PHILOSOPHY AND FILM
PHIL 1500

Class Hours: 3.0  Credit Hours: 3.0
Laboratory Hours: 0.0  Revised: Spring 09

Catalog Course Description:

Examines classical philosophical questions concerning knowledge, truth, minds, bodies, persons, morality, religion, and the meaning of life as raised in and through the medium of contemporary film.

Entry Level Standards:

Students must be able to read and write at the college level.

Prerequisites:

None

Textbook(s) and Other Course Materials:

Films: readily available at video rental stores, online, or, when possible, at the media center.

I. Week/Unit/Topic Basis:

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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Syllabus; What is philosophy?</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Knowledge and Truth — <em>Total Recall</em></td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Skepticism — <em>The Matrix</em></td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Relativism — <em>Hilary and Jackie</em></td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Personal Identity — <em>Being John Malkovich</em></td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Personal Identity — <em>Memento</em></td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Artificial Intelligence — <em>AI: Artificial Intelligence</em></td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Ethics — <em>Crimes and Misdemeanors</em></td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Free Will, Determinism, and Moral Responsibility — <em>Gattaca</em> and <em>Memento</em></td>
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II. Course Objectives*:

A. Develop a basic understanding of philosophy, its core problems and various branches. I.5, I.7

B. Develop a better sense of the historical development of the questions that have occupied philosophers over the last twenty-five centuries. I.5, I.7, II.4, III.2, IV.4

C. Develop an enhanced ability to think critically about philosophical questions/problems. III.1, III.2, II.6

D. Demonstrate knowledge of basic argumentation and of how fictional work, especially as presented in film, can sometimes function as argumentation. I.1, I.7

E. Develop skill in recognizing arguments implicit in or underlying fictional presentations in film. I.2, II.1, II.6

F. Demonstrate ability to relate/compare/contrast said arguments to those found in traditional philosophical literature. I.6, II.2, II.4, II.5, II.6, IV.4

G. Demonstrate skill in evaluating and criticizing arguments in terms of the evidence presented and the reasoning involved. I.2, I.7, II.6

H. Demonstrate an enhanced ability, both orally and in writing, to articulate one’s thoughts concerning philosophical issues. I.3, I.4, I.5, III.1, III.2

*Roman numerals after course objectives reference TBR’s general education goals.

III. Instructional Processes*:

Students will:

1. View assigned films. Communication Outcome, Humanities and/or Fine Arts Outcome

2. Read and study assigned chapters in textbook. Communication Outcome, Humanities and/or Fine Arts Outcome, History Outcome

3. Participate in class discussions, listen to the views of others, and develop a dialogue with the instructor and fellow class members. Communication Outcome, Humanities and/or Fine Arts Outcome, History Outcome, Active Learning Strategies

4. Be encouraged to carry on serious discussions in non-academic settings and to do so with tolerance and openness to the views of others. Communication Outcome, Transitional Strategies, Active Learning Strategies
5. Take objective quizzes and exams covering assigned materials. *Communication Outcome, Humanities and/or Fine Arts Outcome, History Outcome*

6. Write argument-backed essays reflecting their own developing views on the issues. *Communication Outcome, Humanities and/or Fine Arts Outcome, Transitional Strategies, Active Learning Strategies*

7. Consider ways in which these ideas are relevant to their lives. *Humanities and/or Fine Arts Outcome, Social/Behavioral Science Outcome, History Outcome, Transitional Strategies, Active Learning Strategies*

8. Internalize the work ethic by attending class regularly, being punctual, being dependable, contributing to class discussions, cooperating with the teacher and classmates, and acting in a professional manner while in class. *Communication Outcome, Transitional Strategies, Active Learning Strategies*

9. Be encouraged to live a life that is truly informed by the light of reason. *Humanities and/or Fine Arts Outcome, Transitional Strategies.*

*Strategies and outcomes listed after instructional processes reference TBR's goals for strengthening general education knowledge and skills, connecting course work to experiences beyond the classroom, and encouraging students to take active and responsible roles in the educational process.*

**IV. Expectations for Student Performance:**

Upon successful completion of this course, the student should be able to:

1. Give the etymology of the word “philosophy” and list the four major “branches” of the discipline along with their focus. A, B

2. Explain the distinction between knowledge and truth and the relationship between them. A, C

3. Sketch and evaluate the reasoning that leads to skepticism. A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H

4. Sketch and evaluate the main arguments for and against relativism. A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H

5. Discuss the challenges faced by the notion of personal identity owing to changes in the self. A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H

6. Discuss the notion of intelligence and the relationship of intelligence to the nature of the entity that possesses it. A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H

7. Compare and contrast the descriptive and the normative. A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H

8. Evaluate grounds for normative claims. A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H

9. Explain how determinism challenges the existence of free will and of moral responsibility. A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H

10. Sketch the challenge that evil raises to the idea of a good God. A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H

11. Evaluate the theodicy responding to the problem of evil. A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H

12. Outline the basic claims of existentialism and the challenges existentialism raises against the received notions about human nature and the meaning of life. A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H
13. Consider what meaning life may have and what the source of that meaning may be. A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H

14. Demonstrate awareness of the historical dialogue that has addressed the core problems of philosophy as exhibited in expectations 1-13, above. A, B, F

15. Demonstrate ability to think critically about philosophical arguments by writing insightful, appropriately developed essays. C, D, E, F, H

16. Demonstrate ability to recognize and evaluate both explicit and implicit arguments. A, C, D, E, G, H

17. Articulate and support personal views with reference to primary works. B, D, G, H

18. Relate arguments implicit in contemporary film to primary philosophical works. A, B, D, E, F, G, H

*Letters after performance expectations reference the course objectives listed above.

V. Evaluation:

A. Testing Procedures: 30% of grade

   Midterm (15)
   Final (15)

B. Laboratory Expectations:

   N/A

C. Field Work: 50% of grade

   Journal-essays; Five at 10% each

D. Other Evaluation Methods: 20% of grade

   Classroom participation: Each day, students will execute a signed contract that quantifies their participation (arriving on time and staying for the entire class, studying the reading assignment, contributing to class discussion, etc.)

E. Grading Scale:

   90-100 = A
   85-89 = B+
   80-84 = B
   75-79 = C+
   70-74 = C
   60-69 = D

VI. Policies:

A. Attendance Policy:

   Pellissippi State Technical Community College expects students to attend all scheduled instructional activities. As a minimum, students in all courses must be present for at least 75 percent of their scheduled class and laboratory meetings in order to receive credit for the
B. Academic Dishonesty:

Academic misconduct committed either directly or indirectly by an individual or group is subject to disciplinary action. Cheating [which includes but is not limited unauthorized assistance from material, people, or devices when (a) taking a test, quiz, or examination; (b) writing papers or reports; (c) solving problems; or (d) completing academic assignments] and plagiarism [presenting other persons work without citation or as your own] will not be tolerated. In addition to other possible disciplinary sanctions that may be imposed as a result of academic misconduct, the instructor has the authority to assign, at his discretion, (1) an 'F' or zero (0) for the assignment and/or (2) an 'F' for the course.

C. Accommodations for disabilities:

If you need accommodations because of a disability, if you have emergency medical information to share, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please inform the instructor immediately. Please see the instructor privately after class or in his/her office. Students must present a current accommodation plan from a staff member in Services with Disabilities (SSWD) in order to receive accommodations in this course. Services for Students with Disabilities may contact by going to Goins 127 or 131 or by phone 694-6751(Voice/TTY) or 539-7153.

D. Other Policies:

Prolonged Closure:

In the unlikely event that PSTCC undergoes a prolonged closure (perhaps as a consequence of terrorism, a pandemic of avian flu, or an act of God), information about this course and adjustments to enable its continuation will, if possible, be posted at elearn.pstcc.edu (Desire2Learn). If Desire2Learn is unavailable, you should continue readings and other assignments listed in this course syllabus with the understanding that you will be responsible for the material assigned when the college reopens and classes resume. [In any case, you should anticipate that daily work scores will be replaced by scores for participation in online discussions on Desire2Learn and/or (additional) examinations that will cover the content of the daily assignments.]