

## **Philosophy 102 *Enduring Questions: The Good and the Beautiful***

### **ON DEMAND**

Western Kentucky University

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#### **Course Meditation and Description:**

If an evil and all-powerful genie told you that she was about to wipe a major figure in history out of existence, either Martin Luther King Jr. or Pablo Picasso, and you could choose which it would be, who would you pick? Why? Aren't they equally valuable? Aren't they equally good? What would be your justification for your choice? Would you pick Picasso for all of the beauty he has introduced to the world and his impact on Art? Or would you pick MLK since he helped and inspired so many oppressed people and effectively contributed to their social and political liberation? What's more important? Are they even important in the same way? Which do YOU value more, and why?

Value Theory is the part of philosophy that evaluates facts and principles in many spheres of human existence insofar as they contain standards of what is important. The majority of this course will be focused on one branch of value theory, moral philosophy, or *Ethics*.

Ethics is the study of morality: its nature, origin, practice, principles, conflicts, justification, validity, and application. While the division is fuzzy and involves much overlap, Ethics is typically divided into three kinds: Applied, Normative, and Meta. Applied Ethics deals with instances of ethical dilemmas and concerns on a case-by-case basis. Normative Ethics searches for general theories that one can use and refer to when deliberating about how to live and act. Metaethics analyzes what we do when we do ethics; it asks questions like *What is goodness?* and *What are we doing when we make more judgments?*

Also part of Value Theory is Aesthetics, or the philosophy of art and beauty. In this course, we shall consider what it means to be beautiful and what it means to be art, whether these two are mutually inclusive, and whether there is a relationship or, perhaps even tension, between aesthetics and ethics. Specific questions might include: Is beauty in the eye of the beholder? Is something art because someone says so? Can there be something that is both art and ugly? Are all good things beautiful? Are all beautiful things good? What does it mean to value something as beautiful or to value it as good? Do we find ourselves choosing between satisfying our desires for beauty and our desires for the good? What is the right choice?

Throughout this course, we will be considering these questions and many more. Upon considering answers, we shall employ valid and sound argumentation techniques to determine which answers are most plausible and compelling. Most importantly, students will be encouraged to determine the plausibility of accounts for themselves as well as consider opposing views objectively and fairly.

### **Course Objectives:**

Like PHIL 102's counterparts (PHIL 101 and PHIL 103) this course aims to teach students how to:

- Utilize basic formal elements, techniques, concepts, and vocabulary of philosophy, including the concepts and techniques of argumentation, philosophical theories, and core techniques and concepts of the interpretation of philosophical texts.
- Analyze and evaluate philosophical arguments, (including a demonstrated ability to distinguish between valid and fallacious reasoning and to identify common logical fallacies); identify reliable sources; and distinguish between different types of philosophical evidence.
- Express themselves logically and objectively in both analytic and argumentative writing.

### **Specific goals of PHIL 102 include developing students' abilities to:**

- Analyze and ponder answers to questions concerning how ethical and aesthetic value have evolved over time and have been fundamentally connected to philosophers' historical and cultural circumstances.
- Evaluate the significance of human expression and experience in shaping larger social, cultural, and historical contexts, in particular how philosophical theories about ethics and aesthetics shape and impact larger social, cultural, and historical contexts and institutions.
- Evaluate enduring and contemporary issues of human experience, including both (i) how changing cultural and social factors influence current philosophical debates about ethics and aesthetics and (ii) how to engage with current philosophical debates about ethics and aesthetics in students' own cultural traditions.
- Effectively express beliefs, commitments, and practices related to ethical and aesthetic themes in speech and writing.
- Recognize, understand, and appreciate reasoned expression of alternative ethical and aesthetic views (e.g., not the student's own) in speech and writing.

### **Required Texts:**

--Many short readings provided electronically through the course Blackboard site.

### **Recommended Texts:**

--Articles found on the [Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy](http://www.iep.utm.edu) ([www.iep.utm.edu](http://www.iep.utm.edu)) or the [Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy](http://plato.stanford.edu/) (<http://plato.stanford.edu/>).

## Course Requirements

Quizzes	40%
Final Exam	30%
Short Papers (2)	30%

### ***Papers:***

The papers will have both: 1) an exegetical component—a specific objective question about the material that should be thoroughly explained and 2) a reflective component that involves analysis of the student's own life experiences and defense of the student's own beliefs. Each paper is a response to a ***reflection question*** of the student's choice. Reflection questions can be found on the assignment sheet after each Topic and again in the learning modules for each topic.

### **Instructions for Reflection Question Responses:**

Write an essay response between 750-1,000 words for any 2 reflection questions. Be sure to answer the question completely and thoroughly, but also concisely. Make each word count. Cite the texts in Chicago Humanities Style (word count does not include footnotes). Be certain to cite both direct quotes as well as paraphrasing. Cite as specifically as possible; in other words, cite page numbers, page ranges if an idea is paraphrased from a section of text larger than a page, or chapters. Do not simply cite an entire manuscript unless what you are citing is the main idea expressed throughout.

### ***Quizzes:***

Students are expected to take several quizzes online via Blackboard. The purpose of these quizzes (called "tests" by Blackboard) is to assess your comprehension and retention of what will surely prove to be an extensive and quick study of many philosophers and views. These tests may have T/F sections, fill-in answers, and, perhaps, short objective answers (i.e., not essays requiring the student's own argument). Quizzes will be timed.

Students are NOT permitted the use of any resources beyond their own memory and cognitive capacities: No notes, no texts, no help from friends, and definitely no web searches.

Students are NOT permitted to take quizzes in multiple sittings, and students are NOT permitted to navigate away from the quiz screen for any reason. If a student hits "Backspace" or tries to navigate away from the screen during a quiz, Blackboard will record '0's for all unanswered questions and submit the assessment as is for grading. Students will have but one opportunity to take each quiz.

It is recommended that students take their quizzes in an environment with a strong and reliable Internet connection. In addition, given that Blackboard frequently makes updates in the early morning hours, it is recommended that quizzes not be attempted between midnight and 6:00 a.m. if at all possible.

### ***Final Exam:***

Students will take a final exam in a proctored setting approved and arranged by the Division of Extended Learning and Outreach, the department responsible for On Demand learning at WKU. This exam will cover all of the material in the course. Its format will resemble that of the quizzes for the course with the exception of this exam being substantially longer. The exam will be timed.

### **Graded Assignment Advice:**

- Abide by rules of academic honesty at all times. Plagiarism is an offense punishable by an F for the entire course.
- Sharing study tips/information before a quiz or exam IS PERMITTED AND ENCOURAGED. No reliance on such materials during the exam is allowed.
- Conducting research and further study on one's own before a quiz or exam IS PERMITTED AND ENCOURAGED. No reliance on such materials during the exam is allowed. See recommended texts for good places to start such research.
- Review the "How to Write a Philosophy Paper" presentation to better understand how to write responses to reflection questions. While an introduction is not required for these papers, and a specific thesis is optional, if a student elects to have either one, the student should follow the suggestions in this presentation and be sure to remain concise in doing so. Grammar counts. Paragraph organization counts. Sentences should relate to surrounding sentences. Citations are required.

### **Course Policies:**

Please see the document, "Anton's Course Policies" for further information (available on Blackboard or by request). This document is an appendix to the syllabus and is, therefore, equally binding. This syllabus (as well as reading lists and assignments lists) is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor at any time.

## Suggested Course Schedule

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Below you will find a suggested course schedule to help you organize your studies. This schedule is meant as a guideline to help those who need to complete their course in a certain timeframe.

Need to finish your course within a semester? Here is a suggested course schedule:		
Week	Assignments	Exams
1	Review Syllabus, Take Plagiarism Quiz	
2	Module 1	

3	Module 2
4	Module 3
5	Module 4
6	Reflection Paper #1
7	Module 5
8	Module 6
9	Module 7
10	Module 8
11	Reflection Paper #2
12	Module 9
13	Module 10
14	Prepare for Final Exam
15	Final Examination

Finally...*Enjoy the class!* 😊