New Undergraduate Course Approval Cover Form
Montana State University

This four-page form collects basic information about the proposed new course, provides information on the approval process, and includes all required approvals. Additional information (see INFO sheet) is also required as part of the New Course Packet.

Proposed New Course Information

Requested Rubric, Course Number, Core Designation (if needed): PHL 103 D

Course Title: Philosophy and Popular Culture

Abbreviated Course Title (≤ 30 chars): Philosophy and Popular Culture

First Semester to be Offered: Spring 2013

Submitted by: Sara Waller

Submitter's Contact Info: Phone, Email: 5216 sara.waller@montana.edu

Instructor: Sara Waller (alternate years, Dan Floy)

Department: History and Philosophy

College: Letters and Sciences

New Course Review Process

Instructor completes the New Course Packet, with Core Information if a Core designation is requested.

Instructor checks for "equivalent" course in the MUS system and recommends a common or unique course number.

Department Head's signature indicates that course has been approved by the process used within the Department.

The Chair of the College Curriculum Committee signs to indicate college academic approval.

The Deans' Dean signs to indicate that adequate resources are available to offer the course. Supporting information (Dean's Statement) is typically required.

The New Course Packet (in PDF) is uploaded to the Provost's Office server for distribution to other committees.

Course requests are sent to Curriculum and Program Committee (CPC). Core reviews are sent to appropriate Core subcommittees. Committees work in parallel whenever possible to speed approval process. Special topics courses (291, 491) skip the CPC review (limited to two years.)

Provost's Office reviews the course request. New courses are submitted to MUS for Core Course Number (CCN) review. Dean and Department informed upon approval.

Approved new course sent to Registrar for inclusion in the Catalog and Schedule of Classes

APPROVALS

Oct 1 2012

Submitter

Department Head

Chair, College Curriculum Comm.

Dean

Chair, Core Subcommittee (if app)

Chair, CPC

Assoc. Provost

Note: This diagram illustrates the typical flow path, but at any review step there can be a request for additional information or modifications. Careful review in early steps is the best way to speed the overall process. * Special topics courses [691] require fewer signatures, but cannot be offered more than two times without committee review.
INFORMATION NEEDED FOR COMMON COURSE NUMBERING

The process for identifying a common course number for a new course is as follows:

1. Course learning outcomes are prepared for the new course.
2. The person submitting the new course request looks at the CCN website to see if a course with similar outcomes already exists in the MUS system. 
   
   www.mus.edu/ctools/CCN/ccn_default.asp

   • If a course exists with at least 80% of the same outcomes, the course is considered "equivalent" to the proposed new course, and the new course should use the existing rubric and course number.
   
   • If no “equivalent” course is found, the person submitting the new course request should identify a unique course number that has not been used by any other course in the MUS system.

3. The requested rubric and course number are submitted as part of the new course packet.
4. The Provost’s Office submits the learning outcomes and the requested rubric and course number to the MUS to have a course number assigned to the course. (This will typically be the requested course number, but it could be changed.)
5. The assigned common course number is reported back to the person submitting the new course request.

Requested Rubric, Course Number, Core Designation (if needed):

Course Title: PHL 103 D
Abrev. Course Title (5 30 char): Philosophy and Popular Culture
Credits:
Department Offering Courses:
College:

Is this course “equivalent” to a course in the MUS System?: □ Yes □ No

Learning Outcomes for the Course:

Understand diversity within societies as well as diversity among societies

Understand the conditions and contributions of world societies or of disproportionately represented groups in the US

Become aware of how world societies perceive and/or pursue social justice or how disproportionately represented groups affect decisions about social justice

Identification and avoidance of fallacies in argument

Ability to develop a thesis, give reasons for a view and critique a view

Demonstrate orally and in writing knowledge of several historical philosophical figures and philosophical systems

Describe philosophical theories, concepts, techniques and issues pertinent to popular culture
INFORMATION REQUIRED BY THE REGISTRAR

The data needed to enter the new course into the MSU Catalog and Schedule of Classes is collected on this page. Once the new course has been approved, this page is automatically forwarded to the Registrar for data entry.

Assigned Rubric, Course Number, Core Designation if needed: PHL 103 D
- Course Title (for Catalog): Philosophy and Popular Culture
- Course Title (for Schedule of Classes, 30 characters, max.): Philosophy and Popular Culture
- First Semester to be Offered: Spring 2013
- Restricted Entry/Consent of Instructor Required: Yes ☑ No ☐
- Instructor's GID (last 4 digits only): 3901
- Department Offering Course: History and Philosophy
- College: Letters and Sciences

Is the requested course number available? (x4155 to check): Yes ☑ No ☐
Frequency of course offering:
- Annually ☐
- Alternate Years, starting 2013 ☑
- Summer ☐ Fall ☐
- Spring ☑
- Second 6 weeks ☑ 12 weeks ☐

Credits by mode of instruction:
- Lecture: 2
- Seminar:
- Independent Study:
- Lab/Studio:
- Recitation/Discussion: 1
TOTAL CREDITS: 3

Primary Mode(s) of Delivery:
- Face-to-face ☑
- Web-Enhanced (small on-line comp.) ☐
- On-Line Only ☐
- Blended (significant on-line portion) ☐

Time and Location – Call the Registrar’s Office at x4155 to find a time and location for the course.
- Assigned Day(s): M ☑ Tu ☑ W ☑ Th ☐ F ☐ Sa ☐ Su
- Assigned Time(s): 8:00 – 9:15
- Assigned Building: Reid
- Assigned Room: 201
- Capacity (room capacity, or enrollment “cap”): 80

Co- and Pre-Requisites – Courses numbered 200 and above are normally expected to have prerequisites. When listing multiple prerequisites, please separate courses with “and” if both are required, or “or” if only one is required.
- Prerequisite(s): none
- Co-Requisite(s): none

Course Description – Provide a course description of 40 words or less for the MSU Catalog.
- Introduces philosophy to students through popular culture. Basic philosophical concepts, methods, and theories will be learned through discussion of technology, video games, films, television, therapy, sports, race, gender, alternative sexuality and drug use.
DEAN'S STATEMENT

The reviewing committees are being asked to take a closer look at the resources required for each proposed new course. In many cases new courses will replace existing courses and the new course request is effectively resource neutral, however that is not always the case. For example, a new elective course that would result in distributing an existing student population across a larger number of courses would represent a significant increase in expenditures for the new course, and no increase in total student credit hours. A funding mechanism for such a course would need to be identified. The Dean's Statement is the place to document how the costs of the proposed new course will be covered.

Note to the Dean:

This course is designed to be cross-listed with AMST 101 D and so is resource neutral. The same room, instructor, and graduate teaching assistant will be used for lecture and recitation sections. Sara Walter has already taught AMST 101D and simply plans to add more philosophy to enhance critical thinking, content, and reading options in the course.

Theoretically, the courses are separable, in which case PHL 103 D would simply be another course that introduces philosophy to incoming students in addition to PHL 101: Reason and Reality and PHL 110: Good and Evil. If this course is offered separately from AMST 101D, it will simply replace a section of PHL 101 or PHL 110, and so continues to be resource neutral.

The philosophy department is excited to offer a new course to introduce philosophy to incoming students. We do not anticipate any change in demand for rooms, instructors, or teaching assistants. We do not anticipate that this introductory course would produce any significant change in total student credit hours. Thank you.
New Undergraduate Course Narrative
Montana State University
Updated August 23, 2012

Please provide the following information in narrative format. Substantive responses to all criteria are required. Although not required, a draft syllabus can also be helpful to the committee in understanding the details of the proposed course.

General Course Information
1. Requested Rubric, Course Number, and Core Designation (if any)

PHL 103 D

2. Course Title

Philosophy and Popular Culture

3. Provide a general description of the course explaining the need for the course, its goals, and its overall structure. This is the most important part of the application and should offer a good sense of what students will experience by taking this class.

The purpose of this course is to introduce philosophy to students through direct discussion of popular culture. This course introduces basic philosophical concepts, methods, and theories through such cultural phenomena as: the influences of technology, video games, films, television, therapy, sports, and counter-culture activities such as drug use, political protest, experimental lifestyles, and alternative sexuality. Questions of race, class and gender as they emerge through events in popular culture will also be included in the course.

Students will write short papers and be asked to apply philosophical methods, concepts and theories to a broad range of issues and events in popular culture, focusing on, but not limited to, American popular culture.

Students will gain tools and techniques for thinking about popular and countercultural movements and consider practical and principled choices to options found in the world around them. Using philosophical writings ranging from Socratic dialogues to contemporary articles, students will formulate clear thesis statements regarding contemporary cultural forces and argue for a well-developed view, carefully considering objections and alternative positions. The course will equip students with the ability to give reasons for a variety of viewpoints that pertain to current issues.

Students will also critique views presented in popular culture from a variety of standpoints. Philosophical questions asked will be ethical, metaphysical, and epistemic.

4. Based on what types of student work (e.g., tests, homework assignments, papers, performances, etc.) will grades be determined?

Student work will be assessed in a variety of ways. Quizzes and exams will measure the grasp of basic concepts and topics/arguments presented in reading material. In some cases, quizzes may be take-home. Papers will ask students to develop and defend a thesis while showing an understanding of primary textual material and basic philosophical concepts. Discussion will be a
major part of the course, and will take place in small groups with focused questions and topics as well as in the context of the entire course, involving interactive lectures that incorporate questions, counterpoints and discussion. Students will have many opportunities to discuss different points of view regarding popular culture (and philosophical questions raised by pop culture activities) in class.

5. Provide a course content outline containing all major topics plus a brief description of the material to be covered under each major topic heading.

Topics will vary to some extent depending on current cultural trends and events, as well as on the expertise of the instructor teaching the course. A course on pop culture must naturally follow what exactly is popular in the culture at any given moment. Because the course will be taught by more than one faculty member, depending on the semester, topics will vary to some extent. However, this list provides an illustrative example of the kinds of conceptual and popular material that will be covered in class.

Week 1: Introduction to philosophy, course, and basic concepts

Week 2: Argument, reasoning, defending a view, deduction, induction (basic philosophical toolkit)

Week 3: Art in Popular Culture: This unit will discuss such cultural phenomena as poetry slams, contemporary performance art, flash mobs, tattoos, and dance crazes, and begin to ask philosophical questions of beauty, social acceptance and human nature.

Week 4: Pushing the Boundaries: This unit will explore sanity and insanity as defined over the last 40 years, criminality and breaking the law as civil disobedience, the obligation of the citizen to the state and vice versa.

Week 5: Self-Help: therapy, self-reflection, yoga, personal trainers, life coaches, and self-help books. What is happiness? What is self-actualization? Does the concept and achievement of self-actualization change along with cultural trends and if so, how? We will discuss philosophical notions of human nature, including essentialism, existentialism, and more. We will also address questions such as: Why are American women statistically more depressed than men? Why do people with lower socio-economic status often report being happier than those with more material wealth, especially in the context of the American dream?

Week 6: Drug use and transcendental states: What is the (ethical, spiritual, legal, psychological) difference between pharmacological drug use and the use of street drugs? Is there really such a thing as better living through chemistry? What drugs should be allowed in society and how should they be controlled? How do drugs relate to counter culture group formation and belonging?

Week 7: Sexuality, Culture and Self: What is the relationship between love, sex and sexuality? What is the difference between sexual orientation, sexual identity, and sexual preference? How does culture influence, change, or oppress our choices when it comes to sexuality? What is it to be queer? How does sexuality contribute to human character, human nature and human morality?

Week 8: Radio, Film, Television, Youtube: Does the way in which we receive our information and enjoy our stories change our understanding of ourselves? Could stars of the silver screen be youtube artists? Why do we watch what we watch, and how has narrative changed as the venues
that convey it have changed? Why do some films, shows, or youtube channels become popular, accepted, or viral? How are racial and gender stereotypes maintained, or questioned, by media?

Week 9: Rock and Roll, Rap, Alternative, Jazz: How does music shape culture and how does culture shape music? Is music something that should be controlled by the state? Is some music better than other music (and what would such principles of aesthetic judgment look like)? How much does music shape the construction of the self? How are racial and gender stereotypes maintained, or questioned, in popular music?

Week 10: Technology and trends in science: Does your iPhone make your life better or worse? How has social networking changed humanity and human culture? Has Facebook helped you redefine who you are? Should human beings share more or less information, and what should the principles of information sharing be? Will technology bring us a more peaceful, less prejudiced society?

Week 11: To Vote, to Terrorize, and to Survive: What are the responsibilities of a citizen? Should the uninformed still be encouraged to vote? Is there ever a case in which a citizen should become a suicide bomber? How should we respond to, and cope with terrorism? Is Survivalism a coherent doctrine?

Week 12: Sports: do professional sports enrich our lives? Should the Olympics allow professionals to participate? Should athletes be allowed to blood-dope or take enhancing drugs? What moral principles should govern the playing, and watching of sports?

Week 13: Outer Space: should our taxes be spent on missions to Mars? If there is life on other planets, should we try to contact it, or should we try to hide? Would the discovery of life on other planets change the way we think about ourselves? Religion? Human purpose?

Week 14: American Culture, Popular Culture: Does America have a popular culture that is significantly different from the cultures of other countries? How does status as a first world or non-first world country change cultural priorities and trends. How is culture related to individuality and the self? How can we determine what “popular culture” is in a diverse and changing world?

Week 15: Review for final exam

6. List required texts or other required references.

Texts and films will vary to some extent in accordance with changes in popular culture and instructor preference. There are literally hundreds of texts and topics from which to choose. Presses such as Open Court, Wiley/Blackwell, and University Press of Kentucky all have philosophy and popular culture book series, and this allows instructors a wide range of high quality philosophical articles and chapters that will provide primary readings for the course.

The following list provides an illustrative example of books that would be appropriate for this course at the present time.

Pirsig: Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance
Wolfe: The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test
Barad: The Ethics of Star Trek
Marinoff: Plato, not Prozac
Darby: Hip-Hop and Philosophy
Allhoff: Cannabis: Philosophy for Everyone
Allhoff: College Sex: Philosophy for Everyone
Allhoff: Breaking Bad and Philosophy
Allhoff: Tattoos and Philosophy: I Ink Therefore I am

Example Films:
Do The Right Thing
American Graffiti
Inception
Avatar

7. What are the estimated enrollment and student credit hour (SCH) production? 
   [SCH = (enrollment * credits)]

Estimated enrollment is 80 students each year. Course will be 3 credit hours. (80 x 3 = 240)

8. Will there be an enrollment cap that restricts enrollment below the level of student demand? If so, what is the enrollment cap and why is it necessary?

The enrollment is ordinarily capped at 80 students. Because the course will require writing and thesis defense papers, even if the course enlists an undergraduate grader or graduate teaching assistant, the amount of time spent working with students on their written expression will be substantial for the instructor.

We expect student demand to fill, but probably not exceed (to any great extent) the number of seats allocated for the class. If student demand is more than expected, we are happy to review the enrollment cap and consider options to enhance our ability to grade a substantial number of written assignments.

9. Will course be a “restricted enrollment” course? If so, why is restricted enrollment necessary?

There will be no prerequisites or restrictions on enrollment. This is a course designed for freshmen, incoming students, and students new to philosophy and is intended to welcome students into the scholarly fields of philosophy and popular culture analysis.

10. Describe how the success of the course will be evaluated? (“End-of-semester student evaluations” is not the answer to this question. How will the instructor determine if the learning outcomes are being met, and how will the department determine if the course is fulfilling its intended purpose?)

Course outcomes will include: students develop and use philosophical vocabulary, students apply philosophical concepts to issues and events in popular culture, students develop a clear thesis, students give reasons for a view, students critique the views of others using reasons, evidence and critical thinking skills. Students will also develop the clarity of their writing as there will be papers assigned in the class.

These outcomes will be evaluated through quizzes (which will be well suited to show that students understand and can use philosophical vocabulary and apply philosophical concepts to issues and events in popular culture) and short papers in which students are asked to develop, defend and/or critique a philosophical thesis pertaining to an issue in popular culture.
Assessment criteria for critical thinking and writing will be drawn from the undergraduate seminar rubrics currently being developed and refined by Emily Edwards. Sara Waller has been in touch with Emily Edwards regarding the development of assessment rubrics for freshman level critical thinking and writing.

11. Is the instructor a member of the regular faculty (i.e., tenured or tenure-track)? If no, please describe the instructor’s qualifications, attach a Vita, and provide a separate letter of support, signed by the department head (or appropriate unit director), addressing the instructor’s qualifications to teach this course.

Yes: course instructors will be Associate Professor Sara Waller and Associate Professor Dan Flory. We are both regular members of the faculty at Montana State University.

Level of Offering
12. Has the course been offered previously under 280/291 or 480/491? If so, when? Under what number? What was the enrollment? What level of students took the course?

No.

13. Justify the level of course offering.

This course is intended to be an introductory course for incoming college students that presents philosophy in a way that is exciting, relevant, and non-traditional. Basic theories and vocabulary will be taught in the course through a variety of topics in popular culture.

Relationship to other Courses, Curricula, and Departments
14. Does this course build on or interrelate with other courses in your curriculum or related curricula? If so, which ones?

This course does not build on other courses in other courses in the philosophy curriculum or related curricula because it is an introductory level course. It would compliment many introductory courses in American Studies (such as AMST101D), Native American Studies (NASX105D), and introductory courses in Sociology, Anthropology, and History. Students who find themselves taking this course along with one of these other courses may find points of connection between the two courses. However, since the course will change a bit from semester to semester in order to address new aspects of popular culture, there is no necessary interrelationship between this course and other introductory courses that address culture from the point of view of a different discipline.

15. Do the topics in the proposed course duplicate or reiterate those in other courses in this or any other department? If so, how do the coverage and educational experience differ and how is this duplication or reiteration justified? Also, what liaison (which is expected in cases of apparent overlap) has been conducted with other departments? Report reactions, both favorable and unfavorable.

While there are several courses on campus that actively study culture (see courses that possibly inter-relate, listed in answer to question 14), none of these courses uses current popular culture as a venue to specifically introduce philosophical concepts, theories, or methods. Students in this course will approach phenomena in popular culture from a philosophical point of view and using
philosophical tools. Thus, there is no expected substantive overlap with courses offered by other departments.

16. What programs (departments, colleges) will be impacted by the SCH production of this course? That is, where do you think the SCH in the proposed course are likely to come from? If the expected SCH production of the proposed course is greater than 1000, and the SCH are expected to come from other colleges, what steps have been taken to make the other units aware of the potential loss of SCH? Report reactions, both favorable and unfavorable.

SCH is expected to come primarily from incoming freshmen who are interested in a philosophical approach to popular culture. The expected SCH production is not greater than 1000.

17. If this proposed course has a significant interdisciplinary component, please explain briefly. Otherwise, indicate n/a.

N/A

Students Served
18. Does the proposed course serve majors only? Non-majors only? Both majors and non-majors? What other majors might be interested in this course? State areas or disciplines to be served and indicate the specific efforts that will be made to make the course material relevant to all disciplines served.

The proposed course is specifically designed for non-majors as an introduction to philosophy. Some majors may enjoy the course because of its unique approach to philosophy through popular culture. Majors in American Studies, Sociology, Anthropology, Psychology, and History may be specifically attracted to the course because of the popular culture component. As the course is themed around issues and events in popular culture, students who are interested in human behavior (individually or in groups) will find the course relevant – so social science students such as those in psychology, sociology, anthropology and American studies will find the course relevant. Likewise, history students will be attracted to contemporary events and an analysis of those events through a philosophical lens.

Resources
19. What additional resources (e.g., additional instructional FTE, required technologies), if any, will be required to offer this course? Are there any resource issues for the students who will take the course (e.g., required technologies, travel, on-line access requirements)? Will there be an additional fee charged to students taking this course? Please explain.

There will be no additional resources or fees associated with this course. It is likely that the course will make use of D2L for the posting of some reading materials (depending on the methods of the instructor). If the course does require D2L, then students will need to have on-line access to obtain some assignments and announcements.

20. What existing information resources – print (books, journals, documents), audiovisual (videos, DVDs, CDs or other), and/or electronic (e-books, databases, electronic journals and web sites) – provided by the MSU Libraries will be used by students in this course? Provide examples as well as descriptive information. If additional information resources are necessary, please discuss those acquisitions with the library (x6549 Collection Development) at least three months prior to the beginning of the semester in which this course will be taught.
The course material will be taught primarily through a combination of textbooks and DVD films made available through the bookstore, and some articles/ readings posted online via D2L. The MSU libraries may provide some on-line reserve material including an occasional article or book chapter relevant to events and issues in contemporary popular culture and/or philosophical commentary on such events or issues.
For example, a recent Newsweek article describes the odd fate of Jason Russell, founder of Invisible Children, Inc., who made a film about the vicious crimes of Joseph Kony. The film went viral within weeks and both Kony and Russell became wildly famous. While the film impacted Kony’s ability to abuse children, the instant fame seemed to cause an internet-based psychosis in film-maker Russell, who was later found masturbating in public. (Philosophical questions about human nature, our interaction with technology, and ethical methods to promote social change all emerge from this incident.) Such articles will be supplied by the library.
Films such as “Do the Right Thing” will be placed on reserve at the library for student use.
Philosophy librarian Jan Zauha always provides the philosophy department with outstanding assistance in selecting contemporary, relevant articles for our students.
No new acquisitions are expected to be necessary for this course.

Other Supporting Material
21. Include any additional information you feel is needed to support this request.

This will be a great new course that shows the relevance of philosophy to popular culture and contemporary society.
Primary Texts

Ginsberg: Howl and Other Poems
Pirslg: Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance
Wolfe: The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test
Allhoff: Cannabis: Philosophy for Everyone
Marinoff: Plato, not Prozac
Darby: Hip-Hop and Philosophy
Barad: The Ethics of Star Trek

Course Description

The purpose of this course is to introduce philosophy to students through direct discussion of popular culture. This course introduces basic philosophical concepts, methods, and theories through such cultural phenomena as: the influences of technology, video games, films, television, therapy, sports, and counter-culture activities such as drug use, political protest, experimental lifestyles, and alternative sexuality. Questions of race, class and gender as they emerge through events in popular culture will also be included in the course.

Grading Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-100%</td>
<td>373-400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-92%</td>
<td>360-372</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>87-89%</td>
<td>345-359</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-86%</td>
<td>332-344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-82%</td>
<td>320-331</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79%</td>
<td>305-319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73-76%</td>
<td>292-304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-72%</td>
<td>280-291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67-69%</td>
<td>265-279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>60-66%</td>
<td>240-264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0-59%</td>
<td>0-239</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Grading Policy

Grades are based on the following course requirements:
1) 3 Short Papers; 2) Short Quizzes; 3) Discussion Days; 4) Final Exam.
The specifics of each assignment type are detailed on the following pages.

Core Learning Outcomes (Diversity)

- The course provides opportunities for students to participate in discussion and dialogue so that they may actively engage issues of diversity.
- The course examines the concept and meaning of difference, and the social, political, or economic conflicts that result from it.
- The course critically examines categories of human difference and explores commonalities that are sometimes overlooked in the study of diversity.
Course Objectives/Learning Outcomes (Philosophy):
This course provides students with the opportunity to understand, explain and critique the content of traditional philosophical theories in the context of popular culture, and construct and defend arguments as professional philosophers do. Successful students will have demonstrated the ability to do the following at the completion of the course:

* Write formal, philosophical thesis defense papers. This skill demands:
  o Accurate use of the English language
  o Accurate use of terminology specific to philosophy and on popular culture topics
  o Identification, and avoidance of, fallacies of reasoning
  o Identification & description of philosophical theories, concepts, questions & issues as they present themselves in popular culture events and phenomena
  o Construction of a clear, specific, philosophical thesis on an issue in pop culture
  o Reading & understanding primary texts as demonstrated by accurate summaries of them, and the use of quotations from these texts to further an argument
  o Clear presentation of reasons and evidence (found in texts or originally developed by the student) that furthers the thesis
  o Avoidance of discussing irrelevant subjects
  o Recognition and precise description of objections (critiques of, or potential problems with), a theory or thesis
  o Presentation of a relevant, content-bearing response to such objections

* Demonstrate (orally and in writing) knowledge of several philosophers and classical philosophical writings, and the arguments, principles, concepts, and issues contained therea, and applying such knowledge to popular cultural events.

Phenomenological doctrines/systems include, but are not limited to:
  o Existentialism
  o Utilitarianism
  o Deontology
  o Essentialism
  o Feminist Theories
  o Libertarianism

* Describe (orally and in writing) philosophical theories, concepts, techniques and issues pertinent to popular culture, including, but not limited to:
  o Relativism and Realism
  o Fallacies of Reasoning
  o Ethical and Psychological Egoism
  o Human nature
  o Hedonism
  o Virtue Ethics
  o Naturalism

Course Requirements:

1) 3 Short Papers: (4-5 pages, about 2000 words, 80 points each, 240 points total) consisting of both a summary of the current reading, and your own well-supported position on a question or issue at hand. Grades are based on: Accuracy and completeness of summary, how well your argument is supported (this will include
response to objections), number of fatal errors (see handout), grammar, spelling, and finesse. The papers must pertain to relevant issues in philosophy and popular culture currently covered in class. The papers must incorporate a reference to current events. The position that you choose to critique or defend is entirely up to you, so pick topics that interest you.

2) **Quizzes:** (8 quizzes, 10 points each, 80 points total.) Quizzes will ask you to answer a specific topic already discussed in class and will require that you write about one paragraph for a complete answer. Quizzes might be take-home, depending on how much time we need in class. Missed quizzes cannot be made up for any reason. Don’t panic, I offer extra credit throughout the course.

3) **Discussion/Activity Days:** (20 discussions, 3 points each, 60 points total) You need not prepare anything extra for these days, but know the lectures and readings well, just in case you are called on to speak - you wouldn’t want to be embarrassed. I will give a topic for discussion on those days, and you will have a chance to write down what you think about that topic and why, and then present it to the class. Discussions may occasionally take on different formats, such as a debate, or lighthearted competition, or a game.

4) **Final Exam:** (comprehensive, essay format, 20 points) The final examination will be held during the final examination period. Quizzes and discussion questions will provide a good study guide for the final exam.

5) **Extra Credit:** (sporadic, usually involving a 15 minute presentation or a written summary of a current ethical issue of your choice, as related to the course readings or campus events, 21 points) I will announce extra credit opportunities as they appear throughout the semester. Extra credit lets you miss a quiz or a discussion without too much worry or stress.

**Argument Papers**

They are not research papers. They are no comparison and contrast papers.

**Thesis Paragraph:** State your thesis, define your primary terms, mention the relevant philosophical background, i.e., authors or arguments for and against the thesis that have been covered in class, and mention your reasons, arguments, and examples you will use to make your point.

**Summary Paragraphs:** explain the relevant texts and arguments clearly and completely. Do not explain or discuss anything irrelevant to your thesis. Use quotations from the texts we are using in class that are important to your view.

**Argument Paragraphs:** Support your view with reasons, evidence (including lived examples), and arguments. Use the views of relevant philosophers to your advantage, citing them properly as you proceed.

**Objection Paragraph(s):** Present a view that directly and clearly opposes your thesis. Present it briefly but completely, using philosophical texts studied in class as appropriate.

**Reply to Objections:** Respond to the objection(s) you presented. Be honest.

**Paper Grading Guidelines**

How well your argument is supported (35 pts. total, 5 pts. each error).
• Failing to state a thesis is an error. State your thesis clearly, and distinguish your position from other positions.

• Fallacies are errors. See handout.

• Distorting facts to make your case is an error. For example, claiming that the planets move in perfect circles, or that the moon only appears at night, is a distortion of our best-substantiated view of the world today and cannot be used for evidence of any view.

• Failing to define terms that are relevant to your thesis is an error.

• Failing to give a reason for your view is an error.
  o Agreeing with your other beliefs/what you were taught is not a reason
  o Making you feel good is not a reason
  o Claiming you have a right to your opinion is not a reason to believe that the opinion is true. In this culture we often agree that each person has a right to his or her own opinion. However, that does not make all opinions equally true or equally well supported. Some opinions are false, and some views have no substantiation.

• Part of supporting your argument is considering a reasonable, well thought out objection from an opposing viewpoint. Explain the other viewpoint clearly and thoroughly. Why does your opposition believe something that you do not?

• Part of supporting your argument is responding to this objection. How can you defend your view against the view you just presented? This response is usually the conclusion of a philosophy paper.

Accuracy and completeness of summary (35 pts. total, 5 pts. each error).

• Misattributing a view to a philosopher or popular culture figure is an error.

• Failing to produce two relevant quotes from the text is an error. When citing from a web source without page numbers, note book title, author, chapter and section.

• Failing to include information important to your thesis that was covered in class is an error.

• Including information that is irrelevant to your thesis is an error. Do not wildly summarize everything that comes to mind about a philosopher or position.

Number of fatal errors (up to 10 pts.).

• *Nota Bene*, if you spell a philosopher’s name incorrectly in your paper, I will remove 10 points immediately (over and above the 10 points), and then continue to count fatal errors.

• If you use philosophical terminology learned in class incorrectly, I will remove 5 points (over and above the 10 points).

• All other fatal errors appear in the attached or forthcoming handout, and are worth 1 point each.

Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty are Serious Offenses. Know what they are and recognize that the consequences could be worse than a failing grade on the assignment. If I discover academic misconduct, I will 1) meet with you, 2) fill out an Academic Misconduct Notification Form, and 3) provide a written request for the Dean of Students to press charges of violation of the Student Conduct Code.


Ground Rules & Notes on General Civility

1. If a disagreement arises, present facts and evidence calmly rather than a heated and useless personal attack. Some opinions are more well-justified than others, but none merit active hostility or degradation.
2. Missed papers, presentations, discussions, quizzes and exams cannot be made up, but an opportunity for extra credit will be provided for those who have experienced some difficulties in attending class. If you experience an extended illness or catastrophe, see me.

3. If something or someone in the class is genuinely and persistently bothersome, offensive and/or inhibiting your learning process, please bring it to my attention.

4. If work is accepted by email, it is always due at 11:59 p.m. on the stated due date. If your work does not arrive in my inbox with that time stamp (because you experience internet difficulties, your computer has problems, your computer clock is inaccurate, or for any other reason), or if I cannot open your file or if it is corrupt, you will receive 0 points for that assignment.

Schedule (subject to change)

Week 1: Introduction to philosophy, course, and basic concepts

Week 2: Argument, reasoning, defending a view, deduction, induction (basic philosophical toolkit) Readings posted on D2L

Week 3: Art in Popular Culture: This unit will discuss such cultural phenomena as poetry slams, contemporary performance art, flash mobs, tattoos, and dance crazes, and begin to ask philosophical questions of beauty, social acceptance and human nature. Readings: Howl and Other Poems, selections from Tattoos and Philosophy

Week 4: Pushing the Boundaries: This unit will explore sanity and insanity as defined over the last 40 years, criminality and breaking the law as civil disobedience, the obligation of the citizen to the state and vice versa. Readings: posted on D2L (Selections from the DSM, Plato’s Crito, Thoreau on Civil Disobedience)

Week 5: Self-Help: therapy, self-reflection, yoga, personal trainers, life coaches, and self-help books. What is happiness? What is self-actualization? Does the concept and achievement of self-actualization change along with cultural trends and if so, how? We will discuss philosophical notions of human nature, including essentialism, existentialism, and more. We will also address questions such as: Why are American women statistically more depressed than men? Why do people with lower socio-economic status often report being happier than those with more material wealth, especially in the context of the American dream? Readings: Plato Not Prozac
Paper #1 Due

Week 6: Drug use and transcendental states: What is the (ethical, spiritual, legal, psychological) difference between pharmacological drug use and the use of street drugs? Is there really such a thing as better living through chemistry? What drugs should be allowed in society and how should they be controlled? How do drugs relate to counter culture group formation and belonging? Readings: Allhoff’s Cannabis: Philosophy for Everyone

Week 7: Sexuality, Culture and Self: What is the relationship between love, sex and sexuality? What is the difference between sexual orientation, sexual identity, and sexual preference? How does culture influence, change, or oppress our choices when it comes to
sexuality? What is it to be queer? How does sexuality contribute to human character, human nature and human morality?

Readings: Allhoff's *College Sex and Philosophy*

Week 8: Radio, Film, Television, Youtube: Does the way in which we receive our information and enjoy our stories change our understanding of ourselves? Could stars of the silver screen be youtube artists? Why do we watch what we watch, and how has narrative changed as the venues that convey it have changed? Why do some films, shows, or youtube channels become popular, accepted, or viral? How are racial and gender stereotypes maintained, or questioned, by media?

Readings: Allhoff's *Breaking Bad and Philosophy*

Week 9: Rock and Roll, Rap, Alternative, Jazz: How does music shape culture and how does culture shape music? Is music something that should be controlled by the state? Is some music better than other music (and what would such principles of aesthetic judgment look like)? How much does music shape the construction of the self? How are racial and gender stereotypes maintained, or questioned, in popular music?

Readings: *Hip-Hop and Philosophy*

Paper #2 Due

Week 10: Technology and trends in science: Does your iPhone make your life better or worse? How has social networking changed humanity and human culture? Has Facebook helped you redefine who you are? Should human beings share more or less information, and what should the principles of information sharing be? Will technology bring us a more peaceful, less prejudiced society?

Readings: posted on D2L from Turkle’s *Alone Together*

Week 11: To Vote, to Terrorize, and to Survive: What are the responsibilities of a citizen? Should the uninformed still be encouraged to vote? Is there ever a case in which a citizen should become a suicide bomber? How should we respond to, and cope with terrorism? Is Survivalism a coherent doctrine?

Readings: Posted on D2L

Week 12: Sports: do professional sports enrich our lives? Should the Olympics allow professionals to participate? Should athletes be allowed to blood-dope or take enhancing drugs? What moral principles should govern the playing, and watching of sports?

Readings: Posted on D2L

Week 13: Outer Space: should our taxes be spent on missions to Mars? If there is life on other planets, should we try to contact it, or should we try to hide? Would the discovery of life on other planets change the way we think about ourselves? Religion? Human purpose?

Readings: *Ethics of Star Trek*

Week 14: American Culture, Popular Culture: Does America have a popular culture that is significantly different from the cultures of other countries? How does status as a first world or non-first world country change cultural priorities and trends. How is culture related to individuality and the self? How can we determine what “popular culture” is in a diverse and changing world?

Readings: *Ethics of Star Trek*

Week 15: Review for final exam
Paper # 3 Due