

**PHI 197: Human Nature**  
Spring 2019

Instructor: Byron Simmons  
Email: [bsimmons@syr.edu](mailto:bsimmons@syr.edu)

Office hours: MW 2:30-3:30 PM, or by appointment, in Bird Library café.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** The main goal of the course is to introduce students to the basic methods of philosophical reasoning: students will learn how to articulate their beliefs clearly and concisely, to critically analyze and evaluate arguments, construct and defend their own positions, and reason persuasively. These skills will be developed with an eye to the following questions:

1. What is the best life for a human being?
2. Is death bad for the one who dies?
3. Is living in society conducive to happiness?

We will examine a number of influential answers to these questions with the help of classic texts drawn mostly from the Western philosophical tradition.

**REQUIRED TEXTS:** The following texts are required:

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Sir David Ross, revised with an introduction and notes by Lesley Brown (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), ISBN-10: 0199213615

Freud, Sigmund, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, trans. James Strachey, with an introduction by Christopher Hitchens (New York: Norton, 2010), ISBN-10: 0393304515

Sartre, Jean-Paul, *Existentialism Is a Humanism*, trans. Carol Macomber (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), ISBN-10: 0300115466

All other required readings will be made available electronically via the Blackboard website. You are expected to print out them out promptly, study them carefully, and mark them up extensively.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:** There will two exams, two papers, and some short homework assignments. Participation and attendance will also form an important part of your grade. Your course grade will be determined by the following percentages:

First Paper = 10%  
Second Paper = 20%  
Midterm Exam = 20%  
Final Exam = 20%  
Short Writing Assignments = 20%  
Attendance & Participation = 10%

Note that this course is designated by the University as **writing-intensive**. This means that the University imposes requirements as to how many written assignments are to be given in this course. Note that this course will also be **reading-intensive**. The readings will provide context that will be necessary for success on the exams and the papers; you may be tested on content from the readings which is not discussed in class.

**BLACKBOARD:** I will frequently use Blackboard to send emails, post hand-outs, supplementary readings and other material. Make sure that you can sign on to that site and that you check it frequently.

**READING & CLASS PARTICIPATION:** It is of the utmost importance that you complete the assigned readings before class. The material is difficult and must be read carefully and perhaps several times. You should do the assigned readings before each class, so that you have a chance to think about what questions you have concerning the material. If the lecture and discussion in class do not answer your question, make sure to ask it. It is very important that you attend class regularly and participate in class discussion. Preparing questions, asking questions, and hearing the answer and any related discussion are all excellent ways of making sure that you learn the material. Asking questions will also raise your grade. In addition, **there may be occasional pop quizzes on the course readings.** Poor performance on these quizzes will negatively affect your participation grade.

**CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR:** You are expected to arrive to class on time, and to stay for the duration of the class period. If you must enter late or leave early, please do so unobtrusively. Please silence your cell phones. **Do not use any electronic devices (such as laptops, ipods, ipads, or cell phones) during class.** Doing so will negatively affect your participation grade. If you require the use of an electronic device, then you must provide me with a note from the relevant authority (e.g. the Office of Disability Services). If you would like permission to use a laptop or a similar device, please contact me. Students who have requested to use laptops in class may be required to submit samples of their lecture notes.

**ATTENDANCE POLICY:** Attendance is required. You will not be able to do well in this class unless you come to class. **A maximum of 3 unexcused absences are allowed.**

- 4 unexcused absences will lower your course grade 1/3 of a letter grade (e.g., from B+ to B).
- 5 unexcused absences will lower your course grade 2/3 of a letter grade (e.g., from B+ to B-).
- 6 unexcused absences will lower your course grade a full letter grade (e.g., from B+ to C+).
- 7 or more unexcused absences will lead to an F in the course.

Absences will only be excused for legitimate reasons (such as participation in intercollegiate athletic competitions, religious holidays, health problems, personal emergencies, etc.). If you know that you will be absent for any reason, you should inform me (via email) as soon as possible.

**HELP:** Philosophy is hard, but help is available. You might find some of the readings difficult and some of the material confusing. If you find yourself struggling with something you do not understand or if you just want to discuss something further, please do not hesitate to let me know. I will be more than happy to help you. Don't wait for a bad grade on a paper or an exam. If you seek help, you will get it.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:** The Syracuse University Academic Integrity Policy holds students accountable for the integrity of the work they submit. Students should be familiar with the Policy and know that it is their responsibility to learn about instructor and general academic expectations with regard to proper citation of sources in written work. The policy also governs the integrity of work submitted in exams and assignments as well as the veracity of signatures on attendance sheets and other verifications of participation in class activities. Serious sanctions can result from

academic dishonesty of any sort. For more information and the complete policy, see the Academic Integrity Policy and Procedures on the University's website at <http://class.syr.edu>.

The **minimum** penalty for an academic integrity violation in this course is a zero on the exam, assignment, or quiz in question. A report will then be sent to the Academic Integrity Office.

**Don't cheat. Seriously, don't do it.** I have a zero-tolerance policy for violations of academic integrity, and will report violations to the University without exception. I am, however, generally quite understanding of the various problems that can make it difficult to turn in an assignment on time. If you find yourself having difficulty meeting an assignment deadline, then **contact me and let me know about the problem instead of plagiarizing to meet the deadline.** It is much better to turn in an assignment late than to plagiarize in order to get it in on time.

**ACCOMMODATION FOR DISABILITIES AND SPECIAL NEEDS:** Students who are in need of disability-related academic accommodations must register with the Office of Disability Services (ODS), 804 University Avenue, Room 309, (315) 443-4498. Students with authorized disability-related accommodations should provide a current Accommodation Authorization Letter from ODS to the instructor and review these accommodations with the instructor. Accommodations, such as exam administration, are not provided retroactively; therefore, planning for accommodation as early as possible is necessary. For more information, see the Office of Disability Services, <http://disabilityservices.syr.edu>.

**RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES:** If you need to miss a class due to a religious observance, you will be entitled to makeup opportunities if (but only if) you provide notice by the end of the second week of classes (Jan. 27<sup>th</sup>). You must do so through MySlice. For more information on this policy, see [http://supolicies.syr.edu/studs/religious\\_observance.htm](http://supolicies.syr.edu/studs/religious_observance.htm).

**TENATIVE SCHEDULE (SUBJECT TO REVISION):** Please complete all the readings before the class periods indicated below. They will be made available in the "Readings" section of the Blackboard website: <http://bbgroupa.syr.edu/>.

### **Introduction**

Mon, 1/14      General Introduction

### **Unit I: Happiness & the Individual**

Wed, 1/16      Introduction to Axiology  
                    Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book I.1-3

[Mon, 1/21      MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY – No Class]

Wed, 1/23      Perfectionism  
                    Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book I.7-9, 13 and Book X.6-8  
                    \*Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book II and Book III.1-5

- Mon, 1/28 Perfectionism (continued)  
**First Short Assignment Due**
- Wed, 1/30 Perfectionism (continued)
- Mon, 2/4 Perfectionism (continued)
- Wed, 2/6 Classical Hedonism  
Cicero, *De Finibus*, Book I, 26-30
- Mon, 2/11 Classical Hedonism (continued)  
Jeremy Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, Ch. 4
- Wed, 2/13 Classical Hedonism (continued)  
John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*, Ch. 4
- Mon, 2/18 Classical Hedonism (continued)
- Wed, 2/20 Mill's Qualitative Hedonism  
Mill, *Utilitarianism*, Ch. 2, pp. 209-214  
**Second Short Writing Assignment Due**
- Mon, 2/25 Mill's Qualitative Hedonism (continued)
- Wed, 2/27 Epicurus' Refined Hedonism  
Epicurus, *Letter to Menoeceus*, 127-132  
Epicurus, *Principal Doctrines* III-IV, VIII, X, XVIII, XXVI, and XXIX-XXX  
Cicero, *De Finibus*, Book I, 29-33, 37-38, 55-57, 65-70
- Mon, 3/4 Epicurus' Refined Hedonism (continued)  
**Third Short Writing Assignment Due**
- Wed, 3/6 Midterm Exam**

[Mon, 3/11 & Wed, 3/31 – SPRING BREAK – No Class]

## **Unit II: Death**

- Mon, 3/18 Epicureanism  
Epicurus, *Letter to Menoeceus*, 124-127  
Epicurus, *Principal Doctrines* II  
Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, Book III, 830-911
- Wed, 3/20 Epicureanism (continued)  
**Fourth Short Writing Assignment Due**
- Mon, 3/25 Deprivationism  
Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, Book III, 912-1094

Wed, 3/27      Deprivationism (continued)

**Unit III: Happiness & Society**

Mon, 4/1      Unhappiness in the State of Nature  
                  Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Introduction and Ch. 13  
                  **Fifth Short Writing Assignment Due**

Wed, 4/3      Unhappiness in the State of Nature (continued)

Mon, 4/8      Happiness in the State of Nature  
                  Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Second Discourse*, Exordium, Part I, and Note XV

Wed, 4/10     Happiness in the State of Nature (continued)  
                  **First Paper Due**

Mon, 4/15     Alienation and Estrangement  
                  Karl Marx, *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, "Estranged Labor"

[Wed, 4/17    No Class]

Mon, 4/22     Civilization and Its Discontents  
                  Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Chs. 3, 5, and 6

Wed, 4/24     Existentialism  
                  Jean-Paul Sartre, "Existentialism is a Humanism", pp. 17-36  
                  \* Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, Introduction and Ch. 11

Mon, 4/29     Existentialism (continued)  
                  Sartre, "Existentialism is a Humanism", pp. 36-54

**Sun, 5/5      Review Session in Bowne Hall 103 from 3:00 - 5:00 PM**  
                  **Second Paper Due**

**Tues, 5/7     Final Exam at 3:00 - 5:00 PM**

## CHRONOLOGY:

- 4<sup>th</sup> cent. BCE Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*  
Epicurus, *Letter to Menoeceus, Principal Doctrines* (late 4<sup>th</sup>/early 3<sup>rd</sup> cent. BCE)
- c. 55 BCE Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*
- 45 BCE Cicero, *De Finibus*
- 1651 Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*
- 1754 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*
- 1780 Jeremy Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (printed in 1780, but not published until 1789; corrected edition, 1823)
- 1844 Karl Marx, *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* (not published until 1923)
- 1861 John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*
- 1930 Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*
- 1946 Jean-Paul Sartre, "Existentialism is a Humanism"
- 1949 Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*