INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY – SPRING 2016
PHIL 1301.002 (73795), CI 127, TR 11:00-12:15

INSTRUCTOR AND OFFICE INFORMATION:
Stefan Sencerz, Ph.D. Office: FC 261; 825-2392; hours: TR 1:00-3:15; MW 1:00-3:13 and by appointment. E-mail: stefan.sencerz@tamucc.edu; web: http://falcon.tamucc.edu/~sencerz/intro_to_philosophy.htm

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND ORGANIZATION: We will begin by studying methods of philosophical analysis that will be used during the semester. These methods will be used to analyze three major philosophical issues. First, our senses are deceptive and our mental faculties are deficient. Frequently we make mistakes. How is this compatible with the claim that we know anything? Second, it seems that everything in the universe is caused. Yet we also seem to control our own destiny; we seem to act like free agents. Is the claim that our actions are free compatible with the view that everything is caused? Third, God is supposed to be all good, all knowing, and all powerful. Does such a being exist? How is this compatible with the fact that there is so much evil in the world?

Class meetings will consist of both lectures and discussions. Questions, discussions, disagreement and argument is expected and strongly encouraged at any time. The amount and quality of your participation will contribute to your grade. The emphasis will be put on rational procedures for evaluating controversies, both within philosophy and elsewhere. Your grade will not depend on any particular view you may adopt. But it will depend on your understanding of these views and arguments in their support.

The instructor hopes that, by taking this class, you will acquire and take with you an interest in philosophical issues, and develop your own views on a variety of them.

REQUIRED TEXTS: Simon Blackburn, Think (Oxford UP).
A set of outlines for Introduction to Philosophy: http://falcon.tamucc.edu/~sencerz/intro_to_philosophy.htm
Additional readings may be distributed in class

If you miss a class, make sure that you have copies of all additional handouts distributed in the class. Notice that handouts and review quizzes are intended primarily as aids to the understanding of the lectures and readings. They do not cover all of the material on which you may be tested, and they do not contain complete accounts of the topics they do cover. Merely memorizing the handouts will not enable you to pass the course.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES: Students taking the course will be expected to:
1) demonstrate (on test questions) an understanding of a variety of philosophical theories and principles;
2) write essays and case studies in which those theories and principles will be applied to contemporary philosophical controversies;
3) develop their reasoning skills and demonstrate that development on quiz and test questions;
4) construct and evaluate arguments on more than one side of the issue in essays and case studies.

REQUIREMENTS
1) Complete the assigned readings before the class for which they are assigned.
2) Attend every class, arrive to class on time and remain in class until it is over.
3) Complete all graded assignments.

GRADED WORK
25% -- The first test
25% -- The second test
25% -- The third test
25% -- Attendance and participation.
Grading will be on the standard 90-100% = A, 80-89% = B, etc.
ATTENDANCE POLICY: Attending class enables students to participate in discussion and learn from both the instructor and their classmates. Also, lecture material will be covered in detail on attendance quizzes and tests.

Almost each week there will be a short quiz or a case study testing your understanding of the material assigned for the class; please, expect 7-9 short assignments throughout the semester, one worst grade will be dropped. All tests will have both a multiple choice component and an essay part.

You can miss 2 classes without penalty. Each additional unexcused absence will result in the loss of credit you would have earned during the class you miss. Late arrivals and early departures disrupt the class; therefore, they are discouraged. (In case of necessity, please inform the instructor beforehand, if possible.)

PLAGIARISM: Representing someone else's work as your own is known as plagiarism. Whether it is done intentionally (e.g. cheating) or innocently (e.g. failing to place proper quotation marks) plagiarism is a serious offense. Plagiarized work will be assigned a grade of “F.”

MAKE-UP TESTS AND INCOMPLETE: Students who miss a test for a good reason will have a chance to take a make-up during the week after the original test, at a time arranged with the instructor. An incomplete for the course is possible only in cases where course work is nearly complete, and the student has a good excuse for not completing the course work by the end of the semester.

ACADEMIC ADVISING

The College of Liberal Arts requires that students meet with an Academic Advisor as soon as they are ready to declare a major. Degree plans are prepared in the CLA Academic Advising Center. The University uses an online Degree Audit system. Any amendment must be approved by the Department Chair and the Office of the Dean. All courses and requirements specified in the final degree plan audit must be completed before a degree will be granted. The CLA Academic Advising Office is located in Driftwood #203. For more information please call 361-825-3466 or log onto http://www.tamucc.edu/~aac.

DISABILITY SERVICES

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please call or visit Disability Services at (361) 825-5816 in Corpus Christi Hall, Room #116.

If you are a returning veteran and are experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues in the classroom or on campus, please contact the Disability Services office for assistance at (361) 825-5816.

GRADE APPEALS PROCESS

Students who feel that they have not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in this class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details on the process of submitting a formal grade appeal, please visit the College of Liberal Arts website, cla.tamucc.edu/students/studentinfo.html. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean’s Office.
TENTATIVE SCHEDULE: Main primary readings posted here:
Lecture outlines posted here: http://www.tamucc.edu/~sencerz/intro_to_philosophy.htm

W1 01/21 Organization and general introduction
W2 01/26 What Is Philosophy? Read “The APA Statement on Philosophy
http://falcon.tamucc.edu/~philosophy/pmwiki/pmwiki.php?n=PhilosophyProgram.APASTatementonPhilosophy

I: WHAT DO WE KNOW?
W3 02/02 Reasoning and the methods of philosophical analyses
Blackburn, Chapter 6 and Sencerz [http://www.tamucc.edu/~sencerz/METHOD.htm]
Definitions, justification and truth; arguments
W4 02/09 Reasoning and the methods of philosophical analysis continued
W5 02/16 The concept of knowledge [Blackburn, Chapter 1]
Sober, Theory of Knowledge [H]
W6 02/23 Knowledge and the problem of Skepticism
Rene Descartes, "Meditation One"
W7 03/01 Review and Summary
W7 03/03 The First Test

II. THE PROBLEM OF FREEDOM AND DETERMINISM
W8 03/08 Some basic concepts related to freedom and determinism; Free Will Problem [H]
03/14-18 Spring Break
W9 03/21 Hard Determinism and Indeterminism
Paul Ree, "Determinism and Illusion of Moral Responsibility"
A.J. Ayer, "Freedom and Necessity" [selections]
Chisholm, "Human Freedom and The Self" [selections]
W10 03/28 Indeterminism and Soft Determinism; read: A.J. Ayer, "Freedom and Necessity"
Libertarianism Read: Roderick M. Chisholm, "Human Freedom and The Self"
W11 04/05 Libertarianism Continued Summary and Reviews
W11 04/12 The Second Test

I. PHILOSOPHICAL THEOLOGY
W12 04/14 The concept of God; some popular arguments for and against God's existence
John Hicks, "Who or What is God" [ http://www.johnhick.org.uk/article1.html ]
Also, to be distributed in class (Wierenga, “Divine Attributes”, Owen, “Theism”, Geach, “Omnipotence”, The Vatican Position Evolves; Pascal, "The Wager")
W13 04/19 Argument from Design; read: William Paley, "The Watch and The Human Eye"
W14 04/26 The Causal Arguments for God's existence
St. Thomas Aquinas, "The Five Ways"
Leibniz, "On the Ultimate Origination of the Universe"
W15 05/02 The Problem of Evil; read: J.L. Mackie, "Evil and Omnipotence"

The Final Test TBD