



JOHN FELICE  
**ROME  
CENTER**

# Philosophy & Persons

## PHIL 130 – Fall 2019

**Instructor: Dr. Stefano Giacchetti**

**M/W 10.30-11.45 – Office hours M/W Noon-1pm (by appointment)**

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### SUMMARY

**Short Description:** The course examines the way philosophy looks for fundamental characteristics that identify life as a properly human life, asks about its ultimate meaning or purpose, and raises questions about what counts as a good life.

**Learning Outcomes:** Students will be able to demonstrate understanding of the various approaches of the philosophical questions related to what it means to be human, with attention to the historical and conceptual development of these questions, and be able to articulate some of the major problems and responses central to this area of philosophy.

Students should be able to demonstrate

- (a) understanding of the relationships among cultural, economic, political, and social forces, and their impact on human behavior.
- (b) understanding of the processes and components of societies, states and cultures.
- (c) understanding of the differences of class, gender and race in societies, states and cultures.
- (d) awareness that human values and behavior, ideas of justice, and methods of interpretation are influenced by culture and time
- (e) ability to differentiate among historical and contemporary perspectives about the world with a view to fashioning a humane and just world.

Students will learn to

- (a) recognize the way in which the basic principles governing how one ought to live are conditioned by one's involvement in and responsibilities toward the socially organized community in which one lives

(b) understand different positions on this issue, to appreciate the concerns that account for these differences, to look for the reasons given in support of the different views, and to assess the forcefulness of the challenge that each poses for the others and for our own culture.

This course enables the student to

- (a) appreciate the profound issues involved in social relations, such as dignity and diversity
- (b) engage in dialogue with great philosophers, paying close attention to their meaning, their reasons, their concerns, their vision
- (c) examine the way different philosophically defended views challenge each other and see how they also challenge unexamined presuppositions in our own culture
- (d) include their own reflections into the dialogue
- (e) recognize reasons supporting a view, identify unexamined presuppositions, appreciate astute insights, expose vulnerabilities in established positions.
- (f) recognize the need for ethical judgment
- (g) distinguish alternative courses of action.
- (h) articulate the relevant ethical values, principles, rights, and virtues from the point of view of each stakeholder

## **PROCEDURES**

### **Full Course Description:**

This introductory core course is designed to acquaint the student with some of the classical themes and topics in Western philosophy. The course is divided into three segments, each one dealing with a central philosophical topic or issue. The three segments consist in: (1) persons and knowledge; (2) persons and reality; and (3) persons and values. In the first segment we will ask what it means for us to have knowledge, the nature and scope of our knowledge, and in what areas we may want to assert this. This segment will analyze the seminal writings of Heraclitus, Plato and Descartes. In the second segment, through the reading of the works of Machiavelli, Rousseau and Marx, we will ask about the nature of social reality, including the nature of persons, rationality, free will, and alienation, among other issues. In the third segment we will inquire about the nature of value, including whether the good is merely what is useful or whether there is intrinsic good; the nature of the highest human good (e.g., virtue, happiness, pleasure, material success); the role of deliberation in moral reasoning. This last segment will be elaborated through the critical writings of Nietzsche and the overview of moral theory provided by Rachels.

The aim of the course is to lead students to autonomously judge fundamental issues related to human condition, with special reference to the nature of ideas, existence, justice, fairness, rules and duties, cultural and social influences. This will provide students with the basic critical skills for recognizing different philosophical approaches and for judging their feasibility and correctness. The analysis of the philosophies which most consistently influenced the development of Western culture will be the

tool for understanding existential and social dilemmas and constructing philosophically informed decisions.

**Required Texts:**

- Machiavelli, *The Prince and the Discourses*. (Also available online)
- Descartes, *Meditations*. (Also available online)
- Rousseau, *The Basic Political Writings*. (Also available online)
- Marx, *Selected Writings*.
- Nietzsche, *On the genealogy of morals*. (Also available online)
- Rachels *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*.

**Assessment Components:**

Student's final grade will be based on:

- One in-class test (Midterm): 40% of the final grade.
- One take-home paper (Final): 40% of the final grade.
- In-class presentations and participation: 20% of the final grade. Students will be requested to make presentations (15-20 min.) for one of the scheduled readings assigned

**Grading Policy:**

The following grading scale will be applied for determining the final grade:

Presentation: A=20; A-=18; B+=17; B=16; B-=15; C+=14; C=13; C-=12; D+=12; D=11; F=10

Midterm and Final (each): A=40; A-=37; B+=36; B=34; B-=33; C+=32; C=30; C-=29; D+=27; D=26; F=24

Final Grade: A = 94-100; A- = 90-93; B+ = 87-89; B = 84-86; B- = 80-83; C+ = 77-79; C = 74-76; C- = 70-73; D+ = 67-69; D = 60-66; F = 59 and below

**Attendance Policy:**

Students should plan to regularly attend the class, since we will often broaden the topics contained in the texts to contemporary issues, and since this class is mainly intended to the rousing of students' personal thoughts and ideas.

In accordance with the JFRC mission to promote a higher level of academic rigor, all courses adhere to the following absence policy:

- For all classes meeting once a week, students cannot incur more than one unexcused absence.
- For all classes meeting twice a week, students cannot incur more than two unexcused absences.

- For all classes meeting three times a week, students cannot incur more than two unexcused absences.

This course meets twice a week, thus a total of two unexcused absences will be permitted. Unexcused absences beyond these will result in 1% lowering of the final course grade, for every absence after the “approved limit”.

**Academic Honesty: Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty are unacceptable at the JFRC** and will be dealt with in accordance with Loyola University Chicago’s guidelines.

Please familiarize yourself with Loyola’s standards here:

[http://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg\\_academicintegrity.shtml](http://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicintegrity.shtml). You are responsible for understanding what constitutes plagiarism according to the LUC Student Handbook.

### **Accessibility Accommodations**

Students registered with the Student Accessibility Center requiring academic accommodations should contact the Office of the Dean at the John Felice Rome Center, the first week of classes

### **Course Schedule:**

09/02 Introduction

09/04 Pre-Socratics and Myth (Heraclitus)

09/09 Plato *Republic*, Book VII

09/11 Machiavelli ch. I p.4, II p.5, III p.6, IX p. 35, X p.39

09/16 “ “ ch. XVII p.60, XVIII p. 63, XIX p. 66, XXI p. 81

09/18 “ “ ch. XLIII p. 226, XLIV p.227, XLV p.229 & XLVI p.231; Third Book, ch. II p.403, XIX p.470, XXIX p.495 & XL p.526

09/20 Movie

09/23 Descartes *Meditation I-II*

09/25 “ “ “ “, III-IV

09/30 “ “ “ “, V-VI

10/02 Rousseau *Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality among Men*, Part One

10/07 “ “ “ “, Part Two

10/09 Midterm Exam

10/21 Introduction to Marx

10/23 Marx                    *Selected Writings*; pp. 58 to 79; 99 to 101  
10/28 “ “                    “ “; pp. 158 to 186  
10/30 “ “                    “ “; pp. 220 to 255  
11/04 “ “                    “ “; pp. 255 to 282; 294 to 300  
11/06 Introduction to Nietzsche  
11/11 Nietzsche            *On the Genealogy of Morals*; First Essay, Sections 4 to 16  
11/13 “ “                    “ “, Second Essay, Sections 1 to 12  
11/18 “ “                    “ “, Third Essay, Sections 17 to 18 & 24 to 28  
11/20 Rachels                Ch. 1, 2  
11/25 “ “                    Ch. 7, 8  
11/27 “ “                    Ch. 9, 10  
12/02 “ “                    Ch. 13, 14  
12/04 Movie  
Final Exam