



A M B R O S E

PH 125 Introduction to Philosophy Fall 2011

Time: Wednesday & Friday 2:30 – 3:45

Location: Airhart Theatre

Instructor Information:

Kenneth M. Nickel (MAR, MSc, PhD ABD)

Associate Professor of Philosophy

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Course Description

An introduction to philosophy through discussion of topics such as the criteria and limits of human knowledge, the mind/body problem, free will and determinism, the existence and nature of God, and ethics.

Course Objectives

1. Students should learn the classical philosophical positions regarding the fields of metaphysics, epistemology, and axiology.
2. Students should gain knowledge of the most prominent historical contributors to the Western philosophical tradition.
3. Students should develop an appreciation for the invaluable contribution that philosophy has made to other disciplines and fields such as science, politics, law, education, and theology.

Required Textbook

The Ideal Reader (2011) – available only in the bookstore

Recommended Textbook

- Vaughn, Lewis, & McIntosh, Jillian Scott (2009). *Writing Philosophy: A Guide for Canadian Students*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Course Requirements

1. **Midterm Examination** 20%
 - October 19th

2. **Research Paper** 30%
 - Due: November 30th @ 2:30 PM
 - A separate handout regarding topics, format guidelines, and late policy will be available on Moodle.

3. **Final Exam** 50%
 - Date: Wednesday, December 14th 9:00 – 12:00 in Airhart.
 - Students must pass the final exam to ensure a passing grade in the course. A student who performs well during the term but fails the final exam may fail the course.
 - Students should refrain from scheduling flights or travel of any sort that will conflict with the Final Examination schedule. Final examinations will not be rescheduled to accommodate travel arrangements.

Grading: The available letters for course grades are as follows:

<u>Letter Grade</u>	<u>GPA</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
A+	4.0		96-100 %
A	4.0	Exceptional	91-95 %
A-	3.7		86-90 %
B+	3.3		82-85 %
B	3.0	Exceeds Expectations	75-81 %
B-	2.7		72-74 %
C+	2.3		68-71 %
C	2.0	Meets Expectations	63-67 %
C-	1.7		60-62 %
D+	1.3		56-59 %
D	1.0	Minimal Pass	50-55 %
F	0.0	Failure	49 < %

Important Dates

- Last day to enter a course without permission, withdraw from course and receive tuition refund, and change from credit to audit is September 18th.
- Last day to withdraw from courses or change to audit without academic penalty is November 14th.
- Last day to request revised time for a final examination is November 28th.

Important Notes

- Students are responsible to check their Ambrose e-mail account regularly. E-mail may be used to notify students of cancelled classes or other important details relating to the course.
- Use of cell phones, recording devices, head phones, and all other non-essential technology is **prohibited**. **Text messaging** during class is **absolutely prohibited**.
- **Lap top computers are prohibited** from general use during class. Exceptions may be made on a case by case basis for students with relevant disabilities. Lap tops used for purposes unrelated to taking lecture notes are prohibited.
- Students are expected to respect the learning environment of the classroom. Make every attempt to be on time and to remain seated until the class session ends. Keep unnecessary conversations to a minimum as they are distracting to both the instructor and fellow classmates.
- *Ambrose is committed to fostering personal integrity and will not overlook breaches of integrity such as plagiarism and cheating. Plagiarism and cheating can result in a failing grade for an assignment, for the course, or immediate dismissal from the university college. Students are expected to be familiar with the policies in the current Academic Calendar and the Student Handbook that deal with plagiarism, cheating, and the penalties and procedures for dealing with these matters. All cases of academic dishonesty are reported to the Academic Dean.*
- *Personal information, that is information about an individual that may be used to identify that individual, may be collected as a requirement as part of taking this class. Any information collected will only be used and disclosed for the purpose for which the collection was intended. For further information contact the Privacy Compliance Officer at privacy@ambrose.edu.*
- *Although extensions to coursework in the semester are at the discretion of the instructor, students may not turn in coursework for evaluation after the last day of the scheduled final examination period unless they have received permission for a "Course Extension." Alternative times for final examinations cannot be scheduled without prior approval. Requests for course extensions or alternative examination time must be submitted to the Registrar's Office by the appropriate deadline. Course extensions are only granted for serious issues that arise "due to circumstances beyond the student's control."*
- *Students are advised to retain a copy of this syllabus for their records.*

PH 125 COURSE OUTLINE¹

- Sept 7 Introduction
Sept 9 Demythologizing Nature and the Origins of Philosophy

Sept 14 The *Euthyphro* Dialogue and the “Euthyphro Problem”

Theory of Knowledge (Epistemology): What is knowledge? How is it acquired? What can be known?

- Sept 16 Plato, Descartes (Spinoza, Leibniz): Rationalism and Skepticism

Sept 21 Empiricism: Locke & Hume
Sept 23 Kant & Critical Philosophy

Sept 28 Community Days – No Class
Sept 30 James, Russell, Bradley, & Truth Theory

Oct 5
Oct 7 Postmodernism and Feminist Epistemology

Metaphysics: What is real? Is there anything really ‘out there’?

- Oct 12 Idealism and Materialism: Locke/Armstrong, Berkeley/Rorty, *et al*
Oct 14 The Mind-Body Problem: Descartes & Searle: Dualism, Physicalism

Oct 19 **Midterm Exam**
Oct 21 Nagel: *What is it like to be a bat?*

Oct 26 Physics and Metaphysics: O’Hare and Quantum Mechanics /
Fashionable Nonsense and the “Sokal Affair”: When physics gives
way to metaphysics ... and when metaphysics gives way to ... BS.

Personal Identity and Immortality: What is human being? What is a human being? What am I? Can I survive through time?

- Oct 28 The Problem of Self Identity: Hume, Reid, and Dennett

Nov 2
Nov 4 Immortality: Plato and Penelhum

¹ This course outline is provisional and may, at the discretion of the instructor, require revision over the course of the term. The instructor reserves the right to deviate from the outline to accommodate, amongst other things, timely issues or pressing concerns.

Freedom to Choose: Am I free to act and believe as I will? What causes me to act or believe?

Nov 9 Indeterminism, Determinism, Compatibilism, and Weakness of Will
Nov 11 Remembrance Day – No Class

Philosophy of Religion: Can I/we know that God exists? Are there good reasons to believe that God exists? Do I need reasons to justify my religious beliefs?

Nov 16 God and the World
Nov 18 God and Reason

Nov 23

Ethics: What is the good life? What is a good action? Are right actions more important than good actions? What should motivate us to be moral? Do motives matter?

Nov 25 Fulfilling Human Nature: Aristotle and Virtue Ethics

Nov 30 Loving God: Augustine; Respecting God's reason: Kant
Dec 2 Maximizing Utility: J.S Mill : Consequentialism vs. Deontology

Dec 7 Creating Ourselves: Sartre, Kierkegaard and the possibility of Christian Existentialism.