

**GRANDE PRAIRIE REGIONAL COLLEGE  
DEPARTMENT OF ARTS, COMMERCE AND EDUCATION**

**PH2650  
Introduction to the Philosophy of Science  
Winter 2005**

**Instructor: Ruth Michaels**  
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**Lecture/No pre-requisites**

**Calendar Description**

This course offers an introduction to the central issues in contemporary philosophy of science. Topics may include theory evaluation, paradigm shifts and theory change, laws of nature, causation and explanation, the rationality of science and its social and historical setting.

**Content Description**

This course examines some of the traditional problems and topics in the philosophy of science. Topics and problems, such as, the demarcation problem, the problem of induction, reductionism, realism, instrumentalism, etc., are presented as they arise in the readings. The course is designed to present the materials needed for students to conduct their own research inquiries by applying the methods and principles learned to particular questions. So, for example, students may choose to research questions such as, Is medicine a science? Can subjectivity be an object of scientific study? Do super-strings exist? These research efforts will take the form of the term paper and are the central evaluative component of the course.

**Texts**

- Arthur Zucker, *Introduction to the Philosophy of Science*, Prentice-Hall Inc., (Upper Saddle River, NJ, 1996) (required)
- Quitman Troyka, Lynn, *Quick Access*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Edition, (or equivalent) (required.)

**Timeline**

(A detailed syllabus will be distributed on the first day of classes.)

**Evaluation**

- 1 Journal Assignment (optional for students with previous philosophy credit).....0%
- 6 Reading Assignments.....20%
- 1 short paper .....10%
- 1 term paper .....30%
- Midterm examination.....20%
- Final, registrar scheduled, examination.....20%

**Final Grading Schema**

Final Score	Letter Grade	Point Value	Descriptor
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98-100%	A+	4.0	Excellent
94-97%	A	4.0	
90-93%	A-	3.7	
85-89%	B+	3.3	Good
80-84%	B	3.0	
75-79%	B-	2.7	
70-74%	C+	2.3	Satisfactory
65-69%	C	2.0	
60-64%	C-	1.7	
55-59%	D+	1.3	Poor
50-54%	D	1.0	Minimal Pass
0-49%	F	0	Failure

### **Evaluation Policies**

Extensions of assignment and paper deadlines will be considered *only* in the case of significant extenuating circumstances. If such circumstances arise students requesting an extension will be required to show evidence that a significant amount of work on the assignment has been completed in advance of the day *before* the work is due. For example, if a student requests an extension on the day before an assignment is due, a complete, or very nearly complete, draft of the paper must be shown to the instructor at the time of the request.

Students in circumstances of extreme duress should notify the instructor as soon as possible if they anticipate difficulty in submitting their work on time.

**Penalties** for assignments submitted for credit late without prior permission from the instructor are at the discretion of the instructor and may accrue at as much as **25% for each day late**.

Deferred writing of a scheduled Midterm Exam is at the discretion of the instructor. Absences from a registrar-scheduled Final Exam fall under GPRC Examination Policy. It is the responsibility of the student to be informed about these policies prior to the final examination period. A description of the policy is available in the GPRC Calendar and in the Student Handbook.

### **Plagiarism and Cheating**

Students are encouraged to form study and discussion groups, however, assignments must be the independent work of the individual seeking credit for the assignments and students should be prepared to demonstrate that the work they turn in is their own. All forms of plagiarism and cheating are serious violations of academic integrity and will be dealt with as such. Students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with GPRC policy on plagiarism and cheating as outlined under *Student Responsibilities* and *Plagiarism and Cheating* in the Student Handbook.

### **Student Responsibilities**

#### **i) Attendance**

Attendance is taken at the beginning of every class. Students should be aware that they are expected to meet their academic responsibility to attend classes. The instructor reserves the right to debar a student from writing the final exam when the student has accumulated more than 10% (2-3 classes) of *unexcused* absences. Absences will be excused on the basis of ***verifiable illness, dentistry, accident or emergency***.

It is the ***responsibility of the student*** to find out what has been covered in any class that has been missed and to procure copies of any handouts, notes etc., that might have been distributed in class. It is ***not*** the responsibility of the instructor to make lecture notes available to students who have not been in class. Students must make arrangements among themselves to exchange notes with their classmates in the event that they are unable to attend class. It is a good idea to make these arrangements in advance so that your note-buddy can also pick up a set of handouts for you and call you to inform you of important course information if necessary. Missing class is not an acceptable reason for handing assignments in late.

Students should be aware that attending class is one of the most important things they can do to ensure being successful in *any* academic course.

#### **ii) Deadlines for Assignments**

It is the responsibility of the student to complete all assignments on time. As noted above, in general, there are no extensions for any assignments without there being ***significant extenuating circumstances***. Typically, such circumstances should be documented. That is, you may be asked to provide documented proof of the existence of such circumstances. As noted above, if you find yourself in circumstances that you anticipate being ongoing and that threaten to interfere with the timely completion of your course work, you should advise your instructor of the situation **as soon as possible** so that she can work out a feasible arrangement for you to complete

the work with you. Do not wait so long to inform her of the circumstances that there is nothing she can do to help you work through the situation.

## **ii) Specific Student Concerns**

If a student finds themselves with specific concerns about any aspect of the course, their first action should always be to meet with the instructor.

Some concerns are especially common to philosophy courses. For example, it is not at all uncommon for students to feel overwhelmed by philosophy course material, or to feel that they have no idea what is going on in philosophy courses. Sometimes students withdraw under the mistaken idea that they are doing poorly in the course when in fact, they are doing quite well. These feelings are very common, even *normal*, for philosophy students. They only mean that the student recognizes the depth of the difficulty of the material and is responding to that challenge. This is a good thing. It may reassure you to know that even professional philosophers continue to have these feelings when facing the ageless philosophical problems that you will be introduced to in first year philosophy classes. So, *always*, arrange a meeting with your instructor before you make the decision to withdraw from the course.

Among those students who come to class regularly and make a sincere and consistent effort at doing the work for the course, there are very few who fail the course. Those who do fail tend to be students who have not put the time and effort required into the assignments. These assignments do require a *consistent* effort. This means, a regular, disciplined approach to reading and thinking about the course material. It is not possible to procrastinate the work and expect to be able to complete it both quickly and well the night before it is due. If you follow the instructions for the assignments and the study tips and suggestions given in class, you should be successful in the course regardless of the feelings of uncertainty that are so common to students encountering philosophy for the first time. The course is structured to prepare you to succeed in writing papers and learning to read and process philosophical material. If you stay with the course and make a diligent effort, chances are good that you will make it through the course successfully.

Remember too that your instructor is always available to go over any concepts you are especially unclear about or to discuss any other concerns you might have. If you have class conflicts with her office hours remember that you can contact her by email and also by voice mail. Remember too that *it is the responsibility of the student to seek out the instructor for this kind of support*.

The following steps are a **summation of student responsibilities in a philosophy course**. If these steps are diligently followed, the probability that the student will succeed in the course is very good.

### **Vital steps for succeeding in this course:**

1. Come to class
2. Do the readings prior to class

3. Do the reading assignments on time.
4. Do the writing assignments, following the instructions and paying attention to instructor feedback
5. Add to reading notes during lectures
6. Ask questions in class
7. Review reading and lecture notes after class/weekly
8. Meet with instructor to clarify confusions or concerns, and to get additional feedback on writing assignment or class discussions

### **Instructor Absences**

The instructor of this course does have an ongoing chronic illness that may from time to time prevent her from teaching a scheduled lecture. Students should be assured that lectures are missed only when symptoms are at their most severe and every effort is made to avoid having to miss a lecture. Various structures are in place to ensure that any negative effect from such absences is minimized. For example, lecture notes for the “missed” lecture are distributed to students as soon as possible. Students are asked to appreciate that, because of the nature of the situation, it is usually not possible to give advance notice of a lecture being cancelled because of illness. Whenever it is possible to do so, advance notice will be given. Further information regarding how absences will be dealt with will be made available if and when the need arises.

Sometimes students find themselves feeling insecure regarding the course material, especially if the instructor experiences a number of absences close to an examination. When this kind of thing happens, students can be assured that all appropriate measures with respect to what material will be covered on the examination will be taken and that students will be properly advised. If students still find that they have concerns then, again, the first thing they should do is take these concerns to the instructor herself.