

Course Project

Philosophy

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Upon successful completion of this course, the student will be able to:

1. Recall the main ideas presented by a range of texts from the history of philosophy
2. Explain the reasoning process by which each philosopher argues his or her point of view
3. Evaluate philosophical issues as they relate to modern day life experiences

PROJECT DESCRIPTION (OR BACKGROUND INFORMATION)

You will demonstrate your understanding of the real-life applications and consequences for different philosophical theories that you have studied by composing a first-person narrative journal, totaling 8-10 pages. This journal constructs a story of your travels to different places that embody and enact various philosophical viewpoints, describing how those philosophies are put into practice in different societies, and what the consequences—both positive and negative—are for each. You will:

- Explain how three philosophical theories could be put into practice
- Re-construct the reasoning process that each philosophy uses to justify its claims
- Highlight the positive outcomes from the practice of each philosophy
- Predict how the weaknesses of each philosophy would negatively affect its society
- Identify areas of your own community that have philosophical significance
- Argue how the positive aspects of the philosophies you have learned about could be constructively applied to your community

PROJECT INSTRUCTIONS

As the “traveler”, you will see and experience the ways in which the inhabitants of each “philosophical society” think and interact with one another, living out both the strengths and weaknesses of the philosophical view that underpin their society.

Examples of possible “philosophical societies” are, but not limited to:

- A Platonic society in which people are most concerned with questioning their assumptions about themselves and their world and attaining full, philosophical knowledge of what is good

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- An Aristotelian society in which people are most concerned with weighing the possibilities for their behavior against the needs of the situation—finding the ideal “mean” between overshooting their goal and failing to act
- A Cartesian society in which people are only willing to accept as “truth” that which can be indubitably proven beyond doubt. Anything that cannot be submitted to rational proofs cannot count as a worthwhile source of truth or knowledge
- An Emersonian society that values wonder most highly and views human life as spiritually interconnected with the rest of the cosmos
- A Marxist society in which class inequalities are considered unacceptable and the working class has banded together to challenge the ruling class, establishing social equity

The final product of your piece will present the following general components:

1. An imaginative description of three different “philosophical societies”. This is a creative endeavor in which you will demonstrate your understanding of three different philosophical theories by projecting those theories onto imaginary societies. How are those societies organized? What do they look like? What kinds of people live there? How do they speak and behave?
2. A clear exposition of the philosophical arguments that each philosophical society uses to justify itself. *Why* does its manner of self-organization make sense? What basic views about the world or human nature does it use as the basis for its philosophy? How does it justify itself rationally?
3. A plausible description of what is positive about each philosophical society. What aspects of its self-organization and philosophical point of view help its inhabitants to flourish materially, socially, or personally?
4. A critical appraisal of what drawbacks each philosophical society might face. How might its philosophical foundation compromise its inhabitants’ abilities to flourish? What kinds of people or institutions does it encourage or discourage that would indicate that philosophy’s shortcomings?
5. A description of your own community with the fresh perspective offered by your travels to other philosophical societies. What are the ways in which your community self-organizes? How do people in your community justify the way they live (i.e. what philosophical views are implicit in their ways of living)? Is there a diversity of philosophical opinion, and if so, how do these people with opposing viewpoints engage with one another?
6. A proposal for how the positive aspects of each philosophical society could be applied to the philosophical questions at play in your own community. Would your community benefit from a different conception of virtue, human nature, or reason, for example? Is a

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critique of its political, environmental, or social practices needed? How might such an application of these philosophical ways of thinking positive impact society?

PROJECT SUBMISSION

1. A title page is not required for project submissions. Because evaluators do not see student names when reviewing student work, it is important that students not include any personal identifiers in their project submissions.
2. Save your document as a PDF file. In Microsoft Word, you can use the Save As option to select PDF as your file format.
3. *If your project requires a video*, you should post the video to a free video hosting site like www.youtube.com, www.photobucket.com, or one of the other free webhosting websites. The following website maintains a list of video hosting sites; <http://www.videohostings.com/>. In the written materials that you submit as part of the assignment, you should include the title of the video and a link for the faculty member to use to grade your submission.
4. Upload the PDF file in your course.
5. Your assignment will not be returned to you so keep a copy for your files.