

PHILOSOPHY 419/519
20TH-CENTURY ANALYTIC
T&TH 2:00–3:15 PM
LOCATION: LA1 - 304
AUTUMN SEMESTER '09

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Office Hours: T&TH 11:30AM–12:30PM

FURLOUGH STATEMENT

As many of you know, the State of California has dramatically and suddenly cut funding for all 23 of the California State Universities, including the Long Beach campus. In response, and out of severe necessity, the CSU has raised student rates and cut classes, admissions, and faculty positions. In addition, the remaining faculty at CSU has voted to accept salary reductions in the form of 18 furlough days for this academic year in hopes of avoiding further cuts. A *furlough* is an unpaid leave of absence from work. This means that all faculty will stay home on about 10% of the work days in the coming academic year. On three specific days this semester, all faculty and staff will furlough together, so the entire campus will be shut down (except for essential services). All faculty must choose another six days to be on furlough. Here are my designated furlough dates this semester (these will vary from instructor to instructor), along with the campus-wide closure dates:

F Aug 28	=	faculty furlough day
W Sept 4	=	faculty furlough day
T Sept 8	=	furlough day; all campus closed
Th Oct 1	=	faculty furlough day
F Oct 9	=	furlough day; all campus closed
T Nov 24	=	faculty furlough day
W Dec 2	=	faculty furlough day
Th Dec 10	=	faculty furlough day

NOTE: I am not permitted to be available for teaching, advising, email, office hours, or any other work duties on these dates.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Analytic philosophers have often sought to make philosophy more scientific. Indeed, they are sometimes accused of slipping into *scientism*—that is, into an uncritical deference to the natural sciences. One of analytic philosophy's marquee sub-

movements in particular—logical positivism—has come in for perhaps the most widespread ridicule on this score. Across the humanities, one now finds “logical positivism” used as shorthand for a dogmatic faith that science delivers absolute truths about the world. In this class, we will try to gain a more charitable understanding of logical positivism by placing this important movement into historical context. During the first stage of the course we will focus on Kant’s vision of philosophy’s relationship to the sciences. We will also explore some developments in 19th-century geometry and physics that challenged Kantian orthodoxies of the day. During the course’s second stage, we will turn to three of analytic philosophy’s most important founders—Hans Reichenbach, Bertrand Russell, and Rudolph Carnap. These figures thought then-recent developments in science demanded that philosophy be thoroughly redesigned—and so to this extent they did show substantial deference to the sciences. But when we place these figures in an appropriate intellectual context, we find that their suggestions for *how* to remake philosophy were far more nuanced and less dogmatic than many now think. In the final stage of the course, we will turn to two figures often regarded as critics of logical positivism: Thomas Kuhn and Willard Quine. Our more charitable reading of the positivists will suggest a surprisingly close affinity with Kuhn’s form of pragmatism. But our reading will also bring out stark differences with Quine’s *naturalism*—the view that philosophy should be a purely empirical enterprise, and should therefore become a part of empirical psychology.

Prerequisites: Some background in early modern philosophy is helpful but not necessary. An openness to learning some details about the history of geometry as well as about Einstein’s theory of relativity is essential.

COURSE GOALS

Upon completion of this course, diligent students should find that they

- can demonstrate a detailed comprehension of the history of analytic philosophy—of both its intellectual background and its philosophical foundations.
- can show an improved ability to comprehend and critically analyze philosophical texts.
- can show an improved ability to write essays in the history of philosophy.

REQUIRED TEXTS

- I. Kant, Immanuel. *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*. Translated by James W. Ellington. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1783/2001.

2. Russell, Bertrand. *Our Knowledge of the External World*. Routledge: 1914/2009.
3. Kuhn, Thomas. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, University of Chicago: 1969/1996.
4. A course reader available at Copy Pro (1785 Palo Verde, at Atherton—in the 7-II mini-mall, next to Pizzamania)

GRADING

Undergraduates

Grades will be based on one 6 page paper (worth 25%), one 8-page, final paper (worth 35%), several reading assignments (25% together), class participation (10%), one quiz on geometry and relativity theory for amateurs (5%), and a plagiarism quiz that you must ace (0%).#

Graduates

Grades will be based on one term paper of approximately 15-20 pages (35%), two required presentations (25% together), several reading assignments to be due in class (25% together), class participation (10%), one quiz on geometry and relativity theory for amateurs (5%), and a plagiarism quiz that you must ace (0%).#

You cannot pass this class without taking an online plagiarism quiz and scoring 100%. You may take the quiz as many times as you'd like. You must take and ace the quiz before you can submit your first written assignment.

TYPES OF ASSIGNMENTS

Essays

This is a class in the history of philosophy. On one hand, essays in the history of philosophy have to be good *history*. That is to say that historical scholarship has a serious empirical component; we are trying to understand, on the basis of their literary remains, the intellectual intentions of real people who lived a long time ago.

But on the other hand, essays in the history of philosophy have to be good *philosophy*. It is not enough simply to say new, true things about the dead people we're studying. The new, true things we're trying to say also should have some independent philosophical interest.

Striking an appropriate balance between these two concerns—historical accuracy and philosophical interest—can be a delicate matter. So one goal of this class is to help you cultivate your skills at the two-pronged task of writing the history of philosophy.

Reading Assignments

Reading assignments will be short—around 1 page (certainly no longer than 2 pages). These exercises are meant to give you a kind of sandbox for experimenting with the history of philosophy. The assignments will typically be distributed in class on a Thursday and will be due the following Monday on Turnitin.com (more on this below). The assignments will call your attention to some particular passage in the day's reading. Your task will be to reconstruct and critically analyze the philosophical argument in that passage. There is no need to write an introduction or conclusion. These will be graded on a scale of 1 to 5, 5 being highest. By far the most common grade will be a 3.

Presentations [Graduate Students Only]

Throughout the semester, graduate students must give two presentations on secondary articles concerning the primary material we are reading in class. Graduate students must find appropriate and relevant articles themselves; in all cases, they must OK the articles with me before preparing a presentation.

Presentations should be 10 minutes in length, and not a minute longer. I will be savage in keeping you to your time limit! The idea is to force you to pick only the most important aspects of the article to discuss.

Spend the first half of your presentation outlining the author's argument for the central conclusion he or she wishes to establish. Remember that most others in the class will not have read the article you are presenting—so you must take responsibility for *teaching* the rest of us about the main claims of the article.

Spend the second half of your presentation developing a critical analysis of the text. This may mean a discussion of the text's significance, especially in light of other readings from the semester; or you may offer a critical evaluation of the author's argument.

Finally, we'll keep you on the "hot seat" with about five minutes of questions about your presentation.

Attendance/Participation Grade

I've got attendance and participation responsibilities in this class, and so do you.

It's my responsibility to show up to every class prepared to talk about the day's reading. It's also my responsibility to help you understand the reading assignments each week. This means helping you understand what, exactly, the philosophers we're reading are saying. And it means helping you understand a thing or two about the historical context in which the assigned essay or book excerpt was written. Finally, it's my responsibility to try to say something *interesting* about the reading material. I

can't guarantee that you'll find everything I say riveting—but since boredom is an obstacle to learning, I will try to keep class discussion as engaging as possible.

You share three responsibilities with me. Like me, you must show up to every class session. Like me, you also must show up prepared (in your case, this means that you've read the assigned article with care). And like me—this is the important part—you also must show up to every class ready to say something engaging and interesting about the reading material. Think of class like a well-choreographed talk show. If either the host or interviewee shows up without preparing some questions and points for discussion, the conversation is going to be painfully boring.

At the end of the semester, I'll assign attendance/participation grades on the basis of your contributions to our weekly discussions.

Math/Science Quiz

One of our reading assignments will provide an introductory discussion of some 19th century developments in geometry. I will give a short quiz on this material in class. Neither the reading assignment nor the quiz presuppose any substantial expertise in math or science beyond what you would learn in a high school geometry class.

Plagiarism Quiz

I will hand out the answer sheet to a mandatory quiz early in the semester. The quiz itself can be found online: <https://www.indiana.edu/~tedfrick/plagiarism/item1.html> . You can take the online quiz as many times as you'd like—the website will correct your answers immediately. You must hand in a signed answer sheet with 100% correct answers in order to pass this class. The quiz will be due before the first written assignment.

POLICIES

Beachboard

This class requires the use of Beachboard. I will distribute the syllabus and many assignments simply by posting them online. I will also post your grades to Beachboard, and send the occasional group email to all enrolled students. All written assignments should be turned in via the appropriate dropbox in Beachboard.

NOTE: the dropbox automatically sends your paper to turnitin.com, which checks your writing for plagiarism by comparing what you wrote with everything available online, as well as with turnitin.com's database of old student essays.

Withdrawal

I follow the University's current withdrawal policy, which can be found at:

http://www.csulb.edu/divisions/aa/catalog/2009-2010/academic_information/withdrawal_policy.html

Attendance

Students are permitted a maximum of three unexcused absences during the semester. I will take attendance each class. You must attend the entire class session in order to count as *present* on any given day.

How to Submit Assignments in Case of an Excused Absence

With the exception of the plagiarism quiz, all written assignments are to be submitted digitally, outside of class. So even in the event of an excused absence, you should still be able to submit your written work with everybody else. In the case of an excused absence in the class where the plagiarism quiz is due, you may submit your answers to me by email, provided you later hand in a signed hard copy.

Disability

I am happy to accommodate any special requirements you may have in connection with a University-documented disability. It is your responsibility to notify me in advance if you need any such accommodation. I would appreciate hearing from you as soon as possible.

Plagiarism

My penalty for any and all plagiarism is an F for the final course grade. I give no second chances. I will not permit you to rewrite the paper or assignment. I will simply fail you.

To be sure that everybody knows what constitutes plagiarism, you are required to complete a plagiarism quiz before the first written paper is due. See above for details.

Why do I care so much about plagiarism? The grades you have when you graduate, the honors or distinctions that may go along with those grades, and the letters you get from your professors on the basis of your performance in their courses, are all you will have to show prospective employers or graduate schools that you are qualified to be employed or admitted. Plagiarism is a way of cheating in this process, pure and simple.

The founding idea of the modern university system is precisely that opportunity should be correlated with performance. In fact, the idea that social opportunities like jobs and education should be commensurate with actual performance, not with one's family or fraternity connections, money, or whatever, is also among the founding ideals of our entire American democracy. Since plagiarism is an affront to this idea

of a meritocracy, and thus to founding ideals of our nation, I simply will not tolerate it.

Unfortunately the rise of the internet has ushered in a new era of plagiarism. Perhaps plagiarism seems less serious these days because it is so easy to cut, paste, and paraphrase. Whatever its source, the new wave of plagiarism has forced many professors to institute no-tolerance policies, and I am certainly part of that trend. So please—do not get mixed up in a plagiarism case. You will fail the course with no second chance.

LATE PENALTIES

Unless other arrangements are made in advance, written work will be penalized by a fraction of a letter grade per each day late. For example, an otherwise B+ paper submitted after the deadline and before 24 hours has lapsed will be given a grade of B; the same paper submitted during the next 24-hour period will be given a B-, and so on.

EMAIL POLICY

Because of the state budget cuts, I no longer have a phone in my office. So if you need to contact me, please use email. I try to respond to student email within 1 business day of receiving a message. If you do not hear back from me within that period, feel free to give me a gentle e-nudge. Please do use your university email account for all communication.

I'll probably suggest that we meet during office hours if you raise a substantive question over email. If you email and ask for information that is readily available online, please do not be offended if I respond with a very brief message. That helps free me up to deal with more pressing issues related to the class.

Finally, please do not send me email attachments unless we have arranged something in advance.

I am a new faculty member here, so this course is a work in progress. As such, I reserve the right to change any regulations during the semester, though I will try to reach a consensus with the class should the need arise to make any significant alterations.