“Intelligence plus character – that is the goal of a true education.” – ML King, Jr.

“A very popular error: having the courage of one’s convictions; rather, it is a matter of having the courage for an attack on one’s convictions!!!” – Friedrich Nietzsche

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Course Rationale
An Introduction to Philosophy course is a place to think about some of the most fundamental issues and problems of human existence, and to examine the ways that others have come to grips with them. We will address a number of these problems in four units this semester:

1) Ethics/Moral Philosophy: How should I live my life in relation to others?
2) Metaphysics: What is truly real? What am I, really? A soul or a body? Do I have a real identity?
3) Philosophy of Religion: How (if at all) is our world related to the divine?
4) Political Philosophy: What is the best kind of government and society? Is my highest obligation to my own well-being, my family, my state, or the moral law?

This course will attempt to bring the relevance of these issues to life by considering short selections from multiple approaches (both classical and contemporary) to each of them. The rigorous reading and discussion of primary texts being central to the philosophical enterprise, we will also devote some time to reading a few (short) complete philosophical texts.

I don’t study the history of philosophy simply for its own sake – to know what Plato or Descartes or Kant thought – nor do I expect you to do so. Rather, I hope more than anything else that by seriously engaging with each of these texts, some of which will call your own presuppositions about the world into question quite radically, you will not simply learn what some of the greatest thinkers of the past have believed about these fundamentally important issues, but will also begin to develop your own positions in thoughtful dialogue with them. To do that, however, each of us has to do what any reasonable person must do in any conversation: come to every text with an open mind, listen critically to what it has to say, analyze carefully the arguments that it gives us, and consider the possibility that what we currently believe – and, more essentially, how we live – might actually be wrong.

Required Texts
Rental Text: Philosophy: The Quest for Truth (6th edition; Louis P. Pojman, editor)
Supplemental Readings: These may be found on WebCat. When you see <Web> on the syllabus, you should go to WebCat, and print out and read the required selection. Please bring the texts to class with you every day so we can refer to them actively in our discussion.

Perspective (P-4) Information
This course is a Perspectives course. The primary goals of the Perspectives courses are:

- To promote love of learning and to cultivate an active interest in the Liberal Studies;
- To build on the Core's foundation through practice and refinement of areas of academic emphasis;
- To provide students with a broadened world view and knowledge base;
- To provide experiences in the arts, humanities, and social sciences from which connections between disciplines can be revealed;
- To provide an introduction to the challenges of living in a global society;
- To create opportunities for reflection on values, and for discussing differences in values in a critical yet tolerant manner;
• To afford opportunities to make career or disciplinary choices.
• To improve the student’s critical analysis of arguments, oral communication, and moral reflection

This course satisfies the P4 Perspective requirement of the Liberal Studies Program. In it, you will be exposed to landmark texts that embody the traditional Western heritage of humanity’s attempt to understand the human condition and that engage you in the exploration of the significance of human modes of being, thought, and values in your life. As in all Liberal Studies Perspective offerings, this course will emphasize reading, writing, and the use of information, as well as one or more of the following: critical analysis, oral communication, service learning, moral reflection, and cultural diversity.

My Course Objectives
Beyond the substantive philosophical goals of 1) developing an understanding of various thinkers’ responses to the complex issues described above and 2) developing your own positions in dialogue with those thinkers, I also hope that you will improve your 3) critical reading skills as well as both your 4) written and 5) oral communication abilities over the course of this semester, through the practice of reading, writing about, and discussing these complex philosophical texts. To do so, you will have to put in enough time and effort outside of class: it’s not enough to come to class and listen to the lectures, you’ve got to practice doing philosophy on your own.

Reading philosophy is hard work, though, and most students find it very difficult to understand the texts we will be looking at with a single reading. Consequently, you may find it necessary to read a selection carefully twice or more before class. For this reason, most of the readings I have selected are fairly short. I expect that you will spend, at minimum, two hours outside of class preparing (reading, taking notes, analyzing the text and summarizing it in your own words, answering the questions in the anthology after each reading), for every hour you spend in class. (Some students may find it necessary to spend more than this!)

Course Policies and Expectations
Attendance: If you aren’t here, you obviously can’t participate in the discussions, so excessive absences will be reflected in your participation grade. The absolute maximum number of allowed absences for this class is 9 (i.e., 10 absences = automatic failure of this course). I take attendance at the beginning of virtually every class; entering the class late (after I have done so) will constitute ½ an absence. In general, “A”-range participation grades will not be awarded to students with 3+ absences.

Preparation and Participation: Since philosophy from Socrates on has been dialogue-oriented, and to help fulfill objective (5) above, students are expected to participate actively in class discussions. Some class days will be, of necessity, more lecture-oriented; others will be more centered on discussion or small-group activities. You should always feel free to ask questions in class. “Good” or “Satisfactory” (“B”- to “C”-range) participation grades may be earned by 1) consistent attendance and 2) answering questions when called on in class. Higher participation grades will be reserved for those who demonstrate that they have carefully read and actively reflected on the assigned reading, by (for example) raising questions and issues for discussion without my prompting. At the end of the term, I will also ask you to turn in a worksheet evaluating your own participation and preparation over the course of the semester. I weigh these self-evaluations heavily in assigning class participation grades. (This worksheet is available on WebCat.) You are also responsible for all messages sent to your catamount.wcu.edu account and WebCat.

In-class time: You have a total of roughly 35 hours of in-class instructional time over the next 3.5 months. Sleeping, text messaging, talking on cell phones, using laptops for reasons besides note-taking, side conversations, and working on other class assignments or personal activities during class are all unacceptable uses of this time. I do not mind if you bring a drink, but I would prefer that you not eat or use tobacco products in this class. All of these activities tend to disrupt the concentration and focus of other students in the class; consequently, engaging in them will constitute grounds for my asking you to leave the class. Please silence your cell phone ringers before class begins.

Attitude: Philosophy and religion classes are natural places for dialogue. For any dialogue to work, however, all the participants must maintain an attitude of humility and openness, both to the text and to the interpretations and comments of others about the issue under discussion. (I will often refer to this attitude...
as a “hermeneutics of charity.”) This does not preclude critique of others’ positions: we will not be leaving behind our capacity for judgment. Here are a few other helpful rules of thumb for our class discussions:

- **Everyone** should be prepared to offer contributions on the reading for that day. If you can’t express something in your own words, you don’t have a good grasp of it yet. As this class is intended to improve your oral articulation, “I’m not good at talking in class” is no more valid an excuse not to speak than “I’m not good at papers” would be to avoid the written assignments.
- On the flip side, one or two people should not dominate the discussion every day. This is unhelpful to you as well as others in the class. It does not give you the chance to hear different opinions and interpretations that might be helpful to your own developing thoughts, and it also does not allow others in the class to work on their own articulation. Do not be offended if I ask you to allow some of your colleagues to participate more on a particular day.
- **Philosophical claims, not persons,** should be the object of assessment, discussion, and criticism. “Ad hominem” attacks are uniformly unhelpful, only serve to silence legitimate discussions, and should be avoided in genuine dialogues.

**Completion of Assignments:** All assignments should be completed by you and turned in **on time.** NOTE:

- If you must miss class, it is **your responsibility** to make other arrangements for turning in work due on that day, to get class notes from another student in the class, to find out if any assignments have been made for the next class, and to turn those in on time.
- Departmental policy dictates that late assignments will be docked **one full grade for each calendar day late (including weekends)** unless you have made prior arrangements with me. Assignments will not be accepted **more than a week after their due date (= zero).**
- **As the point of a philosophy course is for you to learn to think for yourself,** plagiarism (taking credit for someone else’s words or ideas) constitutes grounds for **failure of this class.**
- **ALL** assignments must be turned in to receive a passing grade for the course.

In short, then, you should be present, on time, and prepared to discuss the material for each class session with a charitable attitude, having carefully read and thought about it before class; and complete all assignments by their due date and on your own (unless instructed otherwise).

**Course Assessment**

1) In-class Midterm Examination: 15%
2) Comprehensive Final Examination: 25%
3) Quizzes/Homework: 15% (I will, on occasion, give short quizzes or homework assignments to determine how well you are reading the texts. If I find that quizzing is unnecessary, item (4) will increase to 30%.)
4) Class Preparation and Participation: 15% (Neglecting to bring your book or printed copy of the material from the website to class will constitute a participation grade of zero for that day.)
5) Formal Papers: 30% total (15% each for 2 short papers). The writing for the semester will consist of two essay responses (**minimum 1000 words each**) on Units I and III (specific due dates listed below).

I adhere to the grading policies found in the Western Carolina University Undergraduate Studies Catalog. Please refer to it for the official policies regarding the awarding of grades on written work. Final grades of “A” are, as defined there, reserved not merely for satisfactorily completing all requirements for the class, but for “Excellent” work over the course of the semester.

**The numerical grading scale for the course is as follows:**

- A+ =97+;
- A =93-96;
- A- =90-92;
- B+ =87-89;
- B =83-86;
- B- =80-82;
- C+ =77-79;
- C =73-76;
- C- =70-72;
- D+ =67-69;
- D =63-66;
- D- =60-62;
- F = <60.

**Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:** Western Carolina University is committed to providing equal educational opportunities for students with documented disabilities. Students who require disability services or reasonable accommodations must identify themselves as having a disability and provide current diagnostic documentation to Disability Services. All information is confidential. Please contact Disability Services for more information at (828) 227-2716 or 144 Killian Annex.
Tentative Schedule of Readings and Class Discussion Topics:
(Subject to change: it is your responsibility to make sure you know what the reading is for each class.)

General Introduction to Course
Jan 12 General Introduction. Course overview; get acquainted. How do you read philosophy?
Jan 14 Historical and Topical Introduction to Philosophy. What is philosophy? What kinds of questions does it answer? Why do we still do it? (Pojman, 2-5; <Web> “Reading Philosophy Well”)

Unit I: Moral Philosophy and Ethics
Jan 19 Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday: No Class
Jan 21 Introduction to Socrates & Plato. Plato, Apology, selections. Socrates on virtue, philosophy, life, and death. (Pojman, 6-12)
Jan 23 “The unexamined life is not worth living.” Apology, conclusion. (Pojman, 12-17)
Jan 26 Is morality merely relative to our cultures? Benedict: yes. (Pojman, 399-405)
Jan 28 Is morality merely relative to our cultures? Rachels: no. (Pojman, 405-413)
The Fellowship of the Ring: Bilbo’s choice.
Feb 4 The moral virtues and the golden mean. Ethics II, selections. (Pojman, 443-449)
Feb 6 Philosophy and the very best life. Nicomachean Ethics X, chs. 6-8. (<Web>, Nicomachean Ethics X; “Writing a good philosophy paper”)
Feb 9 The “good will” and the three propositions of morality. Reason, duty, and inclination. Kant, Foundation for the Metaphysics of Morals, selections. (Pojman, 449-456)
Feb 11 Foundation, selections. The “categorical imperative.” (Pojman, 456-461)
Feb 13 Mill, Utilitarianism, selections. “Utility” as moral principle. (Pojman, 462-468)

Unit II: Some Metaphysical Meditations
Feb 16 Modern rationalism: searching for solid, foundational knowledge. Descartes, Meditations I. (Pojman 165-171) *** Unit I Paper Due ***
Feb 18 The body and the mind: two separate substances? Descartes, Meditations II and other selections. (Pojman 245-252)
Feb 20 Mind as function or operation, not entity: Ryle, The Concept of Mind. (Pojman 252-258)
Feb 23 Then what’s the difference between minds and computer programs? Searle. (Pojman 293-300)
Feb 25 What is personal identity? What is it based on? Locke: memory. (Pojman, 301-309)
Feb 27 We have no personal identity: Hume. (Pojman, 309-312)
Feb 28-March 8 Spring Break: No Class.

Unit III: Philosophy of Religion
Mar 9 Guest presentation (<Web>, “What Can I Do With a Philosophy Major?”)
Mar 11 Review session for Midterm Exam
Mar 13 *** Midterm Examination ***

Mar 16 Introduction to philosophy of religion. The “teleological” argument for the existence of God: Paley. (Pojman, 48-50, 83-86)
Mar 18 A critique of the teleological argument: Hume. (Pojman, 86-93)
Mar 20 The “cosmological” argument(s) for God’s existence: Aquinas. (Pojman, 50-53)
Mar 25 God and the problem of evil: Dostoevsky. (Pojman, 109-114)
Mar 27 God and the problem of evil, continued: Johnson and Hick. (Pojman, 115-125)

Mar 30 Is faith even compatible with reason? Pascal and Clifford. (Pojman, 125-134)
Apr 1 William James’ response to Clifford: “The Will to Believe.” (Pojman, 134-143)

**Unit IV: Political Philosophy**
Apr 3 Introduction to political philosophy. Unjust laws, imprisonment, and the duty of a citizen. Plato, Crito. (<Web>, Crito) ***Unit III Paper Due***
Apr 8-12 Easter Break: No Class (Wednesday-Friday).
***Courseval opens April 12***
Apr 13 Locke, Second Treatise of Government, selections. Modern theories of democratic government: state of nature; property; nature and extent of individual freedom and political power. (Pojman, 496-501)
Apr 17 A critique of the modern view: capitalism alienates the worker. Marx, Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts. (Pojman, 509, <Web>, “Alienated Labor”)
Apr 20 How did it come to this? Marx’s philosophy of history and the necessary result: the workers’ revolution. Marx and Engels, Manifesto of the Communist Party, selections. (Pojman, 510-517)
Apr 22 Post-Marxist critiques of contemporary society in film: Fight Club, day 1/3. (<Web>, “How to read a film”)
Apr 24 Viewing of Fight Club, continued: day 2/3.
***Self-evaluation Due; Courseval closes April 26***
Apr 27 Viewing of Fight Club, continued: day 3/3.
Apr 29 Discussion of some Marxist themes in Fight Club: alienation, revolution, etc.
May 1 General Review for Final Examination.

May 6 (Wed), 8:30-11:00 am Final Examination.