**INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY**  
**SPRING 2014**

**Dr. Terezakis**  
Contact: terezak@rit.edu  
Tu/Th 11:00-12:15  
Office: Eastman (Bldg. 1), Rm. 3218  
LOW; Rm. 3215  
PHIL 101-01 (50750)  
Office hours: Tu/Th 12:30-1:40  
and by appointment

**COURSE OBJECTIVE**  
Our objective is to become familiar with a set of philosophical concerns and philosophers’ attempts to address them. In studying these problems, we will also pose them on our own terms, attempting to understand, answer, or deepen them for ourselves. The philosophical questions we will encounter will take us from the emergence of philosophical reasoning in ancient Greece through its continued application in late modernity. As such, we will begin to get acquainted with the shifts and developments in the Western philosophical canon, and will consider philosophy as a historical, developing collection of methods, systems, and techniques of reasoning. Our questioning will involve the nature of emotions or affects and their relationship to reason; the possibility and limits of human knowledge; the significance of imagination and creativity; the possibility of a human nature or essence; the formation of moral and aesthetic values; and the effect of social and political institutions on human development.

Success in the course can be facilitated by carefully reading course material and coming to class prepared to discuss and question it, by taking notes on aspects of the texts that need to be clarified or elaborated, and by taking thorough class notes. Quizzes and exams will incorporate our in-class considerations, so actively attending to the lectures and discussions, and asking for explanation of anything that remains obscure to you is crucial.

**READINGS**  
The primary philosophical texts we will read—that is, texts by canonical thinkers of the Western philosophical tradition—will be made available via MyCourses; they will be posted up front in the “News” section. Each week, you will read from these primary texts, so you will need to go to MyCourses regularly to retrieve them. For an overview of our reading schedule, see below.

In addition, we have a required textbook: *The Path of Philosophy: Truth, Wonder, and Distress* by John Marmysz (Wadsworth, 2012). I will refer to this textbook as the “Marmysz” text. It is a work of scholarship (or a “secondary text”) aimed at students. It is a smart, entertaining book which accomplishes the rare feat of explaining difficult texts with fairness and without overgeneralizing their basic arguments. To the extent that you engage with it, it will strengthen your understanding of the problems we will treat in class. Some homework and test questions will be taken directly from this textbook.
I advise that you bring our primary texts to class, along with your copy of the Marmyz text. Having the readings on hand will facilitate our in-class discussion and will allow you to better grasp the arguments with which we will be occupied. Whether or not you bring these texts to class, I advise that you bring your own reading notes to class.

The best way to succeed in the class is 1) to read each day’s selection before class, taking notes on its key points as well as on your questions and concerns; 2) to attend to the day’s lecture, using your own reading and discussion notes as a springboard to ask for clarifications and to amplify ideas in which you are interested; 3) to reread the week’s selections after the in-class lectures on them; and 4) to follow up with the professor on any points still requiring clarification or amplification after lectures are delivered. Such follow up may be in class, in person during office hours or by appointment, or via email.

Our readings and discussion will proceed basically as follows; see MyCourses for the schedule with dates. Additional readings may be announced.

- **Plato**  *Apology, Meno*
- **Marmysz**  Chapter 1 (optional); Chapters 2-3 (pp.22-64)
- **Descartes**  *Meditations on First Philosophy* (Selections)
- **Marmysz**  Chapter 7 (pp.143-177)
- **Hume**  *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (Selections)
- **Marmysz**  Chapter 8 (pp. 179-210)
- **Sartre**  *Existentialism Is a Kind of Humanism*
- **Camus**  *The Myth of Sisyphus*
- **Marmysz**  Chapter 13 (pp.355-391)
- **Singer**  *All Animals Are Equal, Famine, Affluence, and Morality*
- **Dershowitz**  *Tortured Reasoning, Reply to Scarry*
- **Scarry**  *Five Errors in the Reasoning of Alan Dershowitz*
- **Soufan**  *Statement to Senate Judicial Committee*
- **Pinker**  *Seven Words You Can’t Say on Television*

More contemporary philosophy, tba.

**REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING**

**Quizzes** will be given three or four times over the course of the semester. Quiz questions will be based on the readings as well as on class lectures and discussions. Quiz questions may reappear in a reworded and combined form on the exams. Once taken, a corrected version of each quiz will be posted on MyCourses. In sum, the quizzes will account for 30% of the final grade.

**Journal Compositions** will be expected of each student three or four times over the course of the quarter. The formal expectations of the journal entries will be discussed in class, in advance of the first due date. On or before the due time, students will upload journal entries to the dropbox on MyCourses. Journals will not be accepted late or via email (so please be sure you know how to get them into the MyCourses dropbox before the moment they are due). For each entry, students will pursue one of the philosophical
issues or problems discussed in class and/or in our readings. Should you wish to continue your discussions via MyCourses, you are encouraged to post relevant sections of your writings in the discussion section there, and to respond to the writings of others in the MyCourses discussion section. In sum, the journals will account for 30% of the final grade.

**Two examinations** will be given in class. The exam questions will be taken from our readings, textbook, class discussions, and lectures; some exam questions may be based on quiz questions. Exams may include a mix of forms: true/false questions; multiple choice questions; statements which must be completed with key terminology; and short-answer responses (with a weighted emphasis on the short-answer questions). The intention of these examinations is to test for reading and lecture comprehension as well as to encourage students to critically confront and compare the themes at hand. Each exam is worth 20% of the final grade.

Some of your graded materials may be graded by an advanced student of philosophy hired by the Department of Philosophy at the discretion of your professor. If you have a question or concern about any aspect of a grade you earn, please contact the professor and, if you have it, please bring or email the professor a copy of the work in question.

Final grades will not be rounded up (or down). The determination of the final grade, however, will be made by the professor with reference to the caliber of the student’s overall class engagement. Although you are not automatically graded on class participation, for example, the professor may elect to round up a borderline grade when a student has proven to be an engaged member of the class.

**Class Participation**
I encourage you to participate in class because it will help you to focus your attention and to be cognizant of the ideas that are most relevant to you. Of course, this attentiveness can only help you to do well on graded assignments as well. The best short explanation of why it’s worth participating in class to which I can direct you was written by an RIT professor of philosophy. I suggest that you read it (and peruse the blog that houses it, too):
http://knowledgeandexperience.blogspot.com/2013/01/undergrad-tips-for-participation.html

**Personal Computers and Phones in Class**
Your first assignment is to write the policy on personal technology for the class. Most of the research suggests that students do less well when they use personal electronic devices (PEDs) in their classes. Students, however, almost always prefer the option of using PEDs, citing their ability to take notes and to fact-check among the benefits. In this class, the question of whether students will be allowed to use PEDs will be decided by students, but students will be asked to do a (light) review of some of the scientific literature and to present and defend their reasons in a democratic forum.
This assignment will be done jointly on MyCourses, by each member of the class (details on how to contribute and due dates will be discussed in class and noted on MyCourses). This will be a philosophical assignment in several respects:

1) You will read and consider peer-reviewed research in order to build your argument.

2) You must give a reason (or reasons) for your position. You should be in principle willing to be convinced by the superior reasoning of others, and you should be willing to defend and elaborate on your reasoning as you think it through. Our ultimate vote on the issue (at the end of the second week of class), and our subsequent adherence to the policy you determine, will be the outcome of a reasonable dialogue between peers with shared interests.

3) Following from (1), each of you will be responsible for yourself as well as for others. We will all agree in advance to adhere to the policy you determine as well as to any consequences that you determine should follow from breaking it. Hence, by the end of the semester, you may be able to say, with the philosopher Josiah Royce: “my life means nothing, either theoretically or practically, unless I am a member of a community.” On the other hand, you might by then side with Jean-Paul Sartre, who tells us that “hell is the other.” The results of the experiment will be our guide.

4) Following from (1&2), we will be devising, testing, and living with an utterly practical matter, but we will be directed by ideals or principles. No one would make or be convinced by the argument that we ought to allow or disallow electronic devices in class because they exist. We know the facts, i.e., that they exist. What we need to determine is what we ought to do, how we should live with attendant uncertainties, and how we should plan to get on if things go wrong.

You'll review the following two articles, also linked on MyCourses, but if you wish to bring in more published research, please do.

ATTENDANCE
Regular attendance is mandatory. Missed quizzes or exams cannot be made up, except in the possible case of a documented emergency or legitimate reason, which will remain subject to the decision of the professor. If you become ill during the quarter and think that you may be absent for more than one class session, contact the professor without delay. Failure to contact the professor, to provide verification of urgency, and to establish a means of out of class participation in consultation with the professor will constitute grounds for forfeiting any make-up opportunity.

Notifying the instructor if you will be absent (or late) is appreciated; it does not, however, establish an excused absence or entitle the student to make up any missed graded activity. Excessive lateness or early departure, or recurrent forms of class inattentiveness, will negatively impact the final grade.
A Gastronomic Aside
Please do not eat in class, as it often disturbs others. Feel free to drink.

A Few Philosophy Resources
RIT Department of Philosophy website: http://www.rit.edu/cla/philosophy/
Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: http://plato.stanford.edu/
Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: http://www.iep.utm.edu/

There are many other resources relevant to the material we will treat in class. In fact, there is so much information and opining available online that it can be hard to know where to start and what is reputable. Please ask the professor if ever you would like suggestions for further study.

As well, we have a student tutor in philosophy, available to all students, and often also a faculty tutor who conducts sessions in ASL. See or email the professor for details.

Philosophy Events
A number of potentially-great talks are scheduled this semester. The Hale Chair in Applied Ethics is bringing in a number of distinguished speakers; the schedule and details are here: http://www.rit.edu/cla/philosophy/Events.htm

The Department of Philosophy is sponsoring or co-sponsoring a number of speakers as well. The schedule will be here: http://www.rit.edu/cla/philosophy/Events.htm

Several times a month, usually on a Friday afternoon, the Philosophy Club meets to discuss some topic chosen by students. They have a mailing list, which you can ask to join; the club is open to all.

The professor will make an effort to remind students of these events, and may make some an occasion for extra credit or journal assignments. But students should plan for and attend them independently, as their schedules and interests dictate.

Contact
Students are encouraged to meet with the professor independently in order to discuss individual questions, concerns, and ideas. Please contact the professor via email (allowing for at least a day’s delay in response) or schedule an appointment in person.

If you require or would like any form of special services, from disability services to adjusted testing environments to tutoring (to whatever else applies to you) please see or email the professor.