Spring 2014
Phil 480-01: Public Philosophy (13876)
Dr. Jack Weinstein
Tues., Thurs.: 12:30-145
Room: Merrifield 214

Office Hours: Tuesday, Thursday: 1:45 - 2:45, Tuesday: 8:30 – 9:15 (p.m.), or by appointment.
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Course Objectives: (1) to explore public philosophy and compare its form of presentation to academic philosophy; (2) to develop the skills necessary to blog and use social networks with the intent of communicating philosophical ideas; (3) to cultivate skills to engage philosophically outside a college community, with an eye towards lifelong-learning; 4) to foster written, oral, and comprehension skills required for argumentation and analysis.

Course Description: Did you ever want to write philosophy for a blog, magazine, or call-in with a philosophical comment on the radio? This course provides the opportunity for students to take philosophical ideas and "translate" them into more accessible media. Students will explore, evaluate, and create “public philosophy,” focusing on magazine articles, blog entries, opinion pieces in newspapers, YouTube videos, and other media that helps philosophy expand past its home at the university.

This course is geared towards skills-development. It is designed to foster argumentation, writing, comprehension, and oral skills through in-depth reading, writing, and oral assignments. It emphasizes the critical examinations of selected readings. Students are expected to be able to understand difficult texts and write summaries, comparisons, and criticisms that represent both the philosopher's ideas and the students' own observations about those ideas. Students are also expected to create their own, original, philosophical material of good enough quality to publish online.

This course emphasizes reading, understanding, expressing oneself and listening to others. All students are required to participate in in-class discussions and to respect others’ opinions even if they do not agree with those opinions expressed. This course encourages both independence and inter-dependence. It encourages questioning and the ability of individuals to make up their own mind yet also recognizes the importance of discussion and sharing in learning and thinking. Above all else, this course emphasizes communication within a larger group and hopes to create a community of people who can contribute to and learn from each other's insights and knowledge.

Essential Studies: Philosophy 480 is a Capstone course in the Essential Studies program. Essential Studies courses are designed to help students become stronger in areas that have been identified as particularly important for professional, private, and civic life in the 21st century: being able to think and reason well, to communicate effectively, to judge the credibility of information, and to engage in complex and respectful ways with diversity. The two central goals of Philosophy 480 are to help you improve your
philosophical communication and literacy skills, and to help cultivate your critical thinking skills. Nearly every class session will focus explicitly on both the argumentation analysis and construction, and the rhetorical issues involved with revising material to fit the needs of specific audiences, with special attention to creating material for and engaging in critical argument with, the general public. As a Capstone class, Philosophy 480 will allow you to reflect on and use the skills acquired over the course of your liberal arts education, and apply them in the culminating experience of this course.

Philosophy 480 also fulfills the guidelines for an Essential Studies Advanced Communication course, as its primary focus is communicating sophisticated material clearly to diverse audiences through writing. This class will also satisfy your Advanced Communication (A) requirement, and as such is a writing intensive class. In your assignments, you will learn to write with a clear sense of purpose and to develop your skills in rhetoric – the art of developing specific strategies to meet specific audience expectations, including the expectations of our academic discipline. You will be expected to revise your writing on the basis of feedback from your instructor, as well as from your peers and those who see your posts on the internet. You will have frequent opportunities to reflect on what you are learning, to become aware of what you are doing well and to identify areas where you might improve further.

Requirements: Class participation is of the highest priority. This course will not be a success unless everyone in it feels as if they are a part of a larger whole. It is expected that all members of the class keep up to date with the assignments, take an interest in the opinions and arguments of others, and, as a result, students will be graded on participation. Students are required to complete journals summarizing and commenting on each reading assigned in class, write two blog entries suitable for publication online, develop a handful of Facebook posts and tweets, all expressing philosophical ideas. Students will also submit an annotated bibliography, listing accessible public philosophy media with summaries and evaluations of their choices. Students are also required participate in in-class discussions, including writing workshop days. Late assignments will only be accepted in special circumstances. Please speak with me about lateness or attendance problems in advance.

Grading: The grading formula is as follows:

- First blog: 20%
- Second blog: 25%
- Annotated bibliography: 15%
- Facebook posts and tweets: 25%
- Classroom discussion: 15%

Total: 100 points.

Letter grades will be converted to a 100 point scale, in which 95 = A, 87 = B+, 85 = B, 83 = B-, etc.

Perhaps a more useful way of thinking about the grades is: A = excellent or outstanding work, B = good or above average work, C = acceptable or average work, D = unsatisfactory work but it is “just squeaking by,” and F = unsatisfactory or failing work. By definition, most work is “average.” Papers will be graded on: clarity of focus, adequacy of text, breadth and depth of documentation, cogency of argument.

All written work must be typed. No handwritten work will be accepted.

How to get an ‘A’ in this course: This course is difficult; it requires both a lot of work and a significant personal commitment (all classes should require this). You should anticipate at least three hours of out-of-class work for every hour you spend in class. Written work should be detailed and well-edited, with a strong sense of academic discipline evident in the assignment. ‘A’ students notate their textbooks both
when they read and during class discussion. They also take notes during the lecture and refer to these notes when completing assignments. To get an ‘A’, a student must participate actively in the majority of classes, and write detailed journals that integrate their personal point of view with textual analysis. If someone has questions about his or her overall grade, I will ask to see his or her notes and study material. Without textbook notations, lecture notes, lengthy journals, active participation, and, of course, the completion of all assignments, it is unlikely that someone can earn a high grade. Please note, I do not enter grades on Blackboard, nor can I give you an indication of “your grade so far.” All the information required for these computations will be in your hands. Please keep adequate records so you are aware of your standing.

Note: Absences are not extensions; all deadlines still apply. If you are going to be absent, please give me all the required work in advance. Assignments are only accepted in class unless other arrangements have been made (or, obviously, in special incidents such as a car accident, etc.). No late assignments will be accepted unless we have spoken and I have agreed to an extension. Simply informing me that your paper is going to be late does not constitute my consent. Being absent does not excuse you from taking a quiz.

The Web Page: I have developed an interactive World Wide Web page that I hope will make things easier for you throughout the semester. It contains links to sites that will help you write your papers, take better notes, and understand the text better. This, combined with the Facebook group, provides a 24-hour support group that adds depth to our in-class time and makes you feel less isolated when you are doing work outside of class. I hope that this will be the first place you go to when you are having difficulties, or when you are simply “inspired” and want to talk philosophy. The web page address is as follows: http://www.und.nodak.edu/instruct/weinstei/

Journals: Write a journal on the reading assigned in class. You should have a separate journal for the readings and the movie, so some days you will submit one journal, and some days two, but multiple readings on the same day should be included in the same journal. Journals are due the day the reading is scheduled for discussion. Each journal entry should be at least 450 words long, but this is a minimum length and, in conjunction with other factors, does not guarantee anything above the minimum satisfactory grade.

For essays, the first half of the journal should include a summary of the main idea of the reading. The second half of the journal should be your reaction. Is the argument a good one? Are there mistakes in reasoning? How does this connect with other readings? Did the reading upset you? Are there problems to be solved? Is there something you don’t understand, or would like to spend more time on? Include any questions or other comments you have about the reading.

For the larger public-philosophy books, the first half of the journal should provide an overview of the purpose, examples of key philosophical ideas, a description of the “narrative,” and an illustration of the text’s style. The second half should evaluate the text as an example of public philosophy. Who is the intended audience? What evidence suggests this? Does the text do an adequate job of articulating and explaining philosophical ideas? Is the text a success? Why or why not? The journals will be graded on a three point scale: 3=Excellent, 2=Good, 1=Acceptable. Your journal grades will be averaged at the end of the semester. There are sample journals on my web page and attached to this syllabus.

Grading Rubrics: Each paper and journal you submit must include a grading rubric as a cover sheet (with your name on it). There are separate ones for the journals and the papers. You are responsible for printing them out and attaching them to the front of your paper. Assignments without rubrics will not be graded.
Facebook Discussion Posts: This class uses Facebook to create a 24-hour forum for discussion. Every student is expected to participate. This includes posting your public philosophy Facebook posts to the group and linking to any public philosophy articles you think the class should read.

Using Facebook: The Facebook group for your class is closed. It is only accessible to class members. No one but class members will be able to see your comment or posts. To join, please follow the link to the group on my webpage and request membership. I will approve it as soon as possible. Then, check the group regularly for updates and discussions.

Because this group is on Facebook, I ask everyone to please act responsibly. Do not “friend” anyone who does not welcome it, and respect those who choose not to accept friend requests. Post respectfully, no trolling, insults, obscenity, or questionable links. The same code of conduct that governs class behavior is in effect online. But please, enjoy yourself. I am putting it on Facebook so after-hours interaction can be more fun and versatile.

Class participation: This class is small and much of it is workshop based. To ensure equal and vibrant discussion, a participation grade will be given to each student, for each class. 3 = active participant, 2 = adequate contribution, and 1 = some minimal participation. These grades will be averaged at the end of the semester.

General comments: Do not plagiarize. The university defines plagiarism as “the appropriation, buying, receiving as a gift, or obtaining by any means another person’s work and the unacknowledged submission or incorporation of it in one’s own work.” If you are unsure of what that means, speak with me. When in doubt, use citations. All acts of plagiarism will result in immediate failure for the course. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to copying work from other students. You are encouraged to talk in groups about your assignments; I hope that students form study groups to attack the reading and the papers. However, when it is time to write the papers, do your work on your own. Do not write collectively. Should two or more students hand in the same or unacceptably similar papers, both the writer and those who copied the work will be subject to the consequences. In short, all written work must be your own. I have failed many people for plagiarism. Don’t do it. It’s not worth the risk.

- Students who are absent are responsible for all work and all announcements made while they were absent. The syllabus is not a contract. I may add, take-away, or change assignments when I think it necessary. Additionally, I may change deadlines, so make sure you know what you missed while you were absent. All the new rules will apply, even if you are unaware that things have changed.

- Avoid sloppy or careless mistakes. Spell the names of the philosophers correctly. I become very frustrated when I read people who do not care enough about their papers to edit properly. You don't want a frustrated professor grading your paper – that would be a very bad thing.

- Please be sure to keep copies of everything you hand me, either on disk or as a photocopy. I am a human being. Sometimes I lose things. If, for whatever reason, I misplace your paper, or I think you never gave it to me, these copies will resolve the issue.

- If you are having difficulties, or if you are falling behind, come see me. I have office hours for a reason, and I am almost always willing to arrange a one-on-one meeting. E-mail is also a useful way of contacting me. I cannot help you if you don’t let me know you need it; no one has ever been penalized for asking for help. In fact, students who come see me often find it to be an advantage. There is no reason to be scared of me. I really am quite harmless, even though I am loud and flail while I talk.

- As an extension of the previous comment, do not come to me three weeks before the end of the semester to ask what you can do to pass this course. The grade for this course is a semester-long evaluation. At that
point, there is little I can do. Don’t let it get that far. See me early with any difficulties. Remember, I don’t give you a grade; you earn it.

- **Electronic Communication** - My webpage contains all the course handouts; please go there to download them and print them out to bring to class. Also, make sure that Campus Connection has your current e-mail address. Announcements and links will be sent electronically via that service, and you are responsible for receiving them even if you have not updated your account. Finally, for class related matters, it is best to communicate with me via my UND email address rather than my Facebook account. I have no objections to being friended, having you write on my wall, or receiving messages there, but I don’t check it as often. My UND address is my *official* account. It is best to conduct class business there. Don’t post questions about your work, grade, or situation, in the Facebook group or on my wall. Remember: my Facebook account contains my personal opinions and the usual social-network snark. If you find this offensive or it makes you uncomfortable, do not friend me. Becoming my Facebook friend authorizes me to inform you of my opinions (even though, of course, these opinions will never affect your grade or class experience).

- **Students with disabilities**: Individuals with physical, psychological, or learning disabilities, should contact Disability Support Services in McConnel Hall (777 – 3425 – voice or TTY). It is the student’s responsibility to request accommodations. I cannot provide accommodations that are not requested in writing from Disability Support Services.

- **Students for whom English is a second language**: I will make every attempt to work with you so that you meet the requirements of this class. However, you will be held responsible for writing understandable and grammatically correct papers. Contact the academic services below for academic assistance.

- **Students requiring writing assistance or tutoring**: Help is available free of charge through the University Learning Center at the Memorial Union room 201A (777 – 4406), or the Writing Center in Merrifield Hall, room 12 (777 – 3600).

- Discussions in this class will not shy away from controversy. Students are encouraged to discuss any topic that is relevant to the course. It is therefore not uncommon for issues relating to current events, human sexuality, religion, drugs, politics, race, and gender to be our focus. It is also quite common that students will disagree with each other or with me. Although each person is expected to show the proper respect for his or her colleagues, students will not be discouraged from discussing relevant topics that may be offensive to others. Consequently, if such topics make you uncomfortable, or if you are concerned about being offended, you may want to reconsider taking this course.

**Reading and Assignment Schedule:**

(Reading other than the five required texts will be found on my website.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, January 14</td>
<td>Introduction: <em>what is public philosophy?</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday, January 16</td>
<td><strong>Read</strong>: Gaarder, pp. 1-72.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday, January 21</td>
<td><strong>Read</strong>: Gaarder, pp. 73-161.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Due</td>
<td>A list of five topics that interest you with an explanation of why others would be interested.</td>
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Don’t forget to use the correct grading rubric!
Thursday, January 23: *What is a philosophical question?*
  Read: Weinstein, “Philosophy and its Public.”
  Find: Two public philosophy articles.

Tuesday, January 28: Submit: first Facebook post and tweets.

Thursday, January 30: *Introducing style and grammar.*
  Read: Williams 1 & 2.

Tuesday, February 4: *What is a definition?*
  Read: Winchester, *The Professor and the Madman.*
  Read: Gupta, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* entry on “Definition” (Section 1 only): http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/definitions/
  Bring In: Two entries from the Oxford English Dictionary

Thursday, February 6: *Which terms need to be defined? In-class exercise.*
  Find: Two public philosophy articles, link to them on Facebook.

Tuesday, February 11: *Writing verbs.*
  Read: Williams 3. Due: 3.2, 3.3, 3.5, 3.6, 3.7, odd numbers only.


Tuesday, February 18: *Writing subjects.*
  Read: Williams 4. Due: 4.2, 4.4, 4.6, odd numbers only.
  Read: Gaardner, pp. 138-184.
  Submit: Second Facebook post and tweets.

Thursday, February 20: *Dealing with anti-Intellectualism.*
  Read: Weinstein, “Aliens, Traitors, and Elitists.”
  Read: MacIntyre and Dunne, “Alasdair MacIntyre on Education.”

Tuesday, February 25: *Organizing paragraphs.*
  Read: Williams 5. Due: 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, odd numbers only.
  Find: Two public philosophy articles, link to them on Facebook.

Thursday, February 27: Read: Blackburn, pp. 49 – 148.
  Submit: third Facebook post and tweets.
  Due: first version of annotated bibliography.

Tuesday, March 4: *The civic purpose of philosophy.*
  Read: Nussbaum, *Cultivating Humanity:* “The Old Education and the Think Academy.”
  Read: Walzer: “Philosophy and Democracy.”
  Due: sketch of first blog.

Thursday, March 6: *Writers’ Workshop.*
  Due: complete draft of first blog.

Tuesday, March 11: *Writers’ workshop.*

Thursday, March 13: *Writers’ workshop.*
Tuesday, March 18: Spring Break.

Thursday, March 20: Spring Break.

Tuesday, March 25: Read: Weinstein, “What is Public Philosophy For?”
   Due: Final version of first blog.

Thursday, March 27: Read: Cathcart and Klein, pp. 1-76.
   Find: Two public philosophy articles, link to them on Facebook.

Tuesday, April 1: Making sentences concise and simple.
   Read: Williams 7&8. Due: 7.1, 7.5, 8.1, 8.2, 8.3.
   Submit: Fourth Facebook post and tweets.

Thursday, April 3: Read: Cathcart and Klein, pp. 77-170.

Tuesday, April 8: Holt pp. 1-62.

Thursday, April 10: Williams, 10, Due: pp 174-175,
   Due: sketch of second blog.

Tuesday, April 15: Holt pp. 63-148.
   Due: revision of annotated bibliography.

Thursday, April 17: Read: Hoff, pp. 1-66.
   Submit: Fifth Facebook post and tweets.

Tuesday, April 12: Williams 11, Do p. 185,

Thursday, April 24: Read: Hoff, pp. 67-end.
   Writers’ workshop.

Tuesday, April 29: Writers’ workshop.

Thursday, May 1: Writers’ workshop.

Tuesday, May 6: Writing week, no class.

Thursday, May 8: Writing week, no class.

The final version of the second blog and the annotated bibliography are both due at final exam time:
Tuesday May 13, 1 p.m.

Instructions for submitting final materials:
1. Papers must be submitted as a PDF file. No other file types will be accepted.
2. Files must be named you last name and first initial and assignment. So, my files would be:
   “weinsteinjblog.pdf” and “weinsteinjbibliography.pdf”
3. Layout: Times New Roman font, 12 point, double spaced, margins no more than 1” on all
   sides. Indented quotes should be single spaced, left justified.