Honors: Concepts of Freedom

Philosophy 2890/27355
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Spring 2019 at HSCI 330
T: 3:30-4:20
Office Hours at 258 Murray Hall: W, 10:00-12:00

Course Description

The variety of authors and theories that could be selected for this course are nearly infinite. It is thus tempting to try to cover as many essays and books as possible in this class in order to provide the student with an eclectic assortment of philosophical approaches to life, but the drawback to this approach is that the readings tend to be superficially engaged. To avoid this problem, I have instead selected just 3 books for us to read this semester—and in these books we will explore themes related to Buddhism, moral and cultural pluralism, individualism, and the possibility of social equality. So in *The Myth of Freedom* we will consider why it is that life is full of suffering and how this suffering might be overcome through the Four Noble Truths. In the second book (*The Proper Study of Mankind*) we will read about the perils of pursuing ideal social, political, and religious ideals at the cost of individual liberty. These first two books therefore provide us with different accounts of the self: in the first it is said that we should let go of the ego while in the second it is argued that individual autonomy is a healthy ingredient to any society. And in last book (*The Communist Hypothesis*) capitalist individualism will be countered with a defense of positive freedom in the sense of communitarianism and social equality. It will be incumbent upon us to keep an open mind toward a wide range of ideas, for if we never seriously consider opposing views it is impossible for us to learn and grow. Ultimately, then, the successful student will leave this class with a more profound understanding of his or her place in the context of diverse cultural, ethical, and religious values.

Required Texts and Materials

Berlin, *The Proper Study of Mankind*, Farrar, Strauss and Giroux
Badiou, *The Communist Hypothesis*, Verso

(Note on texts: Whatever publisher you use, you should be able to provide proper citations. If you cannot cite either the publisher or page references with certain electronic sources, then you should avoid those sources.)

The Writing Center

Many students benefit from talking with others about their writing, especially when they go to the OSU Writing Center. The Writing Center has four campus locations and you can make an appointment either at the Morrill Hall office or online. They are open every week day from 9:30 to 5:30.)
Weight of the Assignments

Throughout the semester your progress will be graded according to 3 exams and 6 in-class participation assignments. The take-home exams will range from 3 to 5 pages each for a total of 10 pages. In them you will answer questions on the main ideas and views of our readings, how those ideas are defended and justified, and possible objections to such arguments. Participation assignments are going to be randomly given, so they are not listed below in the “schedule” section. Here then is a breakdown of the weighted distribution given to each of the categories:

- 25% Essay Exam #1 (Buddhism)
- 25% Essay Exam #2 (Pluralism)
- 30% Final Essay Exam (Communism)
- 20% In-Class Participation Assignments

Grading

The following grading scheme indicates a typical percentage for each kind of grade unless the grades in this class are such that require a curve (e.g., if they are lower than expected, then I may institute a curve which bases your final grade on how well you fare in relationship to your peers). Such a curve will either maintain or help your graded percentages, but it will never hurt them.

A  90%
B  80%
C  70%
D  60%

Plagiarism

All acts of either cheating or plagiarism will automatically constitute a failed grade.

Late Assignment Policy

There are no grace periods. All take-home exams should be submitted through OSU’s Online Classroom on the dates listed below (in the schedule). Late exams will be marked down by 10% per day after the due date (beginning at the precise time that it is due). Do not submit exams via email unless D2L isn’t working. Since in-class participation is intended to measure your participation on a given day, it cannot be made up on a later date and must also be submitted in class (not online or via email). Exceptions to this late policy shall be granted to those with good reasons and proper documentation (e.g., notification from a family doctor). Also, remember to double-check submissions to be sure the digital process is completed. It is recommended to take a screen shot of the accepted submission in case you need proof that it was indeed submitted.
Participation

As mentioned above, participation will be measured according to random weekly assignments. These assignments will involve practice retrieval essays, pop quizzes, creative activities, learning games, online forums, etc. As there will be a maximum of 6 in-class assignments (4% each, minus one assignment) your total participation adds up to 20% of the final grade. [As this is a 1 credit course that only meets once a week, one of the assignments may be missed and doesn’t count toward your final grade.]

Disabled Student Accessibility

If you have a learning disability or will need special accommodations for any other reason, please bring documentation of this need to class. Alternative arrangements for fulfilling the course requirements will be made as necessary.

Schedule

Week 1     Trungpa, pp. 1-20
Week 2     Trungpa, 21-40
Week 3     Trungpa, 41-60
Week 4     Trungpa, 61-80
Week 5     Trungpa, 81-100
Week 6     Berlin, 1-16
Week 7     Berlin, 191-212
Week 8     Berlin, 213-242
Week 9     Berlin, 553-566
Week 10    Berlin, 567-580
Week 11    Badiou, 1-25
Week 12    Badiou, 26-50
Week 13    Badiou, 51-76
Week 14    Badiou, 172-195
Week 15    Review Week

Other Dates:

February 15    Essay Exam #1 Due (25%)
March 29       Essay Exam #2 Due (25%)
May 10         Final Essay Exam Due (30%)