**Phil 100, INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY**

**College of San Mateo, Spring of 2014**

**Tuesday night from 6:30 till 9:30 in bldg 16, room 106**

**from Jan 14 till May 15**

**Instructor: Bob Johnson**

**Office:** bldg. 17, room 144; **Phone messages:** 650/378-7301, ex 19436

Office hour: Tuesdays, 3:00 – 4:00 in bldg 17, room 144.

Web site: go to web site for the College of Alameda; click on the **A-Z directory** link; find Robert Johnson and click on my web page link; click on **Intro to Philosophy** link.

**Or you can simply try this link: http://alameda.peralta.edu/robert-johnson/**

**Catalogue Description**

**Books for this class:**

Think on These Things, by J. Krishnamurti

Plato: Five Dialogues, translated by Grube

The Handbook (*the* *Encheiridion*), by Epictetus

The Way of Chuang Tzu, translated by Thomas Merton

**Requirements:**

1. There will be three, possibly four exams… one given every five or six weeks. Your semester grade will be based on the average percentage score for all the exams. No make-ups except in case of documented illness or family emergency. If you are sick on the day of an exam, call or email to let me know. You must schedule a makeup exam as soon as you can after returning to school.

 Final exam: Tuesday night, May 15, at 6:30 pm

**No cheating... of course.** Sorry I have to mention this, but it does happen now and then, believe it or not. This concept should have been mastered in 3rd grade, but for some it still remains a mystery.

2. Attendance: Required. If you miss more than 4 classes, you may be dropped from the roster. When you are present and contribute to discussions, it makes the class better for everyone. Your comments and questions will help form the content of the class. If you miss class, you should find out from your fellow students what we did, and what we will do during the next class.

3. There may be occasional short assignments.

4. Demonstrated effort can elevate your grade. Class discussions are the best place to demonstrate real effort. Don’t be shy. Talk!

**Recommended:** Keep a **journal.** It should be separate from your class notes. In it you can keep track of your thoughts about what you heard in class, about readings you’ve done, and, most important of all: it can track your own reflections, puzzles, speculations, and insights. It will not be graded but it can certainly help you understand the ideas we will be discussing.

**Note: If you decide to drop the class, take care of it officially at the admissions office.**

**Be sure that your phones are turned off before entering class. Thanks.**

Student Learning Outcomes

(Most of this is from the Philosophy Department’s Official statement on student learning outcomes)

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| **SLO… What you should be able to do** **by the end of this semester:**  |
| Identify some of the central figures and main issues in the history of philosophy.  |
| To be able to identify, explicate, and evaluate complex arguments.  |
| Compare and contrast divergent philosophical theories on some issue.  |
| Formulate a reasoned response to a philosophical position.  |
| Analyze a philosophical position in terms of different cultural/social perspectives. |
| Applying philosophical ideas and philosophical analysis to real life problems, including the “big” questions… the foundations of our lives. More than anything else, it is hoped that the study of philosophy will help you create and expand your understanding of life in all of its aspects.  |

A. E. Housman wrote this:

 "Knowledge is good, method is good, but one thing beyond all others is necessary; and that is to have a head, not a pumpkin, on your shoulders, and brains, not pudding, in your head."

Questions:

What is philosophy? What is a philosopher? What is a philosophical problem? What is a “school of philosophy”? How does philosophy differ from other subjects?

Philosophy is a subject that is interesting to some, and entertaining in a strange way. But you often hear this comment: philosophy is not for me... or, philosophy is not for everybody.

Think about chemistry or algebra. If these subjects were not required and encouraged by our culture, there would be no great riots in the streets demanding that they be taught. Some curious individuals would still be interested in, entertained by, and even passionate about these studies, but they would not constitute a mob.

But these scientific and mathematical subjects are taught because they are practical. This means, they are useful for getting you a degree of some kind, so that you may pick up a job in a scientific, technical or semi-technical field of employment.

Is “getting a job” the most important concern of your life?

To answer this question, you must think philosophically. It is a philosophical question. It opens up countless other philosophical issues.

Philosophy is unavoidable for us. It is not quite like math and science. We could get along alright in our lives without paying much attention to these. Most people do. But look at this: shall you marry or stay single? Have a family? Where will you live? Who shall be your friends? What vocation will you follow? What can you dedicate your life to? We shouldn’t make these important choices without doing some serious thinking.

Philosophy is for everybody. It should be. This class can help us be more skilled at it, and it can give us a taste of what some of the great thinkers have had to say. Studying a wee bit of philosophy is not just a matter of satisfying our superficial curiosity. What kind of a life we live depends to a great extent on what and how we think.