INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY – SPRING 2020
PHIL 1301.004, CI-106, MW 5:30 – 6:45

INSTRUCTOR AND OFFICE INFORMATION:
Office: Faculty Center 261; phone 825-2392; hours: hours: MW 3:30-5:00, TR 12:15-1:50; 3:15-4, and BA. E-mail: stefan.sencerz@tamucc.edu;

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).
Additional readings will be distributed in class and/or posted on the “Black Board”

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
30% -- The second test
30% -- The third test
15% -- Attendance and participation. (6 x 2.5)
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 8 short assignments throughout the semester, 6 best will count. 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: University students are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of academic honesty. Academic misconduct for which a student is subject to penalty includes all forms of cheating, such as illicit possession of examinations or examination materials, falsification, forgery, complicity or plagiarism. (Plagiarism is the presentation of the work of another as one’s own work.) In this class, academic misconduct or complicity in an act of academic misconduct on an assignment or test will result in a grade of F.

Definition: In an instructional setting, plagiarism occurs when a writer deliberately uses someone else’s language, ideas, or other original (not common-knowledge) material without acknowledging its source. Plagiarism is a violation academic expectations, but it is sometimes difficult to understand what plagiarism actually is. Often, students commit unintentional plagiarism (not citing sources properly, for example), because they are unaware of the standards that apply. Plagiarism includes:

- Using the work of another as your own,
- Downloading or purchasing ready-made essays off the web and using them as your own,
- Using resource materials without correct documentation,
- Using the organization or language of a source without using quote marks and proper citation.
- Turning in a researched project without citing sources in an appropriate documentation style.

When you are confused about citation of quotes or ideas, please visit the Writing Center or me to get help. Information on MLA documentation rules and APA documentation rules is available at Purdue University’s OWL: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/, and from our local Writing Center at CASA.

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.

DISSABILITY ACCOMMODATIONS: 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 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.

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.

GRADE APPEAL: As stated in University Procedure 13.02.99.C0.03, Student Grade Appeal Procedures, a student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see University Procedure 13.02.99.C0.03, Student Grade Appeal Procedures. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Dean’s office in the college in which the course is taught or the Office of the Provost. These documents are accessible

DROPPING A CLASS: I hope that you never find it necessary to drop this or any other class. However, events can sometimes occur that make dropping a course necessary or wise. Please consult with your academic advisor, the Financial Aid Office, and me, before you decide to drop this course. Should dropping the course be the best course of action, you must initiate the process to drop the course by going to the Student Services Center and filling out a course drop form. Just stopping attendance and participation WILL NOT automatically result in your being dropped from the class. The last day to drop a class for the spring semester is April 10, 2020.

CLASSROOM/PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOR: TAMU-CC, as an academic community, requires that each individual respect the needs of others to study and learn in a peaceful atmosphere. Under Article III of the Student Code of Conduct, classroom behavior that interferes with either (a) the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or (b) the ability of other students to profit from the instructional program may be considered a breach of the peace and is subject to disciplinary sanction outlined in article VII of the Student Code of Conduct. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior may be instructed to leave the classroom. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including classrooms, electronic classrooms, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc.

STATEMENT OF CIVILIY: Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi has a diverse student population that represents the population of the state. Our goal is to provide you with a high quality educational experience that is free from repression. You are responsible for following the rules of the University, city, state and federal government. We expect that you will behave in a manner that is dignified, respectful and courteous to all people, regardless of sex, ethnic/racial origin, religious background, sexual orientation or disability. Behaviors that infringe on the rights of another individual will not be tolerated.

THE FINE PRINT: For all matters concerning course withdrawal, appeal of grades, academic misconduct, etc., students are strongly advised to consult the rules outlined in the Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi Student Handbook and on the web at: http://studentaffairs.tamucc.edu/.


01/20 MLK Holiday
01/22 Organization and general introduction
  http://falcon.tamucc.edu/~philosophy/pmwiki/pmwiki.php?n=PhilosophyProgram.APASatementonPhiloso
phony
01/27 Reasoning and the methods of philosophical analyses.
  Truth, Justification, Arguments, and Definitions
02/03 The Concept of Knowledge [D.A. Truncellito “Epistemology”] [http://www.iep.utm.edu/epistemo]
02/10 The Concept of Knowledge (continued)
  The Problem of Skepticism [Blackburn, Chapter 1; Descartes, “Meditation One”]
02/17 Theories of justification and how much do we know?
02/24 The First Test – 25%

II. THE PROBLEM OF FREEDOM AND DETERMINISM

03/01 Some basic concepts related to freedom and determinism; Free Will Problem [H]
  Blackburn, Chapter 3, “Free Will”
03/08-09 SPRING BREAK
04/15  Hard Determinism and Indeterminism (Blackburn, Chapter 2, again)
Paul Ree, “Determinism and Illusion of Moral Responsibility”

03/22  Soft-Determinism (Compatibilism)
A.J. Ayer, "Freedom and Necessity" [selections]

03/29  Libertarianism Read: Roderick M. Chisholm, “Human Freedom and The Self” (selections)

04/06  The Second Test – 25%

04/13  The concept of God
John Hicks, “Who or What is God” [http://www.johnhick.org.uk/article1.html], Blackburn Ch. 5.

04/20  Soft popular arguments for and against God's existence, Pascal, "The Wager",
The Causal Arguments for God's existence, Argument from Design
St. Thomas Aquinas, "The Five Ways"; Leibniz, "On the Ultimate Origination of the Universe"

04/27  Design Arguments
The Problem of Evil

The Final Tests (30%): TBA