Course Syllabus - Philosophy 101: Introduction to Philosophy

Course Description:
This course is designed to introduce students to some of the most significant philosophical questions, and some of the most historically noted philosophers. In this course, we will cover several areas of philosophy including, but not limited to, ethics, metaphysics, epistemology, politics, and philosophy of religion. This course will help to build critical thinking skills, writing skills, reading skills, and public speaking skills. All of these activities will provide students with a well-rounded skill set in philosophical analysis, which will prepare them for upper-level philosophy courses as well as other college courses.

Course Objectives:
1. Identify and explain some of the major issues (e.g., cultural relativism, the mind/body problem, free will, etc.) and theories (e.g., rationalism, empiricism, dualism, etc.) within metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics.
2. Consider and evaluate various issues and theories by thinking critically about the reasons that support a position and the possible objections to that position.
3. Explain and defend a philosophical position in writing. To develop a clear thesis and support it with strong inferences.
4. Explain and defend a philosophical position orally. To develop a clear thesis and support it with strong inferences.
5. Understand that there are a variety of ways, rather than dichotomous ways, to think about metaphysical, epistemological, and ethical issues.
6. Identify and defend some of your own philosophical positions on the major philosophical issues.

Course Book:

Grades:
Exam #1 5%
Exam #2 5%
Exam #3 5%
Exam #4 5%
Exam #5 5%
Exam #6 5%
Exam #7 5%
Exam #8 5%
Philosophical Essay 20%
Creative Project 20%
Attendance/Participation 20%
TOTAL 100%
Rio Hondo College, Summer 2010  
Instructor: Mr. Joe Rasmussen  
Tues. and Thurs., 5:30 pm - 9:45 pm, Room A207  
jrasmussen@riohondo.edu  
Philosophy 101 - Introduction to Philosophy  
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Course Grading:  
89.5 - 100  A  
79.5 - 89  B  
69.5 - 79  C  
59.5 - 69  D  
0 - 59  F  
Each point is worth one percent of your grade, so it is easy to keep track of your grade.

Course Policies:  
It is important to attend every class. Show up to every class, and show up on time. There are almost zero excuses for being late or missing class. It is important to complete the reading before each class. Otherwise, it is hard to do well in class discussions and exams. Above all else, this course will be a great learning experience that will also be a fun, enjoyable experience. Keep a positive attitude! This is supposed to be a fun class, please enjoy it so that others may also enjoy themselves. No bad attitudes will be accepted.

Grading Criteria:  
Everyone can get an "A" in this course. This course is not based on competition, but rather is based on individual performance. There is no reason for anyone to do poorly in this course if they work hard, show up on time every week, and participate for the entire length of the course.

Exams:  
Exams will be taken in-class and will be based on course readings, class discussions, and philosophical film viewings. The format of these exams will primarily be reflection essays written at the end of a class session. Each of the 8 exams will be based on one of the chapters in the Course Book. Please see the Course Schedule for details. Each of the exams are worth 5% of your grade, collectively making up 40% of your grade.

Philosophical Essay  
Each student will write a philosophical essay on a subject of their choice that is approved by the instructor. The Philosophical Essay is DUE on Thursday, July 8th. 20% of grade.

Creative Project  
Each student will create a slideshow, video, web site, or other creative project on a philosophical subject of their choice that is approved by the instructor. 20% of grade.

Attendance/Participation:  
Attendance and participation are worth 20% of your final grade. A sign-in sheet will be distributed each class session to keep track of attendance. This will be an interactive class. Students taking this course will participate in lectures, small group discussions, debates, and class presentations. Respect others! This is non-negotiable. We will be discussing and debating controversial topics, and we all must respect each other's diverse viewpoints. That is what philosophy is all about. Students will surely disagree on several topics, but we must learn to argue respectfully. Also, we need to learn to listen well, and let others speak completely before responding so that everyone has a great experience.