2) Midterm Exams.

30% Final Exam.

Course Calendar (Fall 2011)

Week 1 (Aug 24th – Aug 26th)

- 1.1 Why Study Philosophy?
- 1.2 Defining Philosophy
- 1.3 Thinking Philosophically: Becoming a Critical Thinker

Week 2 (Aug 29th – Sept 2nd)

- 1.4 Understanding Arguments
- 1.5 Branches of Philosophy
- 1.6 Russell, from The Value of Philosophy
- 1.7 Making Connections: The Search for a Meaningful Life

Week 3 (Sept 5th – Sept 9th)

- 2.1 Socrates: A Model for Humanity
- 2.2 The Socratic Method
- 2.3 Plato, from The Apology

Week 4 (Sept 12th – Sept 16th)

- 2.4 Plato, from The Apology
- 2.5 Socrates' Legacy

Metaphysics

- 5.1 What Is the Nature of Reality?
- 5.2 Reality Is the Eternal Realm of the Forms: Plato

Week 5 (Sept 19th – Sept 23rd)

- 5.3 Reality Is the Natural World: Aristotle
- 5.4 Can Reality Be Known? Descartes
- 5.5 Your Beliefs About the World

Week 6 (Sept 26th – Sept 30th) 1st Midterm

Theory of Knowledge

- 6.2 All Knowledge Comes from Experience: Locke
- 6.3 Reality Depends on Perception: Berkeley

Week 7 (Oct 3rd – Oct 7th)

- 6.4 Understanding Reality Demands Skepticism: Hume
- 6.5 We Constitute Our World: Kant

Week 8 (Oct 10th – Oct 14th)

- 6.6 Emotions Shape Our Understanding: Jaggar
- 6.7 Developing Informed Beliefs

Ethics

- 8.1 Your Moral Compass
- 8.2 Ethical Relativism

Week 9 (Oct 17th – Oct 21st)

- 8.3 Ethical Absolutism: Some Moral Values Are Universal

- 8.4 Egoism as a Universal Principle

Week 10 (Oct 24th – Oct 28th)

- 8.5 Religion and Universal Values
- 8.6 On Becoming an Ethical Person

- 9.2 Character: Virtue Ethics

Week 11 (Oct 30th – Nov 4th)

- 9.3 Maxims: Duty to Moral Laws

- 9.4 Consequences: Utilitarianism

Week 12 (Nov 7th – Nov 11th)

- 9.5 Authenticity: Existentialist Ethics

- 9.6 Empathy: The Ethics of Care

Week 13 (Nov 14th – Nov 18th) 2nd Midterm

Political Philosophy

- 10.2 Classical Theories of Society: Confucius, Plato, and Aristotle

Week 14 (Nov 21st – Nov 25th)

- 10.3 Justice Depends on a Social Contract: From Hobbes and Locke to Rawls

Week 15 (Nov 28th – Dec 2nd)

- 10.3 Justice Depends on a Social Contract: From Hobbes and Locke to Rawls (continue)

- 10.3 Justice Depends on a Social Contract: From Hobbes and Locke to Rawls

Week 16 (Dec 5th)

- 10.4 Justice Is Based on Need and Ability: Marx and Engels

FINAL EXAM

- 1305.16 Friday Dec 9th 8:00am – 10:30am
- 1305.17 Friday Dec 9th 11:00am – 1:30pm
- 1305.18 Wednesday Dec 7th 5:00pm – 7:30pm

(The course calendar might be subject to revision)

