

Philosophy 308w: Spring 2012
Studies in Contemporary Philosophy: World Philosophies
MW 1-1:50 TYD 2106

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Course Description:

This course examines five philosophical traditions: Platonism, Islam, Aztec, Yoruba, and Confucianism. It discusses each philosophy in its own terms as well as in terms of the other four. Juxtaposing the five philosophical traditions allows students to compare and contrast the philosophical concepts and categories with which the adherents of each tradition conceive wisdom, reality, truth, knowledge, personhood, language, right and wrong, good and bad, beauty, and the human condition. It also provides students with the opportunity to become more self-conscious of and self-reflective about the philosophical presuppositions of their own philosophical views as well as the opportunity to understand better those who do not share their views. Lastly, the course offers students the occasion to develop their own views regarding the possibility and nature of cross-cultural understanding, and ideally, to develop a more genuine form of global awareness.

Course Requirements and Grading*:

Students are required to attend lectures and sections, participate in discussions, and complete five take-home *essay* exams each of which counts one-sixth of the final grade. Class participation will help raise borderline grades. Late papers will be penalized one-half letter grade per academic day (not class period). Electronic submissions will not be accepted.

Required texts (available for purchase at UMD Book Center)

Plato, *The Republic* (Francis Cornford, trans.) Oxford University Press, ISBN 10: 0-19-500364-0 (paper).

Roger Ames and Harry Rosemont (trans), *The Analects of Confucius*. NY: Ballantine Books, 1977. ISBN 0-345-43407-2 (paper).

Barry Hallen, *The Good, the Bad and the Beautiful*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000. ISBN: 0-253-21416-5 (paper).

Peter S. Goff, *Islamic Philosophy A-Z*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007. ISBN: 978 0 7486 2089 0

All non-purchased course readings will be made available on ELMS.

Course Outline:

1/25: Introduction to class.

Section I: Plato's Philosophy / Weeks 2-4 (1/30-2/15) plus one lecture in section

Reading: Plato, *The Republic* (pages to be specified in class).

! Exam #1 assigned 2/15; due 2/27.

Section II: Nahua (Aztec) Philosophy / Weeks 5-6 (2/20–2/29).

Reading:

- James Maffie, "Double Mistaken Philosophical Identity in Sahagún's *Colloquios y doctrina cristiana*" *Divinatio: Studia Culturologica* 34 (Winter, 2011): 63-92.
... "Aztec Philosophy," *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2005
<http://www.iep.utm.edu/aztec/>
... *Aztec Philosophy: Understanding a World in Motion* (selections)
... "Weaving the Aztec Cosmos: The Metaphysics of the 5th Era".
... "The Centrality of Nepantla in Conquest-era Nahua Philosophy," *The Nahua Newsletter* 44 (2007): 11-31.
... "Why Care about Nezahualcoyotl? Veritism and Nahua Philosophy," *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 32 (2002): 73-93.
... "To Walk in Balance: An Encounter between Contemporary Western Science and Pre-Conquest Nahua Philosophy."

! Exam #2 assigned 2/29; due 3/19.

Section III: Islamic Philosophy / Weeks 8-10 (3/19-4/2)

Reading: Peter S. Groff, *Islamic Philosophy A-Z* (pages to be specified in class)
Additional readings posted on ELMS to be specified.

! Exam #3 assigned 4/2; due 4/16.

Section IV: Confucian Philosophy / Weeks 10-13 (4/4-4/23)

Reading: Roger Ames and Harry Rosemont (trans), *The Analects of Confucius*.

! Exam #4 assigned 4/23; due 5/7.

Section V: Yoruba Philosophy / Weeks 13-15 (4/25-5/9)

Reading: Según Gbadegesun (selections)

Barry Hallen and H.O. Sodipo, *Knowledge, Belief and Witchcraft* (selections)

Barry Hallen, *The Good, the Bad and the Beautiful*.

Richard Farris Thompson, "The Aesthetics of Cool" (recommended)

Oyewumi, *The Invention of Women* (selections) (recommended)

! Exam #5 assigned 5/9; due ...

BUSINESS MATTERS

*(1) The preceding course schedule, requirements, procedures, and reading assignments are subject to change by the instructor in the event of extenuating circumstances.

(2) Individuals having any disability, either permanent or temporary, which might affect their ability to perform in this class are encouraged to inform me at the outset of the term. Adaptation of methods, materials, or testing will be made as required to provide for equitable participation.

(3) Disruptive behavior: Students deemed by the instructor to be guilty of behavior disruptive to the class (e.g. cellphones, text messaging, passing notes, or talking) are subject to permanent expulsion from the class.

(4) Regarding written assignments, students are expected to demonstrate:

(a) the ability to convey a theme or argument clearly and coherently;

(b) the ability to analyze critically and to synthesize the work of others;

(c) the ability to acquire and apply information from appropriate sources, and reference sources appropriately; and

(d) competence in standard written English.

(5) Plagiarism:

“Plagiarism, according to the University website policy on plagiarism, http://www.lib.umd.edu/UES/plag_stud_what.html, is "intentionally or knowingly representing the words or ideas of another as one's own in any academic exercise." Examples of acts that would be defined as plagiarism are:

- Copying word for word, and neglecting to both enclose the words in quotation marks *and* to cite the source
- Summarizing or paraphrasing someone else's words or ideas and failing to cite the source
- Reproducing the organization or structure of another person's work and failing to cite it
- Any other act in which someone presents someone else's intellectual material as their own, whether it involves graphics, code, data, charts, etc.

Plagiarism is a serious act of academic dishonesty which is not taken lightly at this University.” For further information see: <http://www.lib.umd.edu/guides/honesty.html>

(6) All class lectures and class readings are copyrighted. As such they may not be reproduced for anything other than personal use without written permission of the instructor.

(7) Regarding attendance, I quote the following from the UMD websites

Regular attendance and participation in this class is the best way to grasp the concepts and principles being discussed. However, in the event that a class must be missed due to an illness, the policy in this class is as follows:

1. For every medically necessary absence from class (lecture, recitation, or lab), a reasonable effort should be made to notify the instructor in advance of the class. When returning to class, students must bring a note identifying the date of and reason for the absence, and acknowledging that the information in the note is accurate.
2. If a student is absent more than 4 successive times, the instructor may require documentation signed by a health care professional.
3. If a student is absent on days when tests are scheduled or papers are due *[or other such events as specified in the syllabus]* he or she is required to notify the instructor in advance, and upon returning to class, bring documentation of the illness, signed by a health care professional.

“It is the policy of the university to excuse the absences of students that result from the following causes: illness of the student, or illness of a dependent as defined by Board of Regents policy on family and medical leave; religious observance (where the nature of the observance prevents the student from being present during the class period); participation in university activities at the request of university authorities; and compelling circumstance beyond the students control.”

For further information, see <http://www.faculty.umd.edu/teach/instructionalguide201112.pdf>.