

## PHI 245: INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

Dr. David J. Yount

Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies  
Philosophy & Religious Studies/Psychology/Business Building  
(BP Building - #43A), Room BPO 13  
Office phone: 480-461-7833

E-mail: [david.yount@mesacc.edu](mailto:david.yount@mesacc.edu)

Web Page: <http://www.mesacc.edu/~yount> (switches to <http://www.mesacc.edu/~davpy35701> )

### BASICS:

**FALL 2014 Section 39557 (MWF 12 - 12:50 p.m.)**

*Office Hours:* MWF 1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m., TR 9:30 - 10:30 a.m., or by appointment.

You are encouraged to drop by my office to talk about the course, especially if you have difficulties with the course. If you are unable to come to my office during my office hours, please set up another time for us to meet with me. I will check email during the week and possibly during the weekend; if you have an emergency, it is best to leave a message on my voicemail. *Please note that if you have any problems or concerns about this course, MCC policy states that you must try to work the problem out with me first – the Chair cannot get involved until that point. Also, the Chair cannot change your grade on any assignment or for the course.*

*Webpage Note:* Some of my webpage (see above) may not work if you use Microsoft Internet Explorer from a PC (non-MAC); they might have weird characters such as question marks in odd places. Instead, use Mozilla, FireFox, or some other browser for the best results! If you encounter a link that does not work (except those that say "Available when Dr. Y announces in class"), let me know and I will promptly fix it.

### REQUIRED TEXT:

[\*A Sourcebook in Asian Philosophy\*](#). John M. Koller and Patricia Koller, eds. First edition (1991).

### RECOMMENDED TEXTS:

[\*A Rulebook for Arguments\*](#). Anthony Weston. Fourth edition.

[\*A Guide to Asian Philosophy Classics\*](#). Puqun Li. First edition.

### INTRODUCTION:

In this course we shall examine and assess many different Eastern philosophical theories, comparing and contrasting them as we apply their views to different philosophical questions. After a brief introduction to what philosophy is, and the different major schools of Eastern philosophy, we will examine the views of many famous philosophers, including (but by no means limited to) the following: Hinduism (Rig Veda, Bhagavad Gita, Samkhya Karika, Nyaya-Vaisesika, Mimamsa, Sankara, Ramanuja, Syadavada, Gandhi, and Aurobindo Ghose), Buddhism (Buddha, Nagarjuna, Asanga, Vasubandhu, Dogen, Dalai Lama, Nishitani), Confucius, Chung-yung, Lao Tzu, Chang Tzu, Jan Fei Tzu, Mencius, Fa-Tsang, Hui-neng, Chou Tun-i, Shao Yung, Chang Tsai, Chu His, Wang Yang-ming, & Mao Tse-Tung, and others (see Reading List below, and see the Presentation Schedule for the precise readings and schedule).

### COURSE DESCRIPTION:

General consideration of human nature and the nature of the universe. Knowledge, perception, freedom and determinism, and the existence of God. Prerequisites: None.

### **COURSE GOALS:**

- To provide you with a general introduction to and understanding of philosophical views, issues, and arguments. It should also help you to appreciate what philosophy is and the way in which it is relevant to practical issues.
- To help you develop your critical thinking and writing skills. In order to develop your views on these issues, it is important to understand the difference between good and bad arguments, and to have the ability to critically and carefully analyze the arguments of others. This course should help you to write more sharply organized, focused and effective argumentative essays.
- This course does *not* aim to provide simple answers to questions such as, "Is there a permanent self?" Although I have my own views on these issues, I shall not be concerned to "convert" anybody. This course will not preach a set of "correct" views; it will, however, assume rationality (consistency and having plausible reasons for one's view) and free will. What is important is that you attempt to carefully consider and examine the arguments with intellectual honesty and reconcile them with your convictions. This course should open your mind to many, as of yet unforeseen, possibilities and options that may be true of everything that exists or may exist.

*By the end of the semester, I wish for you to know the following general things about philosophy:*

1. Philosophy is useful and valuable.
2. Philosophy is diverse.
3. There is such a thing as a good and a bad argument, whether or not you agree with its conclusion.
4. Your argument is only as good or sound as your consideration and/or answers to good objections against it.
5. There are many answers that have been given to the major philosophical questions, and every such answer is not equally as plausible as every other. Your "job" is to seek the most plausible answer.

### **COURSE PHILOSOPHY, PROMISES AND EXPECTATIONS:**

**COURSE PHILOSOPHY:** Philosophy is a difficult but rewarding discipline. Like life, which at times can be frustrating and hard to figure out (e.g., what should I do with my life, what happens when I die, is there a God, etc.) but which at times can also be exhilarating and fun, philosophizing can have these qualities. The only way to get better at living or philosophizing is to actively deal with the relevant issues and put an honest effort into attempting to understand them. I look at philosophy as a skill that one cannot learn without actively participating. I do not want you to memorize names and dates and definitions and leave the class forgetting what material we covered. In an attempt to engage you in the class, I will require that you present an article to the class (see below). I will be available to help you, and you are free to search the Internet to see if someone else has written something on the article you're reading, etc. I want us to create an atmosphere where we are a team (even though I might know more about philosophy, I do not know everything), trying to sort out what the best view on these issues is, and where you're an essential part of the team. We need open and honest dialogue that includes respect (i.e., no name calling, accusations, verbal attacks, keeping the discussion and comments on the topic and not on the individual), keeping in mind that it is OK to disagree with each other.

**PROMISES (WHAT I PROMISE YOU):** I promise you that I will (1) Be on time, (2) Teach the course unless I have a temperature higher than 102 (I will be at class even if I'm not feeling well – including but

not limited to colds, flu, ear infections, arm injuries, etc.), (3) Be enthused about philosophy and the class material every class session, (4) Help you understand the material to the best of my ability, (5) Be available outside of class in the form of e-mail communication and office hours, (6) Treat you with respect, (7) Grade fairly and promptly (I will have grades on papers returned no later than one week from when they were turned in), (8) Lay out course expectations and requirements clearly, (9) Be organized and use class time well, and (10) Inject as much humor as philosophically possible so that we can have fun!

**EXPECTATIONS (WHAT I EXPECT YOU TO DO):** I expect you to (1) Do the work (e.g., the reading, summaries, and papers) honestly and promptly, (2) Come to class, (3) Be on time, (4) Participate actively, (5) Ask a question whenever something is confusing or unclear, (6) Respect each other, (7) Support/share with each other, (8) Learn a lot, and (9) Have fun!

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS (Due dates and requirements are subject to change):**

**1. ATTENDANCE (Please see Attendance and Tardiness under Class Policies below).**

**2. PARTICIPATION IN DISCUSSION: (10% of course grade).**

To grade the discussion portion of the course, if you either ask one question or make one comment on that day that relates to the course lectures, presentations, or articles, then you will earn participation credit for that day. Your participation grade is calculated based on how often you talk during discussion times. To earn an A in participation, you must make one comment or ask one question at least half of the semester. From there, participation will be graded on a standard scale: Talking in half of the class meetings or more (90% -100% of half of the class meetings) earns an A for this portion of the course; 80% - 89% (of half the class meetings) earns a B; 70 - 79%, a C; 60 - 69%, a D; 59% or lower, a failing grade. **BONUS: YOU WILL EARN AN A IN PARTICIPATION IF YOU HAVE NO (ZERO) UNEXCUSED ABSENCES FOR THE SEMESTER (See Attendance in the Class Policy Section below, for more information)!**

**3. PRESENTATION(S): (10% of course grade).**

During the semester, you will need to present at least one (and perhaps more, depending on the size of the class) article to the class, giving relevant information about the reading (See my Presentation Guidelines on my Website for material that is to be covered during the presentation). I will assign the articles near the beginning of the semester. I will present at least one article as an example before we continue with your presentations. Here are three possible grades on the presentation: (1) If you are on time, are well-prepared and present the material in an organized way (according to my Presentation Guidelines on my Website), then you will earn an A on it; (2) if you are tardy (more than 5 minutes late by my watch), mainly read straight out of the book and not from your own notes, have not prepared well in general (e.g., skipping large parts of an article), or have no notes ready and you wing it, you will earn a C; and (3) If you attend class but do not give a presentation, or if you have an unexcused absence on the day of your presentation, you will earn an F for that presentation. (I reserve the right to give any grade between an A and an F should I deem it necessary.)

**4. ARTICLE SUMMARIES (30% of course grade)**

For each article that is presented, *including my first sample(s)*, you will need to turn in a handwritten summary of the reading(s) for that class period including at least one question you have about the reading. These summaries are due at the beginning of the class period and are NOT to be completed during class! See my Article Summary Guidelines on my website for more details. Your grade for the summaries will be based on how many you turn in: If you turn in 90-100% of them, you'll earn an A; if you turn in 80-89%, B; 70-79%, C; 60-69%, D; and 0-59%, F. Also, the deadline for turning in any

summaries for excused absences are due (unless specifically arranged otherwise with Dr. Y) on or before the last day of class (i.e., not the final exam day).

5. **INTRODUCTORY PAPER** (At least 3 pages, but no more than 4 pages, **10% of course grade**). An introductory paper is an excellent way for you to find out what philosophy is about and for me to find out how you are doing, and since it is not worth much in the general scheme of things, you need not worry too much about your grade. **The paper topic(s) will be posted on my Website and announced when they become available for printing; your papers must be a response to those paper topic questions.** Note that, besides the standard grades of A, B, C, D, and F, I may issue a grade on papers of an AB, BC, CD, or DF, which are mid-grades, halfway between the two grades, and have the numerical equivalent on a 0 – 4 scale as follows: AB = 3.5, BC = 2.5, CD = 1.5, and DF = 0.5. I reserve the right to assign other mid-grades. These grades will be averaged in at the end of the course to give an overall grade of A, B, C, D, or F (in accordance with MCC policy). For much further information on all papers [including, e.g., how the papers are graded (more specifically), good and bad paper examples, etc.], see my Web page. **Due date: See Presentation Schedule.**

6. **SECOND PAPER** (4 - 6 pages, **15% of course grade**). **The paper topic(s) will be posted on my Website and announced when they become available for printing; your papers must be a response to the questions on the Website.** Note that, besides the standard grades of A, B, C, D, and F, I may issue a grade on papers of an AB, BC, CD, or DF, which are mid-grades, halfway between the two grades (see the chart below). I reserve the right to assign other mid-grades. These grades will be factored in at the end of the course to give an overall grade of A, B, C, D, or F (in accordance with MCC policy). For much further information on all papers [including, e.g., how the papers are graded (more specifically), good and bad paper examples, etc.], see my Web page. In this paper, you will be expected to raise at least one good objection to your position and reply to that objection. **Due date: See Presentation Schedule.**

7. **THIRD PAPER** (4 - 6 pages, **25% of course grade**). In this paper, you will be expected to raise at least two good objections to your position and reply to those objections. **Due date: See Presentation Schedule.**

#### **CLASS POLICIES:**

**Absences:** For MWF students, if you have THREE (3) or more UNexcused absences over the course of the semester, I reserve the right to withdraw you from this course. For TR students, if you have TWO (2) or more UNexcused absences over the course of the semester, I reserve the right to withdraw you from this course. Excused absences will only be given in cases of medical emergencies, jury duty, funerals, participation in school activities, etc. I will require a physical copy of a physician's slip, a court order or summons, a funeral prayer card, etc., or the absence will not be excused. Also, I require advanced notice for excused absences, except in the case of medical emergencies, or your absence will not be excused. Examples of typical *unexcused* absences include: My car won't start, my windshield wipers don't work and it's raining, I have a bad cold or feel ill (unless you get a physician's slip for it), I overslept, I had to study for another class, I went home for a long weekend, I'm going skiing, etc. ***You will receive a W for excessive absences (as defined in the first sentence), unless you have extended excused absence (e.g., prolonged illness), in which case you need to make other arrangements with me.***

**Tardiness:** I reserve the right to withdraw you from the class if you are consistently late to class. If you are late to class more than 3 times, I reserve the right to withdraw you from this course. What's the problem with being late? It shows a lack of respect for the class - the teacher and your classmates - if you are habitually late. It breaks the concentration of most everyone in the room, and if you come in and start asking questions of those next to you, they will only miss more of the class as well. In the student

handbook, it says that an instructor can withdraw a student from a class for disrupting the class and being continually late falls under this category, as interpreted by me!

**Attendance Sheet:** It is completely your responsibility to make sure that I mark you as being present, on the attendance sheet. If you are not in the classroom by the time I take roll (pretty quickly as the semester gets rolling), I will not count you as being in attendance for that class period. Note that I may withdraw you from the class for being consistently late to class.

**Disability?** If you have or think you have a disability, including a learning disability, please make an appointment with an advisor at disability resources (461-7447) as soon as possible. They can assist you with appropriate accommodations for you in your classes.

**Cell Phones, Computers, & Tape Recorders:** (1) You may not use your phone during class (for calling or texting), unless I specifically give you permission to do so. You may use your phones in our classroom before class starts, however. (2) You may use a computer to take notes for the class; however, I reserve the right to verify that you are only taking notes with your computer – you may not surf the web, do email, or work on other class work (for this class or other classes) during class time. (3) You may tape record the course, provided you obtain my permission beforehand.

**Warnings:** If you do not like thinking or writing, do *not* take this course. I will be evaluating your critical thinking skills in discussions, in your article summaries, and in your papers, in order to gauge your comprehension of the material. To be a good philosopher (or philosophy student), as I view it, is not essentially to be able to memorize dates and definitions, but is to have the ability to actively engage in argument and critical thinking of one's own views as well as those of one's opponent. Philosophy deals with controversial adult material including human sexuality, the existence of God, principles of justice, etc. Students must be prepared to engage all material as presented and assigned. Alternate assignments, readings, lectures, etc. will not be provided.

**Plagiarism:** Do not attempt to plagiarize in writing your papers. **Plagiarism = taking any idea or writing that is not your own and including it in your paper without citing your source.** For example, if you go to a website and take information or sentences from that website and do not cite that website in your paper, you are plagiarizing. You cannot have a roommate write your paper. You also cannot just cite a website and then turn in a whole paper from a website that is not your work. The paper has to be an original work of your own. This also includes using our own textbook, quoting it, or describing a philosopher's view and not citing the page from which you took the information. (See my *Dave's Philosophy 245 Paper Policies* on my Website for how to cite sources.) How serious am I about this? On the first occurrence of plagiarism (this includes drafts with substantial amounts of plagiarism in them), you will receive a failing grade for the course. I will assume that you now realize what plagiarism is, what plagiarizing in my class results in, and that by continuing in my class you're in effect making a commitment not to plagiarize in this class. (NOTE: I will *NOT* be looking for plagiarism in your presentations or article summaries.)

**MCC Early Alert Program (EARS):** Mesa Community College is committed to the success of all our students. Numerous campus support services are available throughout your academic journey to assist you in achieving your educational goals. MCC has adopted an Early Alert Referral System (EARS) as part of a student success initiative to aid students in their educational pursuits. Faculty and Staff participate by alerting and referring students to campus services for added support. Students may receive a follow up call from various campus services as a result of being referred to EARS. Students are encouraged to participate, but these services are optional. Early Alert Web Page with Campus Resource Information can be located at: <http://www.mesacc.edu/students/ears> or locate the "Early Alert" selection at the MyMcc link from MCC's home page.

*The syllabus is a contract between the student and the professor, and students are responsible for adhering to the policies in the syllabus, as well as in the MCC Catalog and Student Handbook.  
Dr. Yount will notify students of any changes in course requirements or policies.*

**TENTATIVE READING LIST (See Presentation Schedule for official reading list, page numbers, and the due dates for the reading):**

**I. What is (Eastern) philosophy?**

Reading(s):

Lecture 1: Introduction to (Eastern) philosophy

**II. Hindu Texts**

Readings:

Ch. 1: **Vedas and Upanishads:** The Rig Veda (pp. 6-11)

Ch. 1: The Brhadaranyaka Upanishad (pp. 12-19)

Ch. 1: Chandogya & Taittiriya Upanishads (pp. 25-32)

Ch. 2: The Bhagavad Gita, Part I [chs. 1-5] (pp. 34-42)

Ch. 2: The Bhagavad Gita, Part II [chs. 5-7,10-12] (pp. 42-50)

Ch. 3: **Samkhya-Yoga:** The Samkhya Karika (pp. 52-59)

Ch. 4: Nyaya-Vaisesika: Anambhatta's Tarkasamgraha (pp. 70-80)

Ch. 5: Mimamsa: The Mimamsa Sutra (pp. 82-91)

Ch. 6: **Vedanta:** Sankara: A Thousand Teachings, Part I (chs. 1-8) (pp. 93-99)

Ch. 6: Sankara: Thousand Teachings, Pt. II (sec 45-101) (pp. 104-115)

Ch. 6: Ramanuja: Summary of Vedic Teachings (pp. 115-128)

Ch. 7: **Jainism:** The Theory of Perspectives (Syadavada) (pp. 135-142)

Ch. 8: **Modern Indian Thought:** Gandhi: Selections (pp. 156-165)

Ch. 8: Aurobindo Ghose: The Life Divine (pp. 165-177)

**III. Buddhist Texts**

Readings:

Ch. 9: **Basic Teachings According to the Early Texts:** Wheel of Truth (I), Fire (II), & Mindfulness (VI) (195-8, 205-12)

Ch. 9: Words of Truth (VII) & Last Words (VIII) (pp. 212-219)

Ch. 10: **Philosophical Issues in Early Buddhism:** No-Self and Rebirth (pp. 222-231)

- Ch. 10: Dependent Origination: The Middle Way (pp. 233-238)
- Ch. 11: **Rise of the Mahayana:** Bodhisattva (pp. 248-251) & Heart Sutra (pp. 253-257)
- Ch. 12: **Madhyamaka:** Nagarjuna: Treatise on Fund'ls of Middle Way (pp. 264-271)
- Ch. 13: **Yogacara:** Asanga: On Knowing Reality (pp. 308-313 [I]; 315-316 [II])
- Ch. 13: Vasubandhu: Discussion of Five Aggregates (pp. 323-330)
- Ch. 14: **Zen:** Dogen: Essays from Shobogenzo (pp. 346-354, 358-361)
- Ch. 15: **Modern Buddhist Thought:** Dalai Lama: The Key to the Middle Way (pp. 379-387)
- Ch. 15: Nishitani: The Self as Sunyata (pp. 393-399)

#### **IV. Chinese Texts**

##### Readings:

- Ch. 16: **The Vision of Confucius:** Confucius: The Analects (pp. 409-421)
- Ch. 16: Doctrine of the Mean (pp. 433-439; sects. 1-21)
- Ch. 17: **The Taoist Vision:** Lao Tzu: Tao Te Ching (pp. 445-450)
- Ch. 17: Chuang Tzu: Ch. 2 (pp. 450-455; p. 456 after the break in the text, to the last line on p. 456; p. 458, after the second gap in the text, beginning with "Gaptooth," till footnote 9, on p. 458; p. 459, the very last paragraph of the page only)
- Ch. 18: **Utilitarian and Legalist Challenges:** Han Fei Tzu: Way of Ruler & Wielding Power (pp. 468-475)
- Ch. 19: **Confucian Developments:** Mencius (pp. 477-487)
- Ch. 20: **Chinese Buddhism:** Fa-tsang: Hua-yen Treatise (pp. 503-507)
- Ch. 20: Hui-neng: The Platform Sutra (pp. 508-516)
- Ch. 21: **Neo-Confucian Foundations:** Chou Tun-I, Shao Yung, and Chang Tsai (pp. 522-527)
- Ch. 22: **The Two Wings of Neo-Confucianism:** Chu Hsi: Selected Writings (pp. 538-541, 544-548)
- Ch. 22: Wang Yang-ming: Inquiry on the Great Learning (pp. 548-554)
- Ch. 23: **Recent Chinese Thought:** Mao Tse-Tung: On Practice (pp. 556-562)