

THE FOLLOWING **PREVIEW** HAS BEEN APPROVED FOR  
ALL AUDIENCES

## PHILOSOPHY AND FILM



### SECTION ONE: COURSE AND INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Meets: Tuesdays, 6:30-9:00, 102 O'Connell, 3 credit hours

Instructor: Dr. Mark Smillie, Professor, Philosophy Department, Carroll College

Contact: Office – 142 St. Charles; Ph – 447-5416; Email – msmillie@carroll.edu

#### Communications and Availability

Fall 2018 Office Hours: MWTh, 2:30-4:30; Fri, 2:00-3:30; and by appointment. For issues about this course, students can contact me before/after class, at my office hours (posted above), by phone or email (either Carroll email or through moodle email). I will respond to email and phone inquiries within one business day (Saturdays and Sundays are not business days). I will post notifications about the course in the Moodle News Forum. Students should also be aware of the Moodle Calendar that announces assignment deadlines.

#### Reading Materials

*Thinking Through Film: Doing Philosophy, Watching Movies.* Damian Cox and Michael P. Levine. 2012. Wiley-Blackwell. ISBN: 978-1-4051-9342-9. \$34.95 at the Saints Shoppe. Required text. *A compact and accessible introduction. I liked the selection of movies in the book, thought that many of them would be new to students, and I enjoyed the philosophical analysis chosen for each film.*

*Ultimate Questions: Thinking about Philosophy.* Nils Ch. Rauhut. 2011. Prentice Hall (Pearson). ISBN 978-0-205-73197-8. \$41.55 at the Saints Shoppe. *Introductory text to philosophy that incorporates useful exercises to complement its presentations. Text presents overviews of areas of philosophy.*

*Selected articles to supplement our text: available through Moodle. See Course Schedule for titles.*

### Course Description

This course explores philosophical issues through film. In our consideration of philosophical issues and assigned films, we will ask if film is a “philosophical” medium—whether a film can *do* philosophy—and to what extent, if any, a film can be such a medium. The course will introduce students to philosophical thinking, and to some key areas of philosophical thought. These include questions about what is true and what is real, the existence of free will, the nature of human identity, and what is meaningful in life. Students will acquire knowledge about specific philosophers and about some basic philosophical issues, as well as gain experience in the practice of philosophical thinking. In addition, they will enjoy some movies, and maybe even come to look at them in new and intriguing ways.

### Course Procedure

This course will examine general areas of philosophy and watch films chosen for their relevance to these areas. Students will be encouraged to examine and analyze different philosophical positions in these topics and to formulate their own ideas and responses about their truth and value. Class meetings will be used to address more difficult points in the readings, and to have students integrate and synthesize these ideas into their own thinking.

***“You know what your problem is? It’s that you haven’t seen enough movies; all of life’s riddles are answered in the movies.” Steve Martin***

## SECTION TWO: COURSE ELEMENTS AND GOALS

### Learning Objectives

As a result of reading course texts, viewing assigned movies, participating in lecture presentations and class discussions, students will evaluate whether, and in what way, philosophy can be done in film, by completing course activities, by writing analyses and exams, and producing a movie that “philosophizes.”

- **Readings:** After purchasing the required course texts and accessing readings on moodle, students will identify philosophical views and positions, and their presentation in films, through mindful reading of assigned material prior to class.
- **Course Activities:** After studying assigned readings and attending class meetings, students will express, analyze and critically reflect on philosophical views and positions, by participating in class discussions, completing in-class activities, and diverse on-line moodle activities.
- **Plot Summaries:** After viewing assigned films, students will indicate their knowledge of these films by completing on-line moodle quizzes about the movie. (For movies shown in class, students can sign in.)
- **Written analyses:** After studying techniques of argumentation, students will present and analyze philosophy in movies, in assigned written essays.
- **Exams:** After participating in class discussions, reading assigned texts and completing course activities, students will synthesize and express their understanding of philosophy by completing tests consisting of matching, true/false, and essay questions.
- **Short Film:** After completing course readings and activities, and studying Plato’s *Euthyphro*, students working together in small groups will demonstrate their understanding of a philosophical topic and philosophical conversational analysis, by producing a short film to show to the rest of the class.

Disclaimer regarding these objectives:

- 1) Students may vary in their competency levels on these abilities.
- 2) Students can expect to acquire these abilities only if they honor all course policies, attend class regularly, complete all assigned work on time and in good faith, and meet all other course requirements and expectations.

**Fulfillment and Assessment of the Learning Objectives**

- **Preclass Activities (10%).** These are assignments on the readings that you complete on-line. Their purpose is to encourage you to read, to identify parts of the reading for your attention, to help you understanding the readings, and to get recognition for reading. Students will receive credit for these assignments based on their responses to the particular questions and assignments. Two lowest scores will be dropped prior to calculation of the final grade.
- **Plot Summaries (10%).** Students will receive credit for attending the movie showing and signing in/out of class. If absent, to receive credit, students must complete a quiz. For assigned movies not shown in class, students will receive credit for correct answers on an online T/F test for each movie assigned
- **Written Philosophical Papers (30%).** Students will receive a grade using rubrics that will be made available in advance of the assignment.
- **Tests (30%).** Students will receive a grade based on a rubric made available in advance of the test.
- **Short Film (20%).** Students will receive a grade based on a rubric made available in advance of the project.

Scale for final grade:

<u>Percentage points</u>	<u>Grade</u>	<u>Percentage points</u>	<u>Grade</u>	<u>Percentage points</u>	<u>Grade</u>
93-100.....	A	80-82 .....	B-	60-69 .....	D
90-92.....	A-	77-79 .....	C+	Below 60 .....	F
87-89.....	B+	73-76 .....	C	P/F Grade .....	D (60)
83-86.....	B	70-72 .....	C-		

**Course Routine and Participant Expectations**

This class works on four-week cycles. There are four iterations of this cycle during the semester. Each cycle involves one or usually two movies to watch in class. Cycles one and three culminate in an essay assignment; Cycle two culminates in an (on-line) test; Cycle four culminates in the video projects and final exam.

***“A film is a petrified fountain of thought.” Jean Cocteau***

## Course Calendar

C	DATE	TOPIC/ASSIGNMENT
1	Aug 28	Intro to the course; Hand out the Syllabus. Preliminaries. Video: What is Philosophy? Catch-up reading: Chapter One of <i>Ultimate Questions: Thinking about Philosophy</i> (UQ).
	Sep 4	Watching <i>The Matrix</i> during this class!
	Sep 11	Philosophical Method. Read: UQ, Ch 2 and "Philosophy Screened" (Available On moodle). Complete Activity #1.1 by 530pm
	Sep 18	The Matrix as Philosophy. A look at ontological questions: What is real. (Esp: Is our mental experience real?) Read <i>Thinking Through Film</i> (TTF), Ch 4. Complete Activity #1.2 by 530pm Paper #1 is due by Sunday night, September 23
2	Sep 25	Film and Philosophy—Some theories on philosophizing with Film. Read: TTF, Chapter One, Aaron Smuts, "Film as Philosophy: In Defense of the Bold Thesis" and Bruce Russell: "The Philosophical Limits of Film." Complete Activity #2.1 by 530pm
	Oct 2	In Class: Watching <i>AI Artificial Intelligence</i>
	Oct 9	Film project directions (Euthyphro); Class discussion about artificial Intelligence. Read Plato's Euthyphro (on moodle) and TTF, Ch 5. Complete Activity #2.2 by 530pm
	Oct 16	<b>Midterm Break: No class.</b> Moodle Midterm exam due by Sunday night, October 21
	Oct 23	Theories about Time. Watching "La Jetée" in class (30 min film). Read "La Jetée and the Promise of Time Travel," Read: TTF, Ch 6 and "Some Paradoxes of Time Travel in <i>The Terminator</i> and <i>12 Monkeys</i> " by William J Devlin (on Moodle). Complete Activity #2.3 by 530pm
3	Oct 30	Watching <i>Memento</i> in Class. The Problem of Personal Identity. Read UQ, Ch 5. Complete Activity #3.1 by 530pm
	Nov 6	Personal identity. Read: TTF, Ch 8, "Personal Identity: The Case of <i>Memento</i> " and "Does Philosophy Meet Film in Plato's Cave?" (On Moodle). Complete Activity #3.2 by 530pm
	Nov 13	Watching <i>La Promese</i> in class (90 min); Discussion of virtue theory. Read TTF, Ch 14. Complete Activity #3.3 by 530pm
	Nov 20	<b>No Class Meeting. Watch the movie <i>Saving Private Ryan</i>.</b> Paper #2 is due by Sunday night, November 26.
4	Nov 27	Watching <i>The Dark Knight</i> in class
	Dec 4	Moral Theory and Right Action. Read TTF, Ch 13 and UQ, Ch 8. Complete Activity #4.1 by 530pm
	Dec 11	<b>Final Exam (1 hour); Student Films shown</b>

## SECTION THREE: GENERAL INFORMATION/POLICIES

## WHAT IS A PHILOSOPHY CLASS?

## What do philosophers do?

Philosophers examine concepts and study arguments. In class and in your assignments and tests, you will examine fundamental concepts, and study arguments philosophers and others, including yourselves, have presented to defend various positions. Studying arguments includes identifying their parts, figuring out how they work, and judging how strong they are.

## How much work will this class involve?

The workload is typical for any 3-credit college class workload. Our accreditation organization defines one college credit as one hour per week (of a semester) spent in class, plus two accompanying hours of outside

work. (This is a typical definition.) Now you know why three credit classes meet close to three hours a week! And you also know that Carroll expects me to assign, on average, roughly 9 hours of outside class work per week. With seventeen weeks in a typical semester, that is 48 hours of class, and 144 hours of work outside of class. (wow: 192 hours total! Which is a little more than one week of out of your life.) I say “on average 9 hours a week” because the 9 hours a week includes time to read the assignments and complete reading assignments, but also the time to write the essays and complete the semester project, and time to study for exams; these times can vary through the semester as assignment and test deadlines approach. (Bonus fact: now you know that there is such a thing as “too much” work in a course, and you have a measure to actually make that complaint count. If you think I assign too much work, I am willing to sit down and discuss this with you in a data-informed way. I encourage you to do the same with your other classes!)

### **How does your class work?**

Typically, I assign a reading for each class which is meant to introduce you to the topic for the class. In the reading you will see the concepts involved examined, positions clarified and staked out, and arguments presented for or against these positions. Class presentations and activities move from there; my plan isn't to represent or go over all the material you read, but to focus in on aspects of the topic that I believe are more difficult (so you require more help understanding), or are more interesting (at least to me), or to make connections between this topic and other topics we've studied, etc. My tests cover all the reading material, whether I've looked at it in class with you or not; so you do have a good reason to keep up with the readings. As you read, I encourage you to note the fuzzy areas for you, and raise questions in class (or with me at other times), particularly if we don't look at it in class.

### **Does it really matter if I do the readings?**

Good question! A philosophy class is also a humanities class. So you can expect much of the outside work to involve reading and studying texts (as opposed to completing problems and labs in the sciences). I cannot verify that you did the reading, nor do I plan to do this. You should read because it keeps you informed about the course material, because it develops your thinking about the course material, because it helps you write more informed (better) essays for this class, and because the more you know about the material, the more interested you will be in it, and the more you will enjoy it. (Yes, people actually enjoy thinking about and trying to answer philosophical questions!) But remember that you are playing the long game here: You will often not get immediate feedback about your reading, no one will know if you really did the reading, and the immediate effect of reading is often not something that you will feel. (You will probably feel bad, because being confused makes us feel bad; however, it isn't necessarily something to feel bad about!) So that's my plug that you keep up with the reading as diligently as possible.

### **Do you have any advice for reading philosophy?**

Yes! If you know what to expect, you'll do better at it. Here are the common suggestions that you will see if you searched this on google.

- Keep the general problem in your mind throughout the passage.
- Identify specific theses (or conclusions)
- Look for arguments offered to support the theses
- Remember that philosophers usually consider objections (opposition or challenges) to their arguments: be conscious of this fact and differentiate between the reasons offered to support a view and the objections (and replies) raised [this is often most difficult for beginners]
- Keep an inquisitive attitude while you are reading; don't accept things too easily. Try to work out what convinces you and why, and where you aren't convinced.

## POLICIES

### Basic Etiquette

Please be on time for class! All students should practice good manners in class and show civility to all. A positive attitude is appreciated and a professional demeanor is expected. This includes such things as remaining alert (and awake!) in class, respecting and never interrupting others, limiting private conversations, turning cell phones off, and controlling your urges to text or use your electronic devices. Please, no eating or using tobacco products in class (a small beverage is allowed).

In team or group situations, students should cooperate with their team members and obtain their input when working on group exercises and projects. Most group work involves a required peer assessment of each individual's contribution to the group.

Absolutely no electronic devices are allowed during exams, and this includes cell phones, laptops, and mp3 players/devices. Laptops are allowed at other times during class, with the expectation that you are using them to participate in the class and not as a distraction. Please close your laptops while movies are being shown in class!

### Attendance And Tardiness

"Eighty percent of success is showing up." Attributed to Woody Allen  
Regular attendance is a college policy (see College Catalogue). I keep attendance regularly and expect to be informed if some legitimate excuse keeps you from attending class.

Tardiness is disruptive to other members of the class, but I would rather you came to class late than not at all; so please slip into class quietly if you are late!

***Please note: I will not grade assignments of students who do not regularly attend class. You have become such a student once you miss more than two class sessions during this term without informing me of a valid excuse.***

Late exams/assignments: All assignments can be submitted electronically on moodle, observing the deadlines posted there. Students having good reasons for missing a deadline or test should contact me in advance of the deadline. Good reasons include documented medical reasons, documented court obligations, and athletic team commitments, family emergencies. Deadlines will be reset to mutually agreed times in these situations.

I do accept late assignments (turn them in by email or hand if you cannot submit them on moodle); I reserve the right to penalize them one letter grade, more if they are egregiously late (now there's a new word for you!) Missed exams should be retaken at the ARC within one week of the exam date (Students must make their own arrangements with the director of the ARC, and then inform me of their scheduled makeup date).

### Institutional And Course Policies On Academic Honesty

Carroll College's policy on Academic Integrity is stated in both the CC Catalogue and in the Student Handbook. The policy reads: "Students at Carroll College are expected to have high standards of integrity. Any student who cheats or plagiarizes on examinations or assignments, falsifies college records, or fails to give requested academic information on admission documents is subject to dismissal or other appropriate disciplinary action by the College." Students violating the policy will be referred to the Vice President for Academic Affairs. Please see these publications for the correct procedures to follow if you have questions concerning the conduct of this class or the grading procedures (other than a final grade).

I expect all my students to have the high standards of integrity expected by the college. A college classroom is a social environment and honesty, responsibility, respect, and even honor are key components for its success. Cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, deception, and complicity undermine our ability to enjoy and profit from this class.

Plagiarism is a particular act of fraud that merits more attention. Plagiarism is both stealing someone else's work and lying about it. It includes the following

- Turning anyone else's work (including other students') as your own
- Copying without giving credit (including copying from the internet)
- Not putting quotations in quotation marks
- Incorrectly identifying the source of a quotation

Plagiarism also includes copying the sentence structure of a source, even if you changed words, and copying so many words or ideas from a source that it makes up the majority of your work, whether you give credit or not.

I will investigate all suspected cases of plagiarism, and will penalize all verified instances; the penalty can be as severe as immediate failure in the course. If you are unsure about whether some actions constitute plagiarism, please ask me.

### **Returning Work**

I believe in the value of prompt feedback. My goal is to grade and/or return all assignments within 2 weeks of their due dates, if not sooner.

### **Making Up Missed Work**

Tests and exams should be taken on the dates and place assigned. Tests missed for legitimate reasons will be retaken at the ARC, within one week of the exam date. Students must make their own arrangements with the director of the ARC, and then inform me of their scheduled makeup date prior to making up the exam. Final exams are scheduled and conducted according to the policies set in the College Catalogue (see pg 24).

Students having good reasons for missing a deadline or test should contact me in advance of the deadline. Good reasons include documented medical reasons, documented court obligations, and athletic team or other Carroll College commitments, family emergencies. Deadlines will be reset to mutually agreed times in these situations.

### **Grade Challenges And Appeal Policy**

If you do not understand a grade you received, please seek clarification! Under no condition will a grade review result in a lowered grade. If you want to appeal a grade, please submit your appeal first in writing, explaining your question, or if you think your answer was correct, documenting that belief with evidence from the text. In the case where there is a rubric, please identify the assessments of the rubric that you believe are incorrect and why. After receiving your written request, I will review your documentation and the assignment and decide if a grade change is warranted, and return the test with some written comments. If your concern remains after that, then I will meet with you.

### **Office Hours**

Office hours are not just for those in trouble. My office hours are a time for you to come talk to me informally, to ask questions about the material or assignments, to review graded work, to get suggestions for further reading, to discuss other topics related to the course. And if you are having trouble with the course work, we can talk about that too, of course. Make an appointment if you wish, or drop by during the posted times!

### **Campus Support Services**

If you believe that you may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability, please contact Kevin Haddock, in order to discuss your specific needs and to determine a reasonable accommodation

plan. You may contact Kevin Haddock in the Academic Success and Disability Services Office, Borromeo Hall, Room 118 (phone: x4504; email: khaddock@carroll.edu).

### Copyright Statement

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### About Your Professor

I am a full professor in the Philosophy Department. I received a B.A. from Thomas Aquinas College (CA) in 1983; a Ph.D. in 1992, from the University of Notre Dame, where I studied Medieval Philosophy and the Philosophy of Human Being. I have taught at over a half-dozen institutions before I came to Carroll College in 1995.

I teach many philosophy courses here at Carroll, and I regularly teach Philosophy of Human Nature, Business Ethics, Bioethics, Environmental Ethics, and Medieval Philosophy. Recently I taught a course on the Philosophy of Artificial Intelligence, which would make a great second class if you are interested in the material in this class. My research interests are in Medieval Philosophy, especially the philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas, and applied ethics. I have given papers/presentations on: Thomas Aquinas, Catholic Identity, God's Omnipotence, End of Life Decision-Making, using technology in the classroom.

I've been married 32 years and have eight kids (one Carroll grad!). I am involved in various community organizations in Helena and enjoy visiting historical sites, hiking, photography, building things from time to time (and even house remodeling).

### Concluding Disclaimer

The above schedule, policies, and assignments in this course are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances or by mutual agreement between the instructor and the students.

### Final Comments

I welcome everyone to the course. I'm glad you've chosen this class, and I promise to do my best to make it meaningful, useful, and enjoyable. Please feel comfortable giving me any comments or suggestions about the progress of the course as we go along. I am happy to make any adjustments to the course that I can.

