

UWG PHILOSOPHY PROGRAM

PHIL 4385 sec. 01-W

SPECIAL TOPICS: TRUTH & REALITY (3 hours)

Summer Semester 2015 (Session II: June-July)

MW 2-4:30pm

Prerequisites: PHIL 2010 or permission of instructor

Classroom: Pafford 308

Web site: <http://www.westga.edu/~rlane/truth>

Email: rlane@westga.edu*

Instructor: **Dr. Robert Lane**, TLC 2247

Office Hours:

M: 10:00am - 1:45pm

W: 10:00am - 1:45pm

and by appointment

My office telephone: (678) 839-4745

English/Philosophy telephone: (678) 839-6512

***All email communication must be conducted from your official UWG email account. Students are obligated to check their UWG email accounts on a regular basis and to ensure that their mailboxes do not become full.**

UWG Severe Weather Policy: http://www.westga.edu/police/index_2277.php

This is a **Discipline Specific Writing (DSW)** course, fulfilling one of two DSW requirements for the College of Arts and Humanities. All DSW courses require that students write a minimum of 4,000 words across multiple assignments, not including revisions.

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course will examine the philosophical concepts of truth and reality. Some questions that we will investigate are: What does the word 'reality' mean? Can we have knowledge of a mind-independent world, or is reality in some sense mind-dependent? Are human traits like race and gender real, social constructs, or both? We will also examine various theories of truth. What do we mean by 'truth'? Who decides what is true? Is truth simply what is said to be true by convention? Could opposite statements both be true? Figures covered will range from the pre-Socratic philosopher Parmenides to contemporary philosophers including John Searle and Susan Haack. *May be taken to fulfill Philosophy Major Area requirement A.*

LEARNING OUTCOMES: By the end of the semester, each student will be able to:

- write a short response in response to philosophical writings on truth and reality, one that (a) summarizes the reading and (b) responses in an original and critical way;
- write a term paper in which a philosophical view having to do with truth or reality is described, supported with arguments, and defended against possible objections.

These course-specific learning outcomes contribute to the departmental learning outcomes of the Philosophy Program by enabling students better to

- discuss the general historical development of the discipline of philosophy, including the views of at least three major historical figures of philosophy;
- incorporate a philosophical position in oral and written communications;
- critically outline and analyze philosophical issues;
- exhibit critical thinking skills.

METHODS OF INSTRUCTION: The typical class session will consist of about 50% lecture and 50% class discussion. Lectures are intended to elucidate and provide supplementary information relevant to the reading assignments and to form the basis for a vigorous class discussion of the arguments and theories at hand. Reading assignments will be made on a daily basis. In order to benefit fully from lectures and to participate meaningfully in class discussion, **it is a must** that you do the reading when it is assigned.

READING: All required texts for this class will be made available electronically through D2L / CourseDen.

TIME REQUIREMENTS: UWG grants one semester hour of credit for work equivalent to a minimum of (approximately) one hour (50 minutes) of in-class or other direct faculty instruction AND two hours of student work outside of class per week for approximately fifteen weeks. For this three credit-hour course, taught during an eight-week summer session, **students are required to spend (approximately) five hours (300 minutes) in class each week and to conduct at least an additional 12 hours of work relevant to this course outside of class each week.** You should expect to work more hours than this outside of class during periods when you are preparing for an exam or completing a lengthy writing project.

EVALUATION:

- **Four response papers (10% each, for a total of 40%).** Minimum length: 1,300 words per response paper. See "Instructions for Writing Response Papers" on the class web site.*
- **Term paper (30%).** Minimum length: 3,000 words. See "Writing a Philosophy Paper" and "Term Paper Instructions" on the class website**
- **Final examination (30%).** Essays and short answer questions. A study guide will be provided no less than two weeks before the exam date.
- **Class participation does not contribute to your final grade in any fixed way, but I will consider giving borderline students the next highest grade if their in-class questions and contributions to class discussions warrant my doing so.**

*Graduate students enrolled in PHIL 5385 must write six response papers.

**Graduate students enrolled in PHIL 5385 have a minimum term-paper length of 3,500 words.

GRADING SCALE:

- A 100 – 90.1%
- B 90.0 – 80.1%
- C 80.0 – 70.1%
- D 70.0 – 60.1%
- F 60.0 - 0%

- I am prohibited by UWG rules from disclosing your grades via email, even to your UWG email address. Your grades in this class will be posted in CourseDen as soon as they are available.

MISSED TESTS / EXTRA CREDIT:

- If you know that you will need to miss class on Friday July 24, the day of the final exam (for example, due to a UWG sponsored event), you must let me know about your absence as far in advance as possible so that we can schedule an earlier day and time for you to take the test. If you miss the exam without receiving my explicit permission beforehand and making arrangements to take it at an earlier time, you will receive a grade of "0%" for the exam unless one of the following conditions applies: (a) Your absence was due to illness or injury serious enough to require professional medical care and which prevented you from contacting me before the test; or (b) Your absence was due to other extenuating circumstances beyond your control. I will determine on a case-by-case basis what constitutes "extenuating circumstances beyond your control." If one of those conditions does apply, you will receive a grade of "I" (Incomplete) for the course and be required to take a make-up exam at some later date.
- **Extra-credit work will not be given under any circumstances. Work completed for other courses will not be accepted in this course.**

ATTENDANCE, LATE ARRIVAL, EARLY DEPARTURE

- **You may miss two class meetings with no effect on your grade. Beginning with your third absence, you will lose five points from your final average for every class meeting you miss.** I will make exceptions for absences necessitated by UWG-sponsored events or by other circumstances that were absolutely outside your control. However, I will make these exceptions **only if ALL of your absences can be accounted for in one of these ways** (e.g., if you miss three classes and you have documented, acceptable reasons for missing only two classes, then your third absence will still count against you). Documentation will be required in all cases in which I make an exception to this attendance policy.
- **Students who miss 6 class meetings (three weeks worth of classes) or more will not earn a passing grade in this course.** In this case the reason for your absences is irrelevant. If you are unable to attend class for a month due to medical reasons, a family emergency, or any other reason, you should withdraw from the course; if the withdrawal date has passed, you should apply for a hardship withdrawal.
- **An early departure or late arrival may be counted as an absence, depending on the circumstances.** I will decide in each case whether an early departure or a late arrival counts as an absence. If you know before class that you will not be able to stay for the entire class session, please inform me of this before class and sit as close to the door as possible, so as to cause as small a distraction as possible when you leave.

- **From the *UWG Undergraduate Catalog*:**
 - “Instruction begins the first day of class. In face-to-face courses, if students fail to attend the first day and have not contacted the instructor to explain their absence, they may be dropped during the Drop/Add Period to make room for other students.”
 - “Class attendance policies are determined by each instructor for his or her courses and may be found in the syllabus. Since course policies differ, students are responsible for understanding attendance requirements for each course. Failure to comply with those requirements may significantly affect grades.”
 - **“Students are expected to attend each class meeting.** Students absent from class while officially representing the University or observing religious holidays should generally not be penalized in the calculation of final grades, as long as they provide advance notice and expeditiously make arrangements to complete any missed work.
 - “University-sponsored activities include but are not limited to the following: intercollegiate athletic competitions; musical/theatrical/art performances or exhibitions associated with a degree program; debate competitions; and research conferences. Activities not considered to be university-sponsored include participation in clubs, even if they are affiliated with UWG, or events associated with social organizations such as fraternities or sororities.
 - “Regardless of the reason for the absence, each student is responsible for the material covered in class, for completing any assignments, and for making specific arrangements with the instructor for any work missed. The degree to which missed work can be made up will depend upon the nature of the work and its intended purpose. Make-up is at the discretion of the instructor.
 - “Any student who must be absent for more than one week of class should notify the Patient Advocates in Health Services, telephone 678-839-6452. The student should also notify the instructor or department.”

COMMON COURTESY

- **Smartphones must be turned off and put away before class begins. You may use laptops and tablets during class only for class-related purposes, e.g., taking notes and consulting online lecture notes. No other use of electronic devices in class is permitted.**
- **Do not leave the room during class unless it is absolutely essential that you do so.** Leaving the classroom while class is in session (e.g., to visit the restroom) is both disrespectful and distracting. So when you come to class, be prepared to remain in the classroom for the full duration of the class period.
- **Do not study material from other classes while this class is in session.** While you are in this class, I expect your attention to be focused on it rather than on your other courses.
- **Students may be dismissed from any class meeting at which they exhibit behavior that disrupts the learning environment of others.** Such behavior includes – but is not limited to – arriving late for class, allowing cell phones to ring, speaking disrespectfully to the instructor and/or to other students, and using personal audio or visual devices. **Each dismissal of this kind will count as an absence and will be applied toward the attendance policy above.**

CONVERSION TO HONORS CREDIT

- Any student wishing to receive honors credit for this course must get the approval of the professor and complete all the necessary paperwork during **the first week of class**. No honors forms will be signed after this point.

Please carefully review the following information at this link: <http://tinyurl.com/UWGSyllabusPolicies>. It contains important material pertaining to your rights and responsibilities in this class. Because these statements are updated as federal, state, and accreditation standards change, you should review the information each semester. Topic covered include: **The Americans with Disabilities Act; UWG’s Email Policy; UWG’s Credit Hour Policy; and UWG’s Honor Code.**

COURSE SCHEDULE. THIS SCHEDULE IS **TENTATIVE** AND MAY CHANGE AS THE SEMESTER PROGRESSES. THIS INCLUDES DUE DATES FOR PAPERS, WHICH ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE. I will maintain an up-to-date version of the course schedule on the class web site. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to keep up with test dates, due dates, and reading assignments, either by checking the class web site or contacting me directly. An asterisk (*) indicates that the reading may be chosen as the basis for a **response paper**. You may not choose to write response papers about readings that lack an asterisk. **All readings are online, either in D2L or accessible through UWG's Library website.**

June	Topic and reading due	tests and papers
M 1	Introduction to the course and its basic concepts	
W 3	More basic concepts; Susan Haack on Reality 1. "The World According to Innocent Realism", sec.3 (pp.11-18) only [D2L]	*Possible response paper (1 of 4)
M 8	Susan Haack on Truth *2. "The Real, The Fictional and the Fake" [D2L] 3. "Confessions of an Old-Fashioned Prig" pp.7-15 only [D2L] 4. "Staying for an Answer: The Untidy Process of Groping for Truth" [D2L]	*Possible response paper (1 of 4)
W 10	Haack; Heraclitus and Parmenides *5. "The Unity of Truth and the Plurality of Truths" [D2L] 6. Kirk, Raven, Schofield, "Heraclitus of Ephesus" [D2L]	
M 15	Parmenides; Plato 7. "Fragments of Parmenides" [D2L] 8. Cornford, "Parmenides' Way of Truth" [D2L] 9. Excerpt from "Timaeus"	*Possible response paper (1 of 4)
W 17	Plato 9. Excerpts from "Phaedo", "Republic" Book V [D2L] *10. Excerpt from "Theaetetus" [D2L]	*Possible response paper (1 of 4)
M 22	Plato Aristotle *11. "Sophist" [D2L] Discussion of Term Paper assignment 12. Excerpts from Categories and Metaphysics [D2L]	*Possible response paper (1 of 4)
W 24	Peirce on Truth and Reality *13. "The Fixation of Belief" [D2L] *14. "How to Make Our Ideas Clear" [D2L]	*Possible response paper (1 of 4)
M 29	Richard Rorty's Neo-Pragmatism 15. Introduction to <i>Consequences of Pragmatism</i> (pp.xiii-xxi only) [D2L] *16. "Solidarity or Objectivity?" (pp.21-24, 28-34 only) [D2L]	*Possible response paper (1 of 4)

July	Topic and reading due	papers due
W 1	Price's Neo-Pragmatism / Deflationism *17. Huw Price, "Truth as Convenient Friction" [UWG Library online; link is in D2L]	Possible response paper (1 of 4)
M 6	John Searle on Social Reality *18. <i>The Construction of Social Reality</i> ch.1 [D2L]	TERM PAPER (Initial Draft); Possible response paper (1 of 4)
W 8	John Searle on Social Reality 19. <i>The Construction of Social Reality</i> ch.2 [D2L]	
M 13	Is Race Socially Constructed? *20. Naomi Zack, "Philosophy and Racial Paradigms" [UWG Library online; link is in D2L]	Possible response paper (1 of 4)
W 15	Is Race Socially Constructed? *21. Robin O. Andreasen, "Race: Biological Reality or Social Construct?" [UWG Library online; link is in D2L]	Possible response paper (1 of 4)
M 20	Is Gender Socially Constructed? 22. Sally Haslanger, "Ontology and Social Construction", secs. 1-3 (pp.95-108) [UWG Library online; link is in D2L]	TERM PAPER (Final Draft)
W 22	Is Reality Itself Socially Constructed? 22. Sally Haslanger, "Ontology and Social Construction", secs. 4-8 (pp.108-119) [UWG Library online; link is in D2L]	
F 24	Class meets for final exam from 3-5 pm on Friday July 24.	FINAL EXAM