

# Philosophy 61: *Philosophical Explorations I*

## “Global Visions”

Fall Semester, 2013

Sections 003 (Class number 4200) and 006 (Class number 4997)

Mondays and Wednesdays 11a.m.-12:15 p.m./1-2:15 p.m

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### Syllabus and Reading List

*Philosophical Explorations* is a yearlong integrated core course in which we investigate logic, ethics, theory of knowledge and philosophy of art, religion and science and their importance for understanding and managing the complexities of modern life. Among our most important goals are these:

1. To become familiar with the basic concepts and methods of elementary logic and philosophical inquiry while developing philosophical skills that are useful in every area of life
2. To become acquainted with the leading traditions of ethical thought and the central problems of contemporary moral philosophy, and to share, examine, sharpen and refine our own ethical sensibilities and values
3. To gain a sense of the history of ideas generally, so that we may better understand the distinctive features of modern scientific, religious, and philosophical thought

In keeping with our emphasis on the *skills* at work in philosophical exploration we shall engage in an ongoing *workshop* emphasizing responsive and critical *writing* and *discussion*. You will be expected to read and reflect on the important philosophical writings of others. But you should also learn to summarize and respond to such writings in your own voice, thereby learning to *philosophize for yourself* concerning some of the hardest and most important questions of human life. This is really the primary goal of *Philosophical Explorations*—to enable you to *do* philosophy.

How well, or to what extent, will you actually achieve these skills and objectives, and reach our shared goal of philosophizing seriously together? That depends, in large part, on *you* (keep reading).

## Course Requirements

—You *must own* the Plato and Locke texts (books). (Buy, and keep, printed versions.)

—Weekly informal written assignments, which will NOT be graded. (Of course, whether or not you complete them WILL affect your final grade.)

—THREE in-class formal essay and short-answer examinations (no notes). I will announce the subject matter and SOME of the questions in advance of each test. These exams will test your study of the texts, your knowledge of the material I present to you in my (occasional) formal lectures, and your familiarity with the questions and issues discussed in class. There will be NO “PAPERS” (formal essays written “at home”) in this course. On each exam, you must *prove* by what you write that you have carefully READ the BOOK (text)!

—*Faithful* attendance and *regular* participation in our class discussions and exercises and in the plenary (joint) sessions (Attendance and participation will count for nearly a third of your final grade.)

## Required Texts

Plato, *Gorgias*, Translated by Robin Waterfield (Oxford World’s Classics)

John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, Edited with an Introduction by C. B. Macpherson (Hackett Publishing Company)

Assorted photocopies provided by instructor (free)

*The Science Times*, in each Tuesday’s *New York Times*  
(Available at [www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com))

## Grading (Evaluation)

In-class essay/short answer examinations: 60% of your final grade

Weekly written exercises: 10%

Attendance, participation: 30%

## Course Format

*Philosophical Explorations* is *not* primarily a lecture course. Rather it is a kind of ongoing *workshop*, which places emphasis on reading, writing, reasoning, and conversing. Much of our time in class will be devoted to written and oral *exercises* in logical analysis, explaining and evaluating difficult material, and arguing the merits of competing answers to challenging intellectual and practical questions. You should do the assigned reading in advance (of course) and come to class prepared with specific questions, problems and comments. *Always* bring the relevant text(s) with you to class.

Occasionally I *will* offer lectures, and you are responsible for learning the material (names, facts, dates etc.) that I present to you. Therefore it is very much in your interest to ***take careful notes, every day.***

**Faithful attendance is required;** naturally, perfect attendance is highly recommended, and ***you are responsible*** for material covered and assignments given during your absence. Develop your skills; *educate yourself* as the term progresses. Ask questions, express your views, think, write, argue, *do philosophy.*

Please **feel free to consult me anytime** regarding problems, questions or criticisms that you might have. I am always willing to help you personally with your writing, and with any administrative problems pertaining to your study of philosophy at LIU/Brooklyn.

My office is **467 Humanities**; my office hours this semester are **MWF 10-11 a.m. and MW 2:15-2:30 p.m. and by appointment.** You may leave brief messages for me at **x1053**. I am also **always** available for consultation immediately before and after our class.

**Academic dishonesty of any kind is unacceptable and will result in failure in the course. Text messaging and cellular- phoning in class are NOT permitted. In fact, NO use of computers or ANY communications devices are permitted during class, unless otherwise specified by ME on particular occasions. This includes iPads or other tablet computers. If you TEXT IN CLASS, your grade for participation goes DOWN, every time!**

**If you feel that you may need accommodation for a disability or learning difficulty of any kind, please make an appointment to see me right away.** If you have a documented disability/impairment and require specific accommodations, please provide me with an accommodation letter from Student Support Services, which is located on the ground floor of the Pharmacy Building, Room B-04. Their phone number is (718) 488-1044; their hours of operation are Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. ([studentsupportservices@brooklyn.liu.edu](mailto:studentsupportservices@brooklyn.liu.edu))

## Our Theme for the Fall 2013 Semester: “Global Visions”

What does it mean to understand things, and live our lives, “globally”? We often hear that, whether we have chosen to be or not, we are all now part of a global economy. Moreover we are told that, given the undeniable fact of impending radical global warming, we must learn to think in planetary terms, rather than merely local ones, in order to survive as a species. We are thus encouraged to think of ourselves not as solitary individuals but rather as “citizens of the world.” One general term for this very popular idea is “cosmopolitanism.”

But what exactly can this really mean, in reflection and in daily practice? Throughout nearly all of human existence on this planet, the whole idea was practically unthinkable. Men and women conceived themselves as parts of immediate family units, clans, tribes and perhaps (much later) small villages, not as citizens of the globe. In the fourth century BCE the Greek philosopher Diogenes of Sinope (founder of the Cynics, nicknamed “The Dog”) shocked his listeners when, asked where he came from, he reputedly replied, “I am a citizen of the world.” In the time of the Roman Empire some Stoic philosophers went even further, claiming to be “citizens of the universe.”

How have such once radical thoughts become so familiar, even urgent, to us? How have centuries of conquest, empire, commerce, exploration, art, invention and communication empowered—and *forced*—us to think, and try to live, in global terms, as true citizens of a shared world? Is being a citizen of the world really any more possible today than it was centuries ago, given the glaring inequality of wealth and opportunity that persists throughout the world, even (or especially) in our own nation? These are among the questions that will guide us as we learn together in a spirit of academic community.

## Syllabus

### I. Introductions. Can one be a “citizen of the world”? (week 1)

### II. Introduction to informal logic (weeks 2-5)

Branches of philosophy. Philosophy and logic. Formal and informal logic. Logic as science and art. Logic as the study of argument. Arguments and non-arguments. Filonowicz, “Informal Logic LIU-Style” (photocopies)

Fallacies in informal reasoning. A fallacy: a mistake *in an argument*. What is an argument? Premises and conclusions.

Why study bad arguments if the goal is to reason logically? Why argue logically? Naming, defining *and explaining* the fallacy or fallacies at work in a particular argument (showing *how* an argument commits the fallacy you claim it does).

#### Interlude: “Writing” (Filonowicz)

### III. What is the Good? Rhetoric, statesmanship and morality in Plato’s *Gorgias* (weeks 6-8)

Plato, *Gorgias*. Socrates *versus* Gorgias on rhetoric, persuasion and teaching (pp. 3-33).

#### First essay exam (informal logic/fallacies)

*Gorgias*, continued (pp. 34-62). Socrates *versus* Polus on justice and happiness (“psychological goodness”). Socrates on health and beauty.

Socrates *versus* Callicles on justice and power (pp. 62-125). Fallacious arguments in *Gorgias*.

**IV. Interlude: Do human beings have souls? (week 9)**

Socrates on the afterlife: *Gorgias* pp. 126-135.

Patricia S. Churchland, "Soul Searching," from *Touching a Nerve: The Self as Brain* (photocopy)

**Second essay exam (Plato, *Gorgias*)****V. What is citizenship? Locke's *Second Treatise* (weeks 10-12)**

John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*

Thomas Jefferson, The Declaration of Independence (find on your own)

**VI. Interlude: Cosmopolitanism *versus* patriotism (week 11)**

Edward Everett Hale, "The Man Without a Country" (download free at <http://www.bartleby.com/ebook/adobe/3106.pdf>)

**VII. Cosmopolitanism and our (real) world: Is global citizenship possible without true economic and political equality? (week 13)**

Readings from contemporary news sources

**Third essay exam (Locke, *Second Treatise*)**