

NOVA COLLEGE-WIDE COURSE CONTENT SUMMARY PHI 101 - INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY I (3 CR.)

Course Description

Introduces a broad spectrum of philosophical problems and perspectives with an emphasis on the systematic questioning of basic assumptions about meaning, knowledge, reality, and values. Lecture 3 hours per week.

General Course Purpose

To provide the student with an opportunity to systematically develop a personal philosophical perspective on the great questions about meaning, knowledge, reality, and values. This opportunity will be provided through a study of the nature of philosophical questions, the differences between philosophy and other areas of learning, and a survey of the way certain of the “great questions” have been treated by philosophers of various times and persuasions. This course will provide the student with the opportunity to critically read and write about primary texts, commentaries and textbook materials in philosophy.

Course Prerequisites/Corequisites

None

Course Objectives

At the completion of this course, the student will have developed an understanding of the nature of philosophical questions and will know many of the attempts that have been made to answer them. Specifically, the student should be able to:

- Define the term “philosophy” with an appreciation of the many philosophical issues involved in the very attempt to do so. (relates to General Education objectives 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 3.4 and 5.2)
- Distinguish such typical philosophical terms as epistemology, metaphysics, and ethics. (objs 1.1-1.5, 2.2, 3.2-3.5)
- Identify and critically evaluate the positions taken by great philosophers on typical philosophical questions. (objs 1.1-1.5, 2.2-2.6, 3.2-3.4)
- Assess a philosophical argument for persuasiveness, logical consistency, and applicability to other arguments and issues. (objs 1.1-1.5, 2.2-2.6, 6.1)
- Reflect on the importance of philosophy as the systematic questioning of basic assumptions. (objs 2.2, 3.1-3.2, 5.2)
- Summarize and explain, and evaluate in writing ideas, concepts and arguments from primary texts, lecture materials and textbooks. (objs 1.1-1.5, 2.2-2.6, 3.2-3.4)

Major Topics to be Included

Critical attention will be given to the following basic questions of philosophy:

- Who am I? (What is the nature of the human condition?)
- How can I know? (What are the sources and methods of acquiring knowledge?)
- How shall I live well? (What are the principles upon which we make judgments of value?)
- What can I hope for? (What is the telos or purpose of human life?)

These questions will be asked through a critical examination of several of the following major philosophical issues:

- Metaphysical Issues: The existence of God; the nature of the mind; the structure of reality; the nature of meaning; the free-will issue; odes or kinds of existence; etc.
- Epistemological Issues: The nature, sources, and justification for claims to know; knowledge vs. Opinion; the role of the senses; the possibility of a prior knowledge; the role of language; etc.
- Issues in the Theory of Value: The nature of the “good life”; the definition of happiness; the justification for claims about the good, the right, and the morally obligatory; deontology vs. utilitarianism; absolutisms vs. relativism; metaethics; etc.