

PELLISSIPPI STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE  
MASTER SYLLABUS

**PHILOSOPHY AND FILM  
PHIL 1500**

**Class Hours: 3.0**

**Credit Hours: 3.0**

**Laboratory Hours: 0.0**

**Revised: Spring 2011**

**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:**

- Text: Litch, Mary M. *Philosophy Through Film*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., New York, NY: Routledge ISBN 978-0-415-99744-7
- Films: readily available at video rental stores, online, or, when possible, at the media center.

**I. Week/Unit/Topic Basis:**

<b>Week</b>	<b>Topic</b>
1	Syllabus; What is philosophy?
2	Skepticism — <i>The Matrix</i>
3	Skepticism — <i>Vanilla Sky</i>
4	Relativism — <i>Hilary and Jackie</i>
5	Personal Identity — <i>Memento</i>
6	Personal Identity — <i>Vanilla Sky</i>
7	Artificial Intelligence — <i>I, Robot</i>
8	Free Will, Determinism, and Moral Responsibility — <i>Memento</i> and <i>Minority Report</i>
9	Ethics — <i>Crimes and Misdemeanors</i>
10	Political Philosophy — <i>Antz</i> and <i>Equilibrium</i>

- 11 The Problem of Evil — *The Rapture* and *The Seventh Seal*
- 12 Existentialism — *The Seventh Seal* and *Crimes and Misdemeanors*
- 13 Existentialism — *Leaving Las Vegas*
- 14 Overview and Review
- 15 Final Exam

## II. Course Goals\*:

The course will

- A. Guide students towards a basic understanding of philosophy, its core problems, various branches, and historical development over the last twenty-five centuries. I.7, II.1, II.4, II.6, III.2, IV.4
- B. Enhance students' basic understanding of argumentation and of how fictional work, especially as presented in film, can sometimes function as argumentation. I.1, I.7
- C. Grow students' skill in recognizing arguments implicit in or underlying fictional presentations in film and in relating these arguments to those found in traditional philosophical sources. I.2, II.1, II.4, II.6
- D. Enhance students' skill at evaluating and criticizing arguments in terms of the evidence presented and the reasoning involved. I.2, I.7, II.6, III.2
- E. Develop students' ability, both orally and in writing, to articulate thoughts concerning philosophical issues. I.2, I.3, I.7, II.6

\*Roman numerals after course objectives reference the university parallel program General Education Goals.

## III. Expected Student Learning Outcomes\*:

Student will 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
- 2. Explain the distinction between knowledge and truth and the relationship between them. A
- 3. Sketch and evaluate the reasoning that leads to skepticism. A, B, C, D, E
- 4. Sketch and evaluate the main arguments for and against relativism. A, B, C, D, E
- 5. Discuss the challenges faced by the notion of personal identity owing to changes in the self. A, B, C, D, E
- 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
- 7. Compare and contrast the descriptive and the normative. A, B, C, D, E
- 8. Evaluate grounds for normative claims. A, B, C, D, E

9. Explain how determinism challenges the existence of free will and of moral responsibility. A, B, C, D, E
10. Sketch the challenge that evil raises to the idea of a good God. A, B, C, D, E
11. Evaluate the theodicy responding to the problem of evil. A, B, C, D, E
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
13. Discuss what meaning life may have and what the source of that meaning may be. A, B, C, D, E
14. Sketch the historical dialogue that has addressed the core problems of philosophy as exhibited in Outcomes 1-13, above. A, B, E
15. Demonstrate ability to think critically about philosophical arguments by writing insightful, appropriately developed essays. C, D, E
16. Point to and evaluate both explicit and implicit arguments. A, B, C, D, E
17. Articulate and support personal views with reference to primary works. B, C, D, E
18. Relate arguments implicit in contemporary film to primary philosophical works. A, B, D, E,

\* Capital letters after Expected Student Learning Outcomes reference the course goals listed above.

#### **IV. 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

## V. Policies:

### A. Attendance Policy:

Pellissippi State expects students to attend all scheduled instructional activities. As a minimum, students in all courses (excluding distance learning courses) must be present for at least 75 percent of their scheduled class and laboratory meetings in order to receive credit for the course. Individual departments/programs/disciplines, with the approval of the vice president of Academic Affairs, may have requirements that are more stringent. In very specific circumstances, an appeal of the policy may be addressed to the head of the department in which the course was taken. If further action is warranted, the appeal may be addressed to the vice president of Academic Affairs.

### B. Academic Dishonesty:

Academic misconduct committed either directly or indirectly by an individual or group is subject to disciplinary action. Prohibited activities include but are not limited to the following practices:

- Cheating, including but not limited to unauthorized assistance from material, people, or devices when taking a test, quiz, or examination; writing papers or reports; solving problems; or completing academic assignments.
- Plagiarism, including but not limited to paraphrasing, summarizing, or directly quoting published or unpublished work of another person, including online or computerized services, without proper documentation of the original source.
- Purchasing or otherwise obtaining prewritten essays, research papers, or materials prepared by another person or agency that sells term papers or other academic materials to be presented as one's own work.
- Taking an exam for another student.
- Providing others with information and/or answers regarding exams, quizzes, homework or other classroom assignments unless explicitly authorized by the instructor.
- Any of the above occurring within the Web or distance learning environment.

### C. Accommodations for disabilities:

Students who need accommodations because of a disability, have emergency medical information to share, or need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated should inform the instructor immediately, privately after class or in her or his office. Students must present a current accommodation plan from a staff member in Services for Students with Disabilities (SSWD) in order to receive accommodations in this course. Services for Students with Disabilities may be contacted by going to Goins 127, 132, 134, 135, 131 or by phone: 539-7153 or TTY 694-6429. More information is available at <http://www.pstcc.edu/sswd/>.