Knowledge, Reality, and Values
– CORC 1210, Spring 2011 –

Instructor
Denise Vigani
dvigani@gc.cuny.edu

Email
Office hours
Wed 2:10-3pm
& by appt.
Rm. 3316 Boylan Hall

Classroom & Meeting time
Boylan Hall 4145
MW 11am-12:15pm or
MW 12:50-2:05pm

Grading Breakdown & Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writing Assignments</th>
<th>35%</th>
<th>due each Wed.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Critical Thinking Quiz</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>9-Feb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-term Exam</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>21-Mar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>25-May</td>
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Writing Assignment Grading

You start with 100 points. Possible grades for each assignment:

+ Well done! +2pts
✓ Acceptable maintain score
− Unsatisfactory − 4pts
late/missing − 10pts

HOW TO DO WELL IN THIS COURSE!

1. Attend all classes.

Be sure to take good notes. The slide shows displayed in class will not be made available at any other time. Need help with taking notes? See the PDF entitled ‘Taking Notes’ posted on Blackboard.

Class participation will not be formally part of your grade. However, your class participation will be noted, and may make the difference between, say, a C+ and a B-, if your average is otherwise borderline. Need help with class participation? There is a lot of useful information here:
http://www.studygs.net/classrm.htm.

I am also available to discuss note taking and class participation strategies with you, so please do not hesitate to ask!

2. Do the readings.

The required text for this course is: Cahn, Steven M. (ed.), Exploring Philosophy: An Introductory Anthology. 3rd edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009. Please note that this is the third edition. The book is available on Amazon new for $48.50; used copies are available for less.

Additional readings and materials will be made available via Blackboard. Please make sure that you have access to Blackboard and have registered a working email address that you check often in order to receive announcements about the course.
3. Complete and submit all writing assignments on time.

The writing assignments will count for 35% of your final grade. There will be ten in all, and the PDF of assignment questions is posted on Blackboard. The Wednesday due dates are indicated by * on the schedule below. Each writing assignment is to be typed, double-spaced, and should consist of one clear, concise, well-thought-out paragraph, not to exceed one page (about 300 words).

Your grade for the writing assignments will be determined as follows:
− Each student begins the semester with a perfect score (100 points).
− Submitted writing assignments will be graded as √−, √, or √+. Students who receive a √ will not lose any points from their score. A √− results in the deduction of 4 points from your score. A √+ adds 2 points to your score (not to exceed 100).
− A missed writing assignment results in the deduction of 10 points from your score.

A hard copy of each writing assignment must be submitted at the beginning of the class at which it is due. Late submissions (including submission in the middle of, or at the end of, class) will not be accepted. If you cannot make a class at which a writing assignment is due, you may: (1) submit the writing assignment to me at the class prior to the class at which the assignment is due; or (2) give your assignment to a trustworthy friend who will be in class to submit for you. The only time emailed assignments will be accepted are for sudden illness; in such cases, the assignment must be in my inbox prior to the start of class.

Please read the PDF posted on Blackboard entitled ‘Writing Tips’ for useful information about how to get a √ or √+ on your writing assignments. Need more help with writing? Get assistance at the library: http://library.brooklyn.cuny.edu, and/or come talk to me.

4. Study for and take the quiz and exams.

There is one quiz worth 10% of your final grade.

The midterm will count for 25% of your final grade. The final exam (non-cumulative) will count for 30% of your final grade.

The quiz and midterm will be administered in class—see the dates on the schedule below. The final will be 25 May, 10:30am-12:30pm. Please note that make-up finals will not be given.

Please be aware of the NY State Education Law, which provides that:

i. Any student in an institution of higher education who is unable, because of their religious beliefs, to attend classes on a particular day or days shall, because of such absence on the particular day or days, be excused from any examination or any study or work requirements.

ii. It shall be the responsibility of the faculty to make available to each student who is absent from school, because of religious beliefs, an equivalent opportunity to make up any examination, study or work requirements which they may have missed because of such absence on any particular day or days.

iii. Any student who is aggrieved by the alleged failure of any faculty or administrative officials to comply in good faith shall be entitled to maintain an action or proceeding in the supreme court of the county in which such institution of higher education is located for the enforcement of their rights.

If you cannot attend a class, quiz, or exam due to religious beliefs, please make alternate arrangements with me well in advance.
5. Ask!

Ask for help, ask for clarification, ask me to repeat something—don’t hesitate to ask! Ask questions in class, stop by my office hours (feel free to bring a friend!), or drop me an email.

CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE

It is important that we create a classroom environment that is conducive to doing philosophy. To that end:

Please get to class on time and keep absences to a minimum. A large number of absences may adversely affect your grade. If lateness becomes an issue, I may cease to allow latecomers into class.

All questions and comments should be made with respect for me and your fellow students. Hurtful or disparaging comments or behavior will not be tolerated. Speaking informally but respectfully about potentially sensitive subjects is one of the important skills this course aims to develop.

The use of cell phones is not permitted. Cell phones should not be seen or heard in class. If you must take a call, please exit the room quickly and quietly. Disruption from a cell phone will result in the student being asked to leave the classroom.

Eating and drinking in class is permissible, so long as it is not disruptive to others. Please avoid foods with strong odors or that cannot be eaten neatly and quietly. Please make sure that all beverages have lids. If you make a mess, it is your responsibility to clean it up. If you leave trash in the classroom, your eating/drinking privileges will be revoked.

Laptops/netbooks will be allowed in class for the purpose of taking notes. If it becomes apparent that you are using your computer for other purposes (e.g., games), then your computer privileges will be revoked.

POLICY FOR GRADE CHALLENGES & DISCUSSION

There are no extra credit assignments in this course. Please keep copies of all returned work.

If you do not understand why you received a particular grade, you should definitely seek clarification from me. Under no circumstances will this result in your grade being lowered.

If you think you did not receive credit for a correct answer, you must first email me to explain why you believe the grade is unfair, providing textual evidence supporting your claim. If you still have concerns after I have reviewed and responded to your email, we can then meet to discuss those concerns. Please note that I will not discuss possible grade changes until you have submitted something in writing.
SCHEDULE

31 Jan – Welcome & Introduction

Critical Thinking
2 Feb – Identifying and evaluating arguments – PDFs of the reading and exercises on Blackboard
7 Feb – Identifying and evaluating arguments, cont’d – PDFs of the reading and exercises on Blackboard
9 Feb – In-class quiz on identifying and evaluating arguments

Knowledge
14 Feb – Russell’s “Appearance and Reality”
16 Feb* – Malcolm’s “Knowledge and Belief”
21 Feb – Presidents’ Day – NO CLASS
23 Feb* – Ayer’s “What is Knowledge?” & Gettier’s “Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?”
28 Feb – Plato’s Meno p97-108
2 Mar* – Plato’s Meno p109-116
7 Mar – Plato’s Meno p117-end

Mind
9 Mar* – Descartes’ “Meditations on First Philosophy” Second Meditation, p169
14 Mar – Nagel’s “What Is It Like to Be a Bat?”
16 Mar* – Searle’s “Do Computers Think?”

21 Mar – MIDTERM

Free Will
23 Mar – Nagel’s “Free Will”
28 Mar – Ayer’s “Freedom and Necessity”
30 Mar* – Cahn’s “Freedom or Determinism?”

God
4 Apr – Nagel’s “Does God Exist?” focus on cosmological arguments
6 Apr* – Nagel’s “Does God Exist?” focus on arguments from design
11 Apr – Swinburne’s “Why God Allows Evil”
13 Apr* – Blackburn’s “Pascal’s Wager”

17 – 26 Apr – Spring Break

Moral Theory
27 Apr – Rachel’s “The Challenge of Cultural Relativism”
2 May – Mill’s “Utilitarianism”
4 May* – Kant’s “Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals”
9 May – Cahn’s “A Supreme Moral Principle?”
11 May* – Aristotle’s “Nicomachean Ethics”
16 May – Aristotle’s “Nicomachean Ethics” cont’d

18 May – Conclusion & Exam review

25 May – FINAL EXAM 10:30am-12:30pm

* indicates Writing Assignment Due
LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1) Students will improve critical thinking by developing skills of explaining, critically examining, and responding to philosophical theories, issues, and claims in the philosophical areas of epistemology, metaphysics, and ethics.
2) Students will improve writing skills by explaining, exploring, and critically examining philosophical theories, issues, concepts, and arguments relating to the philosophical areas of epistemology, metaphysics, and ethics.
3) Students will improve communication skills by explaining orally philosophical theories, issues, claims, concepts, and arguments relating to the philosophical areas of epistemology, metaphysics, and ethics.
4) Students will improve skills of interpreting and evaluating philosophical writings.
5) Students will develop an openness to having their beliefs challenged, will learn to hear and comprehend the views of others, and to entertain objections to their own views.
6) Students will be able to explain several classic ethical theories, to compare and contrast ethical theories, and to apply these to justify conclusions relating to concrete moral issues.
7) Students will acquire a familiarity with and an understanding of some classic and contemporary philosophical literature and some fundamental philosophical issues, and will be able to explain important contributions to the history of philosophy and their relation to present viewpoints.
8) Students will be able to explain several classic epistemological theories, and to compare and contrast theories of what knowledge is and how it is acquired.
9) Students will be able to show that issues may be regarded from multiple viewpoints, and will be able to present reasons in support of each viewpoint.
10) Students will improve reasoning skills and ethical decision making skills by acquiring an understanding of ethical theories and philosophical concepts that will enable them to develop their own opinions on conceptions and practices of moral interaction and democracy.
11) Students will develop a conceptual foundation for future learning by exploring philosophical theories and arguments and will acquire related critical thinking and communication skills.

CUNY POLICY ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

The faculty and administration of Brooklyn College support an environment free from cheating and plagiarism. Each student is responsible for being aware of what constitutes cheating and plagiarism and for avoiding both. The complete text of the CUNY Academic Integrity Policy and the Brooklyn College procedure for implementing that policy can be found at this site: http://www.brooklyn.cuny.edu/bc/policies. If a faculty member suspects a violation of academic integrity and, upon investigation, confirms that violation, or if the student admits that violation, the faculty member MUST report the violation.

CUNY POLICY ON DISABILITY SERVICES

In order to receive disability-related academic accommodations, students must first be registered with the Center for Student Disability Services. Students who have a documented disability or suspect they may have a disability are invited to set up an appointment with the Director of the Center for Student Disability Services, Ms. Valerie Stewart-Lovell at 718-951-5538. If you have already registered with the Center for Student Disability Services, please provide me with the course accommodation form and discuss your specific accommodation with me immediately.