

The Class

General Information

All participants (students, teacher, friends and family, roadies and groupies, etc.) are expected to be on time. (Pet Peeve: Please do not pack up your books and bags before the end of class. I find this annoying.) Feel free to bring food and drink. You are welcome to bring family and visiting friends to class.

N.B.: If you miss a class... In Class 2, you will get contact info for a few other class members. Contact these people for class notes, assignments, etc. Be sure to check the web site. *Missing a class is not an excuse for not having an assignment ready for the next class.*

Class Preparation

For each session, every participant is expected to have read the assigned reading, to have answered the response-to-reading questions, and to be prepared to say at least one thing in class. To enable you to meet these requirements, the readings will be fairly short, and I will supply you with reading questions to focus your attention. (These are available on the blackboard site.) You might find the texts difficult to read, especially if you have not read any philosophy before. You are not alone! I recommend that you read through each reading at least twice, and that you *make notes* while you read, especially to any questions supplied.

Discussion

Class participation is extremely important. It is where you develop speaking skills. You *must* make contributions to the class discussion. I understand that this policy will make shy students uncomfortable to begin with, but speaking, arguing and discussing are essential to the practice of philosophy. So it is necessary to develop the confidence and ability to speak philosophically. Any student may be called on at any time. (Learn to feel comfortable saying 'I'll pass', 'I don't know,' 'Can you repeat that?' etc.) Occasional inability to answer will not be held against you. If you have a *serious* problem with speaking *in class*, please inform me and you can instead arrange to discuss with me in office hours.

Note that discussion also involves *listening*, to the contributions of your classmates, so that you can (i) respond to them and (ii) learn from them. All participants should pay attention to what others have to say and take their opinions seriously. Give the speaker a chance to make his/her point before responding - don't interrupt.

I will sometimes find it necessary, perhaps due to time constraints, to leave discussion of one point to move on to another or to close the class. This does not at all reflect on the point just made or on those waiting to contribute. See also *Grading: Class Participation* below.

Grades

(Critical Thinking Exercises and) Comprehension Questions	30
Response-to-Reading Assignments	20
Papers (2 @ 15%, plus 2 @ 5% peer reviews)	40
Participation	10

In addition to participation, your grade will depend on three different types of assignment, of increasing sophistication.

1. (Critical Thinking and) Comprehension Questions: For each class you'll be reading a piece of text. Comprehension questions will be posted on the blackboard site. Your answers to these questions must be *typed up* and submitted each class. They are graded as being either satisfactory (1 point), partly satisfactory (0.5 points) or unsatisfactory (0 points). When we are learning about critical thinking, practice exercises will take the place of comprehension questions.

2. Response-to-Reading Assignments: Discussion questions are also posted on the blackboard site. You should think about these as you are doing the reading. Bring your thoughts to class, as they will typically be what we talk about. You need not type these up on a daily basis, but *at least* four times (and a maximum of six times, three in each half of the term) during the term you should type up your response to *a* (that is, *one*) discussion question and hand it in. You can do the write-up either for the class in which the topic will be discussed, or after that class. The important thing is that you give your own response to the question. (If you wait until after the discussion you'll get some good ideas, but then you need to take one of these ideas further.)

Each of these assignments is worth 5% each up to maximum of 20%. If you do more than 4, your lowest scores will be dropped, though you must count at least two from each half of the term. These write-ups are one to two pages long (and definitely no more than two). They provide practice in exploring and expressing your own ideas (rather than the ideas you find in the reading.) These assignments can serve as the basis for a Paper. Some standard types of response would be: to point to an unclarity in the text (with an explanation of why it is unclear); a questioning of whether a certain claim in the text is true (with reasons for thinking it is not true); a criticism of the argument in a text (with an explanation of why you think the conclusion does not follow from the premises); development of a corollary that follows from the position in the text.

3. Papers: In a paper you pull it all together – you show not only that you understand a particular topic, but present *and argue at length* for a thesis you are making. Papers are 4-5 pages in length. For information on how you will be graded, see the last section of Pryor's handout on 'How to Write a Philosophy Paper' which will be available on the blackboard site when the topics are given out.

You are *required* to write a draft, which will be given to another member of the class for peer review. You will be required to review someone else's draft and this work will be graded. Peer reviews are worth 5%. I will explain how to do a peer review when the time comes.

N.B.: *Academic Honesty.* You are expected to be familiar with, and in compliance with, all provisions of the academic honesty section of the student code. All work submitted must be your own. Plagiarism is a failure to cite any ideas (either in quotation *or* *paraphrase*) that are not your own. Any plagiarism will be prosecuted.

N.B.: It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of all written work, (and to collect work as it is returned.) For this reason, word processing of all documents is highly recommended.

N.B.: Always use the last four digits of your soc number (or any 4-digit number of your choosing) rather than your name.

N.B.: *Turning in Assignments Outside Class.* Assignments and Papers will be collected by me at the beginning of the class in which they are due. If you *foresee* that you will miss a class for which an assignment is due, turn it in early to my door (along with a submission form, available in the envelope on my door.)

Any assignment not received either at my door or in class by this time is late. (So if you come in half-way through class, or even a few minutes late, your work is already late.) Late work must be turned in to my door with a submission form.

If you unexpectedly miss a class for which an assignment is due, or must turn an Assignment or Paper after it has been collected, for whatever reason, it may be turned in to my door along with a submission form. If you have *documentation* of a good excuse it will be graded without penalty; if not, it will be penalized (approximately) one grade step per day.

Assignments or Papers can be e-mailed to me in order to establish the time at which it was complete, but a hard copy should be turned in as soon as possible thereafter, with a submission form. For example, e-mailing is very useful if you miss an assignment due on Friday. If turn the assignment in to my door on Saturday and want to prove it, send me a copy by e-mail. Attached files must be rich text (*.rtf) format.

N.B.: *Disability.* VWC recognizes, and is sensitive to, students with special needs. In order to use accommodations, students must first register with the college's disability services co-ordinator, Fayne Pearson, at 455-3246, and provide the college with appropriate, professional documentation. If you need accommodations in this course because of a documented disability, or if you have emergency medical information to share, please make an appointment to see me during my office hours.

4. Participation: See the section 'Discussion' above. Clearly articulating your thoughts is a crucial skill to develop, so participation is graded on a scale from 6 to 10 for the semester. You should aim to make a substantive contribution at least once a week. This means contributing to a discussion by asking a question about an idea, explaining a difficult idea (from the text), articulating a thought in response to the text or discussion.

N.B.: Disrupting class will lower your participation grade. Disruptions include: arriving late to class, leaving during class, talking privately to others, doing other work in class.

General Remarks about Grades

As you can see, this class requires constant work throughout the quarter and the grade is based on many different requirements. This is *not* the sort of class where you can afford to miss a day or three. This is *not* the kind of class you can blow off until the end of the term. However, with constant work, you should be able to do well.

I don't curve and I don't inflate grades. This might be different from what you are used to, especially if this is your first year in college. It's likely that only a few people will get an 'A' in this class, which requires excellent work. A 'B' is a good grade. Many people will get between a 'B-' and 'C'. I will put the grade-book on-line after mid-term, so you can check your standing. You can e-mail for your scores at any time. Employers don't care very much about your GPA, so concentrate on taking challenging classes at college.

Grading Scale: A/A- 100-90 B+/B/B- 90-80 C+/C/C- 80-70 D+/D/D- 70-60