

University of Northern Colorado
SYLLABUS for *Introduction to Philosophy*
PHIL 100-970; CRN 10361; GE 4e; LAC 3c, gtP
Fall 2009 (Online)

Instructor: Nancy J. Matchett, PhD

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Office Hours: T/R 2pm-3pm, and by appointment. Note that office hours are held simultaneously in my campus office and online via Pronto (a free voice and/or text chat service you can download from the course Blackboard site). I have Pronto turned on whenever I am at my computer and available (typically several times throughout the day); my username is nancy.matchett. Instructions for downloading Pronto can be found on the course overview page of Blackboard. If you choose not to download Pronto or have trouble catching me online, you can also schedule a specific appointment via email or phone.

Please use the discussion boards as the main place to ask questions about the course; send an email only if you have a personal or private question that you do not wish to share with the whole class.

Required Materials:

- Lawhead, *The Philosophical Journey*, 4th Edition (McGraw Hill, 2009). Hard copies of the 4th edition are available at the UNC Bookstore and at many online vendors. An electronic version containing only the five chapters that are required reading for this course is available at a substantial discount from Primis Online (<http://ebooks.primisonline.com>). Detailed instructions on how to purchase and download a copy of the eBook are available on the Syllabus&Schedule page of Blackboard. *Note: several copies of the textbook are on 2-hour reserve at Michener Library.*
- Regular access to Blackboard. Because Blackboard messages get sent to your UNC email account, make sure you check that account regularly (or have it forwarded to an email address you do check regularly). To access the course Blackboard site, go to bb.unco.edu and log in with the first 8 or fewer characters of your bear email address and your standard university password. If you have technical difficulties accessing or using Blackboard, contact IT at 1-4357 or LMS.support@unco.edu. If you find a problem with content on the site, please contact me immediately.

Overview: Philosophy, or the “love of wisdom,” lies in the background of all intellectual endeavors. This course will familiarize you with the main branches of philosophical inquiry and sharpen your critical reasoning skills so that you can begin to formulate your own philosophical views about knowledge, reality, god and the meaning of life! Developing a satisfactory position on any of these topics is a lifelong task, and I certainly don’t expect you to complete it in the next 8 weeks. But by the end of the semester, you should have discovered what it means to love wisdom, and my hope is that you will also learn to love wisdom yourself.

Course Format: Although the course is asynchronous and conducted entirely online it is NOT self-paced. Please make sure you adhere to the deadlines provided in the schedule. Of course, I do *not* expect you to completely understand the readings on your own; all of the assignments and the course discussion board will be used to improve your skills at interpreting, applying, analyzing, evaluating and synthesizing the material in the text. In order to learn from these activities, it is essential that you log in to the course website and participate regularly.

The course Blackboard site also incorporates a variety of podcasts, voice announcements and other digital media. If you do not have good audio and/or visual capabilities on your computer workstation, don’t worry! Digital media is provided to enhance your learning experience, but essential information and required course content is always available in text format as well.

Outcomes: PHIL 100 is designed to help you progress toward the learning goals of UNC's Liberal Arts Core, Area 3c (Ways of Thinking). The following table indicates how the specific learning outcomes for this particular course relate to the broader LAC goals:

Upon <i>successful</i> completion of PHIL 100 you should be able to	Associated LAC Area 3c Learning Goals
➤ Describe the relationship between philosophy and other disciplines	➤ <i>understand the historical frameworks of and interactions between diverse disciplines</i>
➤ Identify and explain fundamental philosophical concepts ➤ Recognize and formulate philosophical questions ➤ Identify and assess the structure of arguments	➤ <i>understand and apply research techniques from different disciplines</i>
➤ Recognize philosophical claims and assumptions embedded in daily human interactions ➤ Identify and critically examine the main sources of your own and others' philosophical views	➤ <i>learn how to collect, organize and interpret data using current technology</i>
➤ Understand and evaluate competing philosophical arguments ➤ Articulate and defend philosophically satisfying positions of your own	➤ <i>assess the validity of diverse sources of information.</i>

You are *strongly* encouraged to communicate with me about how well the course is helping you achieve these goals and outcomes. For more information about the LAC, see http://www.unco.edu/general_education/

GRADING POLICIES: Your final grade in this course will depend on the assessments listed below. More detailed information is provided on the Reqs&Grading page of Blackboard. If *at any time* you have *any* questions about what is required of you or why you received a particular grade, you should contact me immediately for clarification. *Please do not be shy about this...it is your education that is at stake!*

➤ **WEEKLY DISCUSSION BOARD POSTINGS: 150 POINTS TOTAL (15% OF FINAL GRADE)**

You are expected to participate in online discussion of the assigned reading on at least two different days each week. To receive full credit, you must do all of the following during each week of the course

- Post at least once on or before Thursday, and a second time between Friday and Sunday
- Use at least one post to explain one thing you learned from the assigned reading sections for that week, or to ask a question you need to have answered in order to understand the course material.
- Use at least one post to respond meaningfully to another student's posting -- for example, explaining why you agree or disagree with the post, or building on ideas in the post to add new content to the board.

Of course, you are welcome to post more often if you choose, as the main goal of the discussion board is to develop your philosophical knowledge and skill. See the grading policy on the Reqs & Grading Page of Blackboard for more details on how your weekly participation will be assessed. ***Please note: failure to post at least 2 times on two different days each week during the term will have a significant impact on your final grade. Make sure you plan time to read and participate in the discussion boards!***

➤ **FIVE CHAPTER READING QUIZZES: 200 POINTS TOTAL (20% OF FINAL GRADE)**

These *open-book* quizzes are designed to help you understand the material presented in the five textbook chapters we study during the course (and to encourage you to keep up with your reading). They are administered and graded automatically by Blackboard so that you can take them when you think you are ready and receive immediate feedback on how much you understood. Since the chapters are of different lengths, there are different point values for each quiz. Quizzes become available in the order you take them: the quiz for Chapter 1 is already available; the quiz for Chapter 2 will appear once you submit the quiz for Chapter 1, etc. You are expected to submit each quiz by the end of the relevant chapter, however, late submissions will be accepted through the last day of class. ***Note that failure to submit each quiz by the "Rewrite Deadline" provided on your syllabus means that you forfeit the opportunity to take advantage of the "Rewrite Option" option described below.***

Links to the reading quizzes can be found inside the unit folders or by clicking the button on the left hand side of your screen. *Note that you may access each quiz as many times as you like before submitting it for grading. To save any completed answers without submitting the quiz for grading, click "Save" at the bottom of your screen and log out of Blackboard. **Click the "Submit" button ONLY when you are ready to have your quiz graded.*** Once you have submitted your answers for grading, that quiz cannot be taken again. You will receive an immediate score report which includes the correct answers.

Rewrite Option: If you are dissatisfied with your score on any quiz, you may write a brief explanation which contains (1) the complete text of any question(s) you missed, (2) a brief statement of what led you to give an incorrect answer (why you thought that answer was correct), and (3) a brief statement of why the correct answer is in fact *better* than the one you originally gave. Assuming your answers are cogent your quiz score will be appropriately revised, but *please note that you must convince me that you understand the reasoning in support of the correct answer in order to get full credit back* (an example is provided on the quiz page of Blackboard).

Rewrites must be submitted by the deadlines provided on the weekly schedule and because they are competely optional they will NOT be accepted late. You may email your rewrites directly to me at nancy.matchett@unco.edu; they may be submitted within the email message or as a separate attachment.

- **PHILOSOPHICAL JOURNEY BLOG: 50 POINTS TOTAL (5% OF FINAL GRADE).** Because philosophy is as much an *activity* as a body of knowledge, our textbook (*The Philosophical Journey*) contains lots of interactive exercises designed to enhance your skill at *doing* philosophy yourself. These exercises are presented in boxes throughout your text titled "What do I think?" "Stop and Think," "Thought Experiment," and "Philosophy in the Marketplace." For Chapter One and again for Chapter Seven, you must choose *one* of these exercises from *each* section of the chapter to complete, and record your responses to these exercises using Blackboard's Blogging tool (note: your blogs are private – viewable only by you and your instructor – unless you choose to export them). It is strongly recommended that you blog as you do your reading, but blogs will not be graded until the end of the relevant chapter. Deadlines are provided in the schedule below; late submissions will be penalized by 1 letter grade (as many as 4 points) per day. See the Reqs&Grading page of Blackboard for more detailed assignment guidelines and a grading rubric.
- **EPISTEMOLOGY WIKI : 50 POINTS TOTAL (5% OF FINAL GRADE):** At the end of Chapter One you will learn about "6 Cs" for evaluating philosophical claims and theories. During Chapter Two, you will work with a group of your peers to evaluate the epistemological theories according to those criteria. Groups will be assigned by your instructor by the end of Week 2, and you must document your group's evaluations using Blackboard's Wiki Tool. Deadlines are provided in the weekly schedule, below. See the Reqs&Grading page of Blackboard for more detailed assignment guidelines and a grading rubric.
- **THREE INDIVIDUAL WRITING TASKS: 200 POINTS TOTAL (20% OF FINAL GRADE):** At the end of Chapter Two, you must submit a short identification of one of the key concepts from that chapter. At the end of Chapter Three, you must submit a brief (1-3 paragraph) analysis or application of one of the metaphysical arguments surrounding the mind-body problem or the free will-determinism debate. And at the end of Chapter Four, you must submit a longer essay (5-7 paragraphs) which articulates and defends a position in the philosophy of religion. The first two assignments are worth 50 points each, and the last assignment is worth 100 points. Deadlines are provided in the weekly schedule below. See the Reqs&Grading page of Blackboard for more detailed assignment guidelines and a grading rubric for each task.
- **FINAL EXAM: 350 POINTS (35% OF FINAL GRADE)**
An open-book final exam will be available on from 12:01am on Thursday 7/30 to 11:59pm on Friday, 7/31. You may choose any 3-hour time period during those two days in which to complete the exam, but ***the exam must be completed in one sitting***. The exam is cumulative and questions may cover material from Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4 and 7 of our text. It contains three sections, corresponding to the three types of writing you practiced during the term. For more details about the structure of the exam and how your performance will be graded, see the Requirements&Grading page of Blackboard.

There are 1000 total points in the course and in general, grades will be determined as follows:

A: 930-1000 A-: 900-929 B+: 870-899 B: 830-869 B-: 800-829 C+: 770-799
C: 730-769 C-: 700-729 D+: 670-699 D: 630-669 D-: 600-629 F: 0-599

Adjustments may occasionally be made, *especially* where student work steadily improves throughout the course and/or when the student performs well on the final exam (for example, if your point total is 795, but you received a B on the final exam, you will likely receive a B- for the course).

Official University Grading Policies: If you have questions concerning University grading policies, please visit <http://bulletin.unco.edu/2007-2008Output/2007-2008-09-17hg.html#wp1180746>. For information about academic appeals, see <http://www.unco.edu/dos/handbook/stuhndbk.htm#acadappeals>.

Accommodations for students with disabilities: Any student requesting disability accommodation for this class must inform the instructor giving appropriate notice. Students are encouraged to contact Disability Support Services at (970) 351-2289 to certify documentation of disability and to ensure appropriate accommodations are implemented in a timely manner.

A final note on academic integrity: All members of the University of Northern Colorado community are entrusted with the responsibility to uphold and promote five fundamental values: Honesty, Trust, Respect, Fairness, and Responsibility. These core elements foster an atmosphere, inside and outside of the classroom, which serves as a foundation and guides the UNC community's academic, professional, and personal growth. Endorsement of these core elements by students, faculty, staff, administration, and trustees strengthens the integrity and value of our academic climate. For more information, see the Student Handbook on the Dean of Students Website (<http://www.unco.edu/dos/handbook/index.html>).

- **Please note that ALL work for this course (including quizzes and the final exam) is open book. Do not be misled by this!** Philosophy is an activity more than a specific body of knowledge, and your final grade will depend on how well you are able to reason with and about the course material by the end of the term. Regular participation in the discussion boards and other Blackboard activities is the best way to develop these skills, and hence is essential to your success in the course.
- **Remember that you MUST provide a page reference whenever you directly quote or paraphrase from the book or any other source!** There is a difference between *using* the book to develop and substantiate your own ideas (and check your memory), and simply copying someone else's thinking. Make sure you learn to do the former.
- **Failure to identify a source will result in a failing grade for that assignment or exam answer even if it was an "innocent mistake,"** since this still demonstrates a failure to understand citation requirements. Serious cases will be referred to the Dean of Students and may result in a failing grade for the entire course (even if you have enough other points to pass). Your grade is supposed to be an evaluation of *your* thinking, so make sure your understanding and ability to reason with and about the course material shines through!

All that being said, note that you are welcomed – even encouraged – to work together on the chapter reading quizzes and other assignments, since the main point of these activities is to help you understand and make use of the course material. However, you may not simply copy another students' answers into your own quiz, and you must complete your own final assignments and take the exam on your own. The basic idea here is that **it is always OK to help yourself or your fellow students learn the material, but it is never OK to do another student's work or to submit someone else's work as your own.** Philosophers (lovers of wisdom) always do their own thinking! If you have questions or concerns relating to the honor code, please contact me sooner rather than later.