**SYLLABUS**

**Code:** PHIL 115  
**Title:** Introduction to Philosophy

**Institute:** Business and Social Sciences  
**Department:** History/Philosophy

**Course Description:** Students investigate key issues in philosophy, including the nature of self, knowledge and truth, freedom and determinism, morality, the nature of the universe, the existence of God, death and afterlife, meaning and purpose. Emphasis will be given to clarifying students' own thinking on these issues through reading, reflection, and discussion.

**Prerequisites:** READ 092, READ 095 or passing score in reading on Foundational Studies test.

**Corequisites:**

**Prerequisites or Corequisites:**

**Credits:** 3  
**Lecture Hours:** 3  
**Lab/Studio Hours:**

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**REQUIRED TEXTBOOK/MATERIALS:**

*Philosophy: An Introduction to the Art of Wondering*, by James L. Christian

N.B. For students taking the Distance Education (online) or Honors section, see the course addenda for those sections, obtainable from the Philosophy Department or instructor.

**ADDITIONAL TIME REQUIREMENTS:**

See course section addenda.

**COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES:**

Upon successful completion of this course, as demonstrated through the writing of essay test questions and a summary/analysis report on primary source readings, the student will be able to:

- describe and analyze the basic problems of philosophy in the areas of epistemology, metaphysics and ethics (HU) (E)
- summarize philosophers’ solutions to the problems of philosophy in the areas of epistemology, metaphysics and ethics (HU) (E)
- summarize the arguments of and critically analyze opposing views on a philosophical issue (HU) (E)
- develop and defend their own opinions on basic philosophical issues (HU) (E)

Learning Outcome(s) support the following General Education Knowledge Areas:

- (HU) Humanities
- (E) Ethical Reasoning and Action

What is philosophy? Philosophy is the love of wisdom. It is not about memorizing a lot of facts or accepting a set of revealed truths. Philosophy is the art of learning how to ask meaningful questions and to offer meaningful answers.

This course is an invitation to think, to question, to speculate, to reason, and to wonder.
The only prerequisite for succeeding in this philosophical adventure is the willingness to be intellectually honest. We shall be investigating our most cherished beliefs and commitments, our notions of reality, our concepts of time and space, our ethical standards, our political affiliations, our belief in God. Some of our presumptions will bear the test, but probably others will not. Our task is to investigate them honestly and objectively, without being afraid or feeling threatened by what we may find.

Our success will be reflected by the degree to which we are able to clarify our own thinking and to understand better the thinking of others on these issues.

The philosophical issues discussed in this course include the nature of self, knowledge and truth, freedom and determinism, morality, the nature of the universe, the existence of God, death and afterlife, meaning and purpose. Through the writing of essay test questions and a summary/analysis report on primary source readings, students who pass this course will have demonstrated competency of the following: 1) understanding relevant concepts related to these issues; 2) thinking critically about these issues; and 3) forming their own opinions on these issues.

**Grading Standard:**

N.B. For students taking the Distance Education or Honors section, see the course addenda for those sections.

1) Students will take several in-class tests, the exact number and style at the discretion of the instructor.

2) Students must write a report on any one of the selected sets of primary source readings. This report shall consist of summary and analysis/commentary. A guide for writing this report is available from the instructor or the learning assistant. The grade for this report will count as equal to one test grade.

3) If a student is absent from a class, the student must submit a report summarizing and giving reflections on the topics which were covered in class on the date of the absence. This report, the purpose of which is to demonstrate preparation of these topics, must be submitted before taking the test to which the topics pertain.

The grading standard for this course will be as follows:

100% to 93% = A
92% to 90 = A-
89% to 87% = B+
86% to 83% = B
82% to 80 = B-
79% to 77% = C+
76% to 70% = C
69% to 60% = D
SYLLABUS

below 60% = F

COURSE CONTENT:

N.B. For students taking the Distance Education or Honors section, see the course addenda for those sections

Chapter 1: The Fine Art of Wondering

Section 1-1: The World Riddle

a. Define "philosophy of life."

b. Identify at least five examples from your textbook.

c. Briefly summarize your own philosophy of life.

Section 1-2: The Spirit of Inquiry

a. Describe the beginnings of Western philosophy in the "Greek Miracle."

b. Explain the concepts of faith, reason, doubt, and belief.

Section 1-3: Critical Analysis

a. List and describe the three families of critical skills.

b. Analyze several statements using critical thinking skills.

Section 1-4: Synoptic Synthesis

a. Describe the approach a synoptic philosopher would use in considering a philosophical question.

b. Explain the significance of the synoptic wheel.

c. Describe the risks and rewards of synoptic thinking.

Chapter 2: The Condition and the Odyssey

Section 2-1: Predicament

a. Define the concepts of egocentric predicament, egocentric illusion, and the aristocentric claim theoretically and from the viewpoint of your own personal experience.

b. Give several examples and some possible explanations for aristocentrism (or egocentrism.)

Section 2-2: Self

a. Discuss the philosophical controversy over the meaning of "self" and develop your own thesis about the nature of "self."

Section 2-3: Growth
a. Explain how pain/or change are related to growth and illustrate by citing examples from your own life and/or your observations of others.

b. List several hindrances to the growth of the self.

c. Define "neophobia" and "neophilia" and explain how they might influence an individual's growth, both positively and negatively.

Section 2-4: Lifetime

a. List the basic philosophical questions one confronts at each stage of life.

b. Describe how a person's experience of time is likely to be influenced by the stage of life he/she is at.

Chapter 3: The Real World: Knowing and Unknowing

Section 3-1: Knowledge

a. Describe the process of going from epistemic naivete to epistemic awareness and illustrate with examples from your own experiences.

b. Explain the four basic sources of knowledge and point out possible problems with each of them.

Section 3-2: Senses

a. Define what the philosopher means by the terms "real" and "reality" and distinguish real events from experiential events.

b. Explain how the mind can be said to "manufacture" knowledge from sensory input.

c. Give some reasons for being skeptical about what we know.

d. Discuss the epistemological conclusions of John Locke, George Berkeley and David Hume.

Section 3-3: Mind

a. Describe how the mind proves to be a versatile creative instrument by explaining its basic function of abstraction and classification.

b. Discuss the basis for developing a system of classification.

c. Give examples which demonstrate how the mind's ability to use abstraction and/or classification can either be helpful or harmful.

Section 3-4: Truth

a. Explain the three truth tests and cite problems associated with each one.

b. Discuss the idea of pragmatism.

Chapter 4: The Inner World: The Fantastic Journey
Section 4-1: Psyche

a. Explain the differences in Eastern and Western views of various mind-states or modes of consciousness.

b. Explain the Buddhist path to enlightenment or awakening and try to determine what level you have achieved.

Section 4-2: Time

a. Explain what is meant by three different kinds of time: clock time, psychological time, and real time.

b. Explain how our understanding of past, present, and future would be challenged if we had indisputable proof that precognition exists.

c. Explain the existentialist’s view that “Existence precedes essence,” and show how it is related to time and consciousness.

Section 4-3: Freedom

a. Distinguish the primal and secondary limitations to human freedom.

b. Summarize the arguments on each side of the freedom/determinism question and relate your own views on the subject.

Section 4-4: Symbols

a. List and describe at least five functions of language.

b. Explain: "We don't want others to hear our symbols; we want them to hear our experience," and "Success in communication depends not upon the speaker, but upon the hearer."

c. Distinguish between Western and Eastern uses of language and ways of responding to meaning-events.

Chapter 5: Delicate Coexistence: The Human Love/Hate Condition

Section 5-1: History

a. Explain the Marxist view of history and describe how it was influenced by Hegel.

b. Discuss Toynbee’s prediction that we are progressing toward a universal state--One World--and cite events from recent history that are consistent with this prediction.

Section 5-2: Laws/Conscience

a. Define the problem of conflict of loyalties, particularly as it applies to individual conscience versus law.

b. Present the major arguments for and against civil disobedience.
c. Develop your own opinion regarding the conditions that might justify breaking the law for the sake of conscience.

Section 5-3: Lifestyles

a. Describe acculturation and the possibility of transcending it.

b. Define cultural relativity and BTF-patterns.

Section 5-4: Politics

a. Discuss the following philosophers views on government: Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Machiavelli, Hobbes and Mill.

b. Summarize the three contemporary world systems: Democracy, Communist, and Islamic-The Caliphate.

Section 5-5: Ethics

a. Distinguish between debatable and nondebatable judgments.

b. Distinguish between authoritarian ethics and autonomous ethics.

c. Explain the criteria for making an ethical decision from the standpoint of the formalists, the relativists, and the contextualists, and give the strengths and weaknesses of each.

d. Discuss the question "To whom (or what) does one's moral obligations apply?" by citing the range of possible answers as well as formulating your own view.

Chapter 6: The Protoplasmic Venture

Section 6-1: Life

a. Describe the theory of evolution and determine whether evolution is teleological.

b. Discuss three philosophical problems related to the theory of evolution: 1) irreversibility, 2) convergence, and 3) competition versus cooperation.

Section 6-2: Humans

a. Explain why it has become increasingly difficult to define "human."

b. Identify the main characteristics of humans which help to distinguish them from other forms of life.

Section 6-3: Earth

a. Explain three different perspectives regarding the relationship between man and nature and support one with personal observation.

b. Describe why some environmentalists have criticized the Western tradition's teachings about nature.
SYLLABUS

Section 6-4: Future

a. Describe several alternative views of the future.

b. Select from the various possible futures the one which you believe is most likely to happen, and explain your choice.

Chapter 7: Microcosm/Macrocosm/Cosmos

Section 7-1: Knowledge of Nature

a. Distinguish between empirical and rational (a priori) knowledge by defining both of them and discussing examples of how each applies to the external world.

b. Discuss theories regarding the relationship between nature and mathematics.

c. Discuss recent theories regarding the dematerialization of matter.

Section 7-2: Space/Time/Motion

a. Discuss the question of what physics is and what it is not.

b. Explain the three systems of physics and the philosophical significances of their differences.

c. Discuss the basis of Einstein's special theory of relativity and describe some of the phenomena it explains.

d. Discuss the various meanings of "force".

e. Discuss the nature of Zeno's paradoxes.

Section 7-3: Cosmos

a. Explain the cosmological theories most widely held today and the philosophical issues raised by them.

Section 7-4: Biocosmos

a. Explain why some astronomers are convinced that extraterrestrial life exists.

b. Discuss the possible philosophic consequences of humans coming into contact with extraterrestrial intelligence.

c. Discuss the "three agonizing decentralizations" and how we have attempted to cope with each of them.

Chapter 8: Of Ultimate Concern

Section 8-1: Of Ultimate Concern

a. Cite several definitions of "religion", identify common features in these definitions, and develop one that best defines religion as you understand it.
b. Discuss the question of whether religion is one or many, including a summary of the views of Huxley.

Section 8-2: Ultimate Reality

a. Analyze the cosmological, ontological and teleological arguments for the existence of God, in each case pointing out its basic assumptions and its inherent logical problems.

b. Discuss the meaning of "The death of God."

Section 8-3: Death/Immortality

a. Discuss and evaluate three different kinds of fear associated with death.

b. Discuss the relationship of death and the meaning of life.

c. Present the strongest rational and empirical arguments for and against a belief in immortality, and explain your own point of view on the subject.

Section 8-4: Meaning/Existence

Develop your personal view regarding the meaning or meaninglessness of human existence.

Department Policies:
Department Policies are in alignment with College Policies.

College Policies:
For information regarding:

- Brookdale’s Academic Integrity Code
- Student Conduct Code
- Student Grade Appeal Process

Please refer to the BCC Student Handbook and BCC Catalog.

Notification for Students with Disabilities:
Brookdale Community College offers reasonable accommodations and/or services to persons with disabilities. Students with disabilities who wish to self-identify must contact the Disabilities Services Office at 732-224-2730 (voice) or 732-842-4211 (TTY) to provide appropriate documentation of the disability, and request specific accommodations or services. If a student qualifies, reasonable accommodations and/or services, which are appropriate for the college level and are recommended in the documentation, can be approved.

Additional Support/Labs:
http://sites.brookdalecc.edu/home/tutors/tutoring-center/