

**PHIL 2005: HONORS CRITICAL THINKING**  
**Spring 2015**

**Section 002**      TR 12:30 p.m. – 1:45 p.m.      DBH 104

**Instructor:** Ian Albright

**Office:** S 242 (Renovated Science Building)

**Phone:** N/A

**Email:** [ialbright@csustan.edu](mailto:ialbright@csustan.edu)

[Email is the best way to contact me, NOT by phone!]

[DO NOT email assignments – messages ONLY!]

[Please include PHIL 2005 and your section number in the title of all messages!]

**Main Website:** <http://dl.dropbox.com/u/98454942/Phil%20Web/index.html>

[The syllabus, formal paper assignments, copies of Power Point lectures, and other important documents can be accessed, downloaded, and printed from this website]

**Office Hours:** MW 2:00 p.m. – 2:50 p.m., TR 11:30 a.m. – 12:20 p.m., and by appointment (tentative hours)

**Course Description:**

To think critically means to actively examine and interrogate the beliefs held by others and ourselves rather than passively accepting them without rational justification. As such, this course on the fundamentals of reasoning and critical thinking will help you develop the skills to more effectively analyze and evaluate your own beliefs and many of the beliefs you encounter on a daily basis from the media, friends, parents, teachers, family members, co-workers, politicians, corporations, advertisements, authority figures, etc. Hence, the skills you will develop throughout this course will allow you to become a better thinker, more personally empowered, and less likely to be taken advantage of by others. In addition to being able to more critically engage the world around you, this course will also provide you with the skills to better articulate arguments to support and justify your well-reasoned beliefs. These skills will be developed through the critical examination and construction of arguments.

We will be focusing on various themes throughout the duration of the course in our praxis of critical thinking. Various questions will be raised to open up spaces for our pursuits.

**Goals for General Education Courses:**

Each GE course must demonstrate how it will meet Goals 1-5 and either Goal 6, Goal 7, or both Goals 6 and 7.

1. *Subject knowledge.* To provide an educational experience that will enhance students' understanding of the discipline's basic principles, methodologies, and perspectives.
2. *Communication.* To provide an educational experience that will enhance the ability to communicate.
3. *Inquiry and Critical Thinking.* To provide an educational experience that will enhance critical thinking skills and will contribute to continuous inquiry and life-long learning.
4. *Information Retrieval and Evaluation.* To provide an educational experience that will enhance the ability to find, understand, examine critically, and use information from various sources.
5. *Interdisciplinary Relationships.* To provide an educational experience that will enhance students' understanding of a discipline's interrelationships with other disciplines.
6. *Global or Multicultural Perspectives.* To provide an educational experience that will enhance the ability to look at issues from multiple perspectives and/or that will describe the discipline's impact on or connection to global issues, AND/OR
7. *Social Responsibility.* To provide an educational experience that will help students understand the complexity of ethical judgment and social responsibility and/or that will describe the discipline's impact on or connection to social and ethical issues.

In addition to meeting the *Goals for General Education Classes* listed above, there are several course-specific *Student Learning Outcomes* that students of this course will meet.

**Student Learning Outcomes:**

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

1. Better understand and articulate the importance of thinking critically in everyday life as well as in scholarly pursuits.
2. More effectively construct logically effective arguments in a variety of situations.
3. Accurately explain and critically discuss, analyze, and evaluate the various theories and beliefs explored,
4. Better engage the world from a critical perspective.

**Required Text:**

*PHIL 2005 Student Reader*

### Supplemental Texts:

Additional texts (in the form of handouts or links to websites) may be distributed periodically throughout the duration of the course. Generally, these materials will be made available during the class meeting preceding the date upon which they will be discussed or included in your homework assignment. It is your responsibility to ensure that you have received and reviewed these additional texts prior to the date upon which they will be discussed or upon which your homework assignment on these texts is due. If you are at anytime absent from class, it is your responsibility to acquire these supplemental works. I will have additional copies available or will provide you with the website address. The syllabus, formal paper assignments, copies of Power Point lectures, and other important documents can be accessed, downloaded, and printed from the **main website**:

<http://dl.dropbox.com/u/98454942/Phil%20Web/index.html>

### Course Requirements:

#### 1. **Informed and active class participation. / 10%**

Participation is an important aspect of any philosophy class. Although it is important to attend class on a regular basis to gain a better understanding of the material, participation is much more than simply showing up. Participation involves relevant, thoughtful, and insightful engagement in full-class or small-group discussions. Additionally, participation may also include brief, informal writing assignments and possibly quizzes. If you are not in class, you can't participate; therefore, chronic absence may significantly lower your participation grade.

#### 2. **Three Papers (5 pages, typed, double-spaced, 12 pt. font). / 30% each (90% total)**

Throughout the duration of the course you will be required to compose three papers. Each paper will allow you to explore in more detail one of the main themes that emerges in the course.

### The grades for papers will be based on the following criteria:

1. Accuracy of Comprehension
2. Depth and Detail of Exposition
3. Critical Reflection and Original and Insightful Comments
4. Clarity of Thought: Proper Organization, Order, Structure, and Clear Phrasing
5. Correct Grammar and Spelling
6. Ability to Support Claims

### A Few General Expectations of Students:

1. Please turn off all cell phones during class.
2. Remember to be kind and courteous to others (especially when disagreeing).
3. Be open to exploring ideas, beliefs, and perspectives that may differ from your own.
4. Be prepared to offer reasons for your beliefs not just descriptions of them.
5. Be open to critically examining your own ideas, beliefs, and perspectives.
6. Behave and conduct oneself in a collegiate manner.

A democratic society can only thrive through the robust exchange of ideas and points of view. This robust exchange of ideas is precisely what the collegiate environment in general, and this class in particular, attempts to foster. Thus, it is to be expected that through the exchange of different ideas conflicts of opinion and belief will emerge. It is important when disagreements occur, that we continue to conduct ourselves in an appropriate manner. Many of the topics we will be exploring can at times be divisive and emotionally charged. Additionally, some ideas explored could be potentially uncomfortable and/or offensive to some individuals. Please keep these points in mind when conducting oneself in a collegiate manner. **Students who do not conduct themselves in a collegiate manner may be asked to leave class for the remainder of the class meeting.**

**MAINTAINING ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:** Maintaining academic integrity is of the utmost importance. The following are violations of academic integrity:

**Cheating:** Intentionally using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise; misrepresenting or non-reporting of pertinent information in all forms of work submitted for credit.

**Facilitating academic dishonesty:** Intentionally or knowingly helping, or attempting to help, another to violate a provision of the institutional code of academic integrity.

**Plagiarism:** The deliberate adoption or reproduction of ideas, words, or statements of another person as one's own, without acknowledgement. This includes all group work and written assignments.

**Academic Integrity Policy:** *If a student cheats, facilitates any academic dishonesty, or plagiarizes, the student will receive an F on the assignment and further disciplinary measures may be taken.*

**Attendance Policy:** *If a student misses 4 or more classes (the equivalent of 2 weeks or more of the course), the student may be dropped. Additionally, if a student has numerous missing assignments, the student may be dropped as well.*

**Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:** *students with disabilities should contact the DRS office regarding any accommodation needs and speak with the instructor at the beginning of the semester regarding accommodations.*

**NOTE:** It is your responsibility to keep abreast of the assignments. Remember, your papers **must** be submitted on (or prior to) the dates they are due. This course is graded on a “plus-minus” grading scale.

### Course Reading Assignments and Schedule [Subject to Change]

**W1** 1/27 Syllabus/Introduction  
Plato, “The Cave” (handout)  
1/29 Plato, “The Cave” (handout)

What is critical thinking? Why is it important? What are Arguments?

**W2** 2/3 Power Point 1: Critical Thinking, Arguments, Conclusions, Premises.

How do reason, emotion, and desire affect us?

2/5 *Student Reader: Plato, The Republic*

**W3** 2/10 *Student Reader: Plato, The Republic*

What are some common impediments to critical thinking? What is a world view and how does it affect our perception?

2/12 Power Point 2: Impediments to critical thinking?

**W4** 2/17 *Student Reader: Benjamin, “World views and ways of life”*

2/19 *Student Reader: Descartes, Meditations of First Philosophy*

History: How do the stories we tell affect our perception and identity?

**W5** 2/24 *Student Reader: Zinn, The Peoples History of the United States, Ch. 1*

2/26 *Student Reader: Dussel, “Was America Discovered or Invaded?”*

Authority/Obedience/Disobedience: Do we have a duty to (dis)obey?

**W6** 3/3 **PAPER 1 DUE**  
In-class video: Milgram, *Obedience*  
Class Discussion

*Student Reader: Milgram, “The Perils of Obedience”*

3/5 *Student Reader: Milgram, “The Perils of Obedience”*

**W7** 3/10 *Student Reader: Obedience-Disobedience Packet (various authors)*

3/12 *Student Reader: Obedience-Disobedience Packet (various authors)*

*Student Reader: Scanlon, “Free expression and the Authority of the State”*

**W8** 3/17 In-class video: Zinn, *The People Speak*

3/19 In-class video: Zinn, *The People Speak*

Class Discussion

Education: What is the purpose of education? Can education be oppressive? Can education be liberatory?

**W9** 3/24 *Student Reader: True and False Democracy Packet (various authors)*

*Student Reader: Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, preface*

3/26 *Student Reader: Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Ch. 1*

**W10** 3/31 **NO CLASS – Cesar Chavez Day**

4/2 **PAPER 2 DUE**

*Student Reader: Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Ch. 1*

**W11** 4/6 - 4/10 **NO CLASSES – Spring Break**

- W12** 4/14 *Student Reader: Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Ch. 1*  
 4/16 *Student Reader: Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Ch. 2*
- W13** 4/21 *Student Reader: Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Ch. 2*  
 4/23 *Student Reader: Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Ch. 2*

Freedom/Responsibility: What is freedom and what might it entail?

- W14** 4/28 *Student Reader: Sartre, "Existentialism is a Humanism"*  
 4/30 *Student Reader: Sartre, "Existentialism is a Humanism"*
- W15** 5/5 *Student Reader: Sartre, "Existentialism is a Humanism"*  
 5/7 *Student Reader: Sartre, "Existentialism is a Humanism"*

Representations/Images/Roles: How do they affect of our perceptions of others and ourselves?

- W16** 5/12 In-class video: *MissRepresentation*  
 5/14 In-class video: *MissRepresentation*  
 Class Discussion

**W17** 5/18 – 5/22 **FINALS WEEK: NO CLASSES**  
**PAPER 3: FINAL PAPER; DUE DATE: TBA**

**Note:** Provisions of this syllabus are subject to change. Changes will be announced in class. It is your responsibility to keep abreast of any changes made.