Philosophy 1a:
Introduction to Philosophy
Spring 2017

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Course Description
This course will seek to introduce students to the central questions, issues and methods of philosophy through close study of some of the most important and influential texts from the Ancient Greeks through the present.

These include questions like:
• What exists?
• What can I know?
• How should I live?

And, of course, questions about philosophy, such as:
• What is a philosophical question?
• How can we answer philosophical questions?
• What can we hope to achieve by doing philosophy?

We’ll explore these questions and various possible answers to them through reading works by Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Hume, Kant, Mary Wollstonecraft, Wittgenstein, Simone de Beauvoir, and Martin Luther King, Jr. The texts we will read will represent a variety of philosophical genres, including dialogues, meditations, and aphorisms as well as more traditional philosophical treatises.

Learning Goals
Students in Philosophy 1a will acquire familiarity with the central questions and areas of philosophy and begin to develop the skills to propose and evaluate answers to those questions.

Students will also acquire a basic familiarity with central movements in the history of philosophy, including ancient and modern philosophy.

Students will learn to critically read and engage with philosophical texts written in a variety of styles and genres, to identify and evaluate philosophical arguments in those texts, and to write papers that carefully develop and defend philosophical claims.
Requirements
Students will be required to write three essays of 3-4 pages. In addition, there will be in-class reading quizzes and a final exam.

Grading
The essays will be worth 50% of the grade for the class. The final will be worth 25% and the quizzes 15% of the grade. Participation and attendance will be worth 10%.

Late papers will be deducted one third of a grade (e.g. from a B to a B-) for each day they are late. No assignments will be accepted more than one week late. If you need an extension on an assignment, perhaps because you have work due in other classes on the same day or for personal reasons, please ask me. I am willing to grant short extensions, provided you ask for them at least a full day in advance. If you are unable to complete an assignment on time because of an unexpected illness, please let me know as soon as possible.

You should come to class prepared, having done the readings in advance. You should bring the texts with you to class! We will frequently be referring to the texts during class, so it is important that you have them.

Readings
There is one required textbook:


Additional primary readings will be posted on LATTE.

In addition, we will make use of the online-learning platform Top Hat in class. You'll be asked to buy a subscription for the service to use in class. (Students on financial aid can get subscriptions through the campus bookstore.)

Academic Integrity at Brandeis
Academic integrity is central to the mission of educational excellence at Brandeis University. Each student is expected to turn in work completed independently, except when assignments specifically authorize collaborative effort. It is not acceptable to use the words or ideas of another person without proper acknowledgement of that source.

Violations of University policies on academic integrity, described in Section Three of Rights and Responsibilities, may result in failure of the course or on the assignment, or in suspension or dismissal from the University. If you are in doubt about the instructions for any assignment in this course or about how to properly cite the sources
you've used, it is your responsibility to ask for help. If you have questions about academic integrity, please do not hesitate to ask me, refer to the Rights and Responsibilities Handbook, or contact the office of Student Development and Conduct.

**Four-Credit Course (with three hours of class-time per week)**

Success in this 4 credit hour course is based on the expectation that students will spend a minimum of 9 hours of study time per week in preparation for class (readings, papers, discussion sections, preparation for exams, etc.).
Tentative Schedule

Week 1: Introduction: What is philosophy?

Week 2: Socrates and the Examined Life

Week 3: Plato: The Really Real

Week 4: Aristotle: Reason and Nature

Week 5: Eastern Thought: Hinduism, Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism

Week 6: The Hellenistic Era: Stoics, Epicureans, and Skeptics

Weeks 7-8: Descartes: What can we know? How?

Paper 1 due!

Weeks 9-10: Hume: Why do we believe what we do?

Paper 2 due!

Week 11: Kant’s Revolution

Week 12: Feminist Philosophers: Then and Now

Week 13: The 20th Century and Beyond: Wittgenstein, Nussbaum, and King

Final Class: Review for Exam. Paper 3 due!