

PHIL 375: PHILOSOPHY AND LITERATURE

Summer 2017, Term 1 (Sect. 001)

Meets: T 13:00-16:00 and R 13:00-16:00 BUCH A201

Instructor:

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TA:

Matthew Kinakin

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Please make sure that every time you write an email to either the instructor or the TA the subject line of your email contains the phrase "PHIL 375".

Office Hours:

Stefan: TBA

TA: TBA

Description

PHIL 375 "Philosophy and Literature" addresses philosophical issues in works of literature or arising from theories of literary interpretation. Topics include issues relating to relativism, the nature of morality, free will, personal identity, and the nature of the emotions. This course in particular will be about the question what the interpretation of texts and the methods associated with interpretation (hermeneutics) can teach us about more general philosophical questions such as metaphysics, moral responsibility, and personal identity.

Learning Objectives (and their relationship to course activities)

Students who successfully complete the course will be able to:

1. Outline a complex argument in an assigned text, stating premises and conclusion.
2. Assess the strength of arguments in assigned texts and in their own writing.
4. Complete an essay that discusses and evaluates arguments with a clear structure and well-supported arguments.
5. Discuss and defend one's own view of a particular issue in the history of the hermeneutic tradition.

Required Readings

There is a list of required readings in the schedule. The readings will be made available on UBC Connect.

Course Website

We have a site on the UBC course website system called “Connect.” We will use the Connect site only to submit papers and provide access to readings. Official grades will be in an instructor spreadsheet, not on the UBC Connect site. To access our course Connect site, go to this site and log in with your Campus Wide Login and password: <http://elearning.ubc.ca/connect/>

Evaluation/Assignments

25% Final Exam

The final exam, like Essay #1, is a personal reflection essay where you respond to a final exam question by writing about what you learned from the readings. The final exam essay is not meant to be written in the style of a rigorous academic paper like Essay #2. You will be graded on your level of engagement with the readings and your own experience. The final exam will be held during the exam period for Term 1, which is June 26-30, 2017.

The final exam will also contain a short answer/multiple choice section which tests your knowledge and comprehension of the readings. To prepare for it, do all the readings required for the class and take some notes that you can review before the final exam. No extensive studying before the exam should be necessary. If you have read the material and reminded yourself of the main ideas of the readings and their authors, you should comfortably pass this requirement.

25% Reading Assessments

There is a fair bit of reading to do for this course. There will be reading assessments (iClicker questions) to ensure that students read these texts carefully. You must have an iClicker available for this course. iClickers are available at the UBC Bookstore. There will also be in-class question sessions where you can submit anonymous written questions. To ensure participation in these in-class question sessions, I will take attendance, and the attendance record constitutes 5% out of 25% of the reading assessments.

50% Essays

The first essay assignment (**Essay #1**) is an assignment that you submit in class on Thursday, May 25, 2017. You must not be late for this class, as the submissions of latecomers will be marked with a penalty. It is freestyle, which means that you have a fair amount of artistic licence. The idea is to write a literary text based on the idea that your life and the narrative associated with it provides a “text” for interpretation. Some questions to pursue are whether there are overall meanings or intentions in your life; what the role of contingency and randomness is; whether there is some kind of narrative with a beginning, an ending, and a middle that holds your life together; and what the continuity of personal identity is throughout the history or story of your life. This essay (and *only* this essay) can be submitted in handwriting. There is no length requirement. (25%)

The second essay assignment (**Essay #2**) is an assignment that you submit in class on Thursday, June 22, 2017. You must not be late for this class, as the submissions of latecomers will be marked with a penalty. Essay #2 is very different from Essay #1. It is an academic paper in which you address a philosophical question or a question of literary criticism based on the readings. The essay will be marked on content (clarity of presentation, strength of argument, relevance of thesis) and form (spelling, grammar, presentation in print). This paper will be six pages in length, where “six pages”

means that the length of the paper must be at least six pages and at most seven pages. Use 1½ line spacing and a font between 11pt and 12pt. (25%)

Course Policies

Class Etiquette and rules:

- I don't encourage the use of computers during class time, although you may do so if you are taking notes. Use the computer as you would on an airplane, i.e. off-line.
- Often it's best to raise your hand if you want to speak, but I'm also happy to have free-form discussions in class where people don't raise their hands as long as everyone is respectful of others (avoid cutting others off, interrupting them when they're in the middle of saying something).
- Basic rules of respectful dialogue will be enforced. Disrespectful speech such as name-calling, stereotyping, and derogatory remarks about ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation and sexual/gender identity should be avoided and may constitute harassing speech.
- Harassing speech will not be tolerated. The UBC Equity office defines harassment as follows: "Harassment, a form of discrimination, is a comment, conduct or behaviour that humiliates, intimidates, excludes and isolates an individual or group based on the BC Human Rights Code's thirteen grounds of prohibited discrimination." The thirteen grounds of prohibited discrimination are: age, ancestry, colour, family status, marital status, physical and mental disability, place of origin, political belief, race, religion, sex (including gender and pregnancy), sexual orientation, unrelated criminal conviction. Examples of harassment include "repeated derogatory comments or jokes based on one of the prohibited grounds," and "discussing the culture of other classmates, co-workers, or colleagues in a disrespectful or ridiculing manner."

General information on assignments: Students should retain a copy of all submitted assignments and should also retain all their marked assignments in case they wish to apply for a Review of Assigned Standing. A final examination becomes the property of the University and must remain in the possession of the University for one year from the date of the examination, after which it should be destroyed or otherwise disposed of in accordance with UBC policy.

Policies on late or missed assignments

- * All essays are due in class on the day noted on the schedule below and on the assignment instructions. Essay #1 must be submitted in hardcopy at the beginning of class on May 25, 2017. I encourage submission of Essay #2 via the Connect site. Late essays are subject to a 5% -per-weekday reduction in points (starting after the beginning of class time on the due date), unless due to an excused absence (may require documentation). The first late day carries an extra penalty of 5%. If you know you are going to miss a due date, the sooner you talk to the instructor or TA, the more amenable we will be to grant an extension (providing, of course, that your excuse is a valid one that makes turning work in on time very difficult or impossible).
- * Final exam: According to the UBC Calendar, if you miss a final exam during the official examination periods, you must follow the procedures to request "Academic Concession."

Grading Standards

The following provide general guidelines that apply to all courses in the Faculty of Arts, including this one.

The following guidelines offer a broad-brush characterization of the type of work that might be associated with various ranges of grades. The intent here is to encourage general consistency across the Faculty of Arts rather than to provide precise specifications.

80% to 100% (A- to A+) *Exceptional* performance: strong evidence of original thinking; good organization; capacity to analyze and synthesize; superior grasp of subject matter with sound critical evaluations; evidence of extensive knowledge base.

68% to 79% (B- to B+) *Competent* performance: evidence of grasp of subject matter; some evidence of critical capacity and analytic ability; reasonable understanding of relevant issues; evidence of familiarity with the literature.

50% to 67% (D to C+) *Adequate* performance: understanding of the subject matter; ability to develop solutions to simple problems in the material; acceptable but uninspired work, not seriously faulty but lacking style and vigour.

00% to 49% (F) *Inadequate* performance: little or no evidence of understanding of the subject matter; weakness in critical and analytic skills; limited or irrelevant use of the literature.

Marks in this course may be scaled (see Calendar, under Grading Practices).

Equity and special arrangements: Any student in this course who has a disability that may prevent him or her from fully demonstrating his or her abilities should contact me as soon as possible to discuss any accommodations necessary to secure equal participation and the full array of educational opportunities. UBC accommodates students with disabilities who have registered with the Disability Resource Centre. UBC accommodates students whose religious obligations conflict with attendance, submitting assignments, or completing scheduled tests and examinations. Please let me know in advance, preferably in the first week of class, if you will require any accommodation on these grounds (you must notify your instructor at least two weeks in advance, according to the university policy cited above). Students who plan to be absent for varsity athletics, family obligations, or other similar commitments, cannot assume they will be accommodated, and should discuss their commitments with the instructor before the drop date.

Academic Dishonesty: I take academic dishonesty seriously, because ensuring that your grades reflect your own work is crucial to your own learning experience, to fairness to the rest of the students, and to those who expect your transcript to reflect your own efforts. Accordingly, I am vigilant about preventing, detecting, and deterring academic misconduct whenever possible, and to punishing cases of it to the fullest extent allowed by university policy. Please review the UBC Calendar Academic regulations for the university policy on cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty.

Schedule of Readings and Assignments

A detailed schedule of readings and assignments is available on UBC Connect. It will be updated as the course progresses. Here are some of the works we will touch on:

Friedrich Ast: Hermeneutics.

Friedrich Schleiermacher: 1819 Lectures.

Wilhelm Dilthey: The Rise of Hermeneutics.

Martin Heidegger: Being and Time.

Hans-Georg Gadamer: Truth and Method.

Jürgen Habermas: TBA.

Paul Ricoeur: TBA.

Friedrich Nietzsche: Selection from Transforming the Hermeneutic Context (edited by Gayle Ormiston and Alan Schrift).

Karl Popper: The Logic of Scientific Discovery.

Karl Popper: The Problem of Demarcation.

Karl Popper: Conjectures and Refutations.

Galen Strawson: Against Narrativity.

Jean-Paul Sartre: Existentialism is a Humanism.

Roland Barthes: The Death of the Author.

Michel Foucault: The Incitement to Discourse.

Michel Foucault: Nietzsche, Genealogy, History.

Michel Foucault: Nietzsche, Freud, Marx.

Charles Taylor: What Is Human Agency?

Charles Taylor: Foucault on Freedom and Truth.

Charles Taylor: Interpretation and the Sciences of Man.

Odo Marquard: In Praise of Polytheism.

Leszek Kolakowski: *Fabula Mundi* and *Cleopatra's Nose*.

Steven Pinker: *The Language Instinct*.

Jacques Derrida: *On Grammatology*.