

PHIL 300  
Introduction to Philosophy  
Cosumnes River College  
Spring 2020 (8-week course)  
Tues/Thurs, 2:00 – 4:50 pm

**Tentatively Scheduled Online**

**Instructor:** Dr. Tristan J. Rogers  
**Email:** [rogersT@crc.losrios.edu](mailto:rogersT@crc.losrios.edu)  
**Office:** BSS 143  
**Office Hours:** Arrange remotely via email  
**Website:** <http://www.tristanjrogers.com>

**Course description:** “Philosophy” literally translated from the Greek means “love of wisdom.” Socrates, an ancient Greek philosopher who epitomized this meaning, famously said that “The unexamined life is not worth living.” Following Socrates’ example, one may describe philosophy as the attempt to live an examined life, in part, by asking questions about what it means to live an examined life. What is the good life? When (if ever) is it permissible to disobey the law? Can we trust the reliability of our senses? What is the moral basis for freedom of speech? What is the nature of God? In this course, we will join Socrates (and other philosophers) in discussion of these questions through careful study of and reflection on four classic texts by Plato, Rene Descartes, John Stuart Mill, and David Hume. While no introductory course can do justice to the great expanse of philosophy, dedicated students can expect to experience what it’s like to engage seriously with the best thinkers and deepest questions of a great intellectual tradition.

**Required Texts:**

All required readings will be supplied electronically either in PDF format or through a link on Canvas.

**Course Learning Outcomes and Objectives:**

*Upon completion of this course, the student will be able to:*

- SLO #1: identify important questions and conceptions within a range of traditional subfields of Philosophy (Epistemology, Metaphysics, Logic, Ethics, and Aesthetics), distinguish from among divergent interpretations those that are better supported and those that are less well supported, construct well supported interpretations of diverse viewpoints and reason well about written and oral discourse.
- Objective 1a: evaluate information concerning central issues within a range of traditional subfields of Philosophy for quality, validity and bias to determine if it is objective and reliable.
- Objective 1B: evaluate the relationship of language to logic and analyze, criticize and rationally justify points of view concerning central issues within a range of traditional subfields of Philosophy.
- SLO #2: reason inductively and deductively, reach conclusions concerning central issues within a range of traditional subfields of Philosophy based on sound or cogent inferences drawn from unambiguous statements of knowledge or belief.

- Objective 2a: distinguish fact from non-factual judgment, belief from knowledge and fallacious reasoning from correct (invalid or weak) reasoning in respect to central issues within a range of traditional subfields of Philosophy.

### **Assessment:**

#### 10% – Course Engagement

You cannot learn if you do not participate and take ownership of your own success. Course engagement will be measured by your participation on the discussion board. Each student is required to make two thoughtful posts per day of scheduled course material. I will moderate these discussions. You are, of course, encouraged to make more than two posts. But these will not be graded.

#### 10% – Study Questions

I will post study questions prior to that day's assigned readings. They will be due at the end of the week. Answers will be graded as Check (15)/Check-Plus (20)/Check-Minus (10), depending on thoroughness and accuracy. No late submissions will be accepted.

#### 80% (20% each) – Four Exams

Your success in the course depends largely on your engagement with the reading. As a measure of this, there will be four written exams, one for each philosopher we will study. You will receive questions in advance and one will be chosen on exam day for you to write on. Exams will be submitted online.

### **Grading Schema:**

A = 93-100%, A- = 90-92%, B+ = 87-89%, B = 84-86%, B- = 80-83%, C+ = 77-79%, C = 74-76%, C- = 70-73%, D+ = 67-69%, D = 60-66 %, F = 0-59%

I will, as a matter of policy, round up grades to the next letter grade if you are within 1% (e.g. 79.1 to 80%, but *not* 78.9 to 80%)

**Late work policy:** As a rule, work will not be accepted late except in cases of documented emergency or illness. You may make a written petition for an exception if you feel you have a compelling reason, but these requests must be made in advance.

**Course conduct:** You are expected to be respectful toward your fellow students and toward me. This course covers some controversial and emotionally charged issues. You are expected to discuss these issues in a rational, thoughtful, and respectful way.

**Plagiarism:** Plagiarism is a violation of college policy and seriously undermines your integrity as a student. If you are suspected of plagiarizing or cheating, and proven to have done so, you will receive a zero for the assigned work and be required to go through standard college procedure, which may include additional penalties. It is your responsibility to understand the college's plagiarism policy as indicated in the *Cosumnes River College Catalog* (p.40):

*Cosumnes River College values academic integrity (honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility). It recognizes that individuals can achieve their maximum potential and contribute appropriately to the well-being of the larger community only if they recognize the ethical dimensions of decisions and actions. The college assumes all members of the academic community will exhibit*

*academic integrity supporting student access, academic quality, academic rigor, innovation and collegiality... Current [college] policies prohibit dishonesty, such as cheating, plagiarism, or knowingly furnishing false information to the college...In situations where cheating or plagiarism has occurred [or is reasonably believed to have occurred] the faculty notifies the dean of the pertinent division, and the student that a "Referral for Student Code of Conduct Violation" will be filed through the area dean to the Office of the Vice President for Student Services.*

**Reasonable Accommodation:** Should any student need accommodation because of a disability, please let me know to discuss options.

**Subject to change proviso:** Information contained in the course syllabus, other than the grade, late work and course conduct policy, may be subject to change with advanced notice, as deemed appropriate by the instructor.

---

### **Course Schedule:**

#### **PART ONE – Plato (Ethics)**

##### **Week One – *The Apology***

March 17 (Tues): “Apology”, pp. 21-28 (through line 24c)

March 19 (Thurs): “Apology”, pp. 39-44

##### **Week Two – *Crito***

March 24 (Tues): “Crito” (all)

March 26 (Thurs): Plato Exam

#### **PART TWO – Descartes (Metaphysics and Epistemology)**

##### **Week Three – *Meditations***

March 31 (Tues): First Meditation

April 2 (Thurs): Second Meditation

April 6-12 – SPRING BREAK

##### **Week Four – *Meditations***

April 14 (Tues): Third Meditation

April 16 (Thurs): Descartes Exam

#### **PART THREE – Mill (Political Philosophy)**

##### **Week Five – *On Liberty***

April 21 (Tues): “Introductory”, pp. 5-17

April 23 (Thurs): “Liberty of Thought and Expression”, pp. 18-35

##### **Week Six – *On Liberty***

April 28 (Tues): “Liberty of Thought and Expression”, pp. 35-54

April 30 (Thurs): Mill Exam

PART FOUR – Hume (Philosophy of Religion)

**Week Seven – *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion***

May 5 (Tues): Part One

May 7 (Thurs): Parts Two and Three

**Week Eight – *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion***

May 12 (Tues): Part Four

**Final Exam Week**

May 19 (Tues): Hume Exam