

INT250-1 Comparative Philosophy (2008 curriculum) (3 credits)

Dr. Don Nilson

Year: 2014

Semester: Fall

Meeting-time/day: TU. and THURS. 3:30 - 4:45 PM

Office: A 4-12

Office Hours: MON. and WED. 1:30 - 3 PM

E-mail: nilson@aiu.ac.jp

Website:

Course Description:

This course is an exploration of several key philosophical issues and concepts in the contexts of several distinct cultures, past and present, by investigating the intellectual or cultural background to the philosophers and issues studied. Themes for the course : knowledge and rationality; alternative understandings of what is real and the question of cultural relativism ; mind and selfhood ; concepts of the good and the ideal society; human responsibility; the role and appreciation of works of art. Examples of themes investigated in recent semesters : experience, self & personal identity in Descartes, Locke and Indian philosophers; the concept of the Good in Ancient Greek and Chinese philosophies; nihilism as interpreted in the work of Western philosophers such as Nietzsche, and in the philosophy of Nishitani Keiji; other themes in the Kyoto School of Philosophy (Nishida and Nishitani) in relation to key Western philosophers ; alternative views on the relation of philosophy and religion to creative expression in music; interpretations (old and new) of Dogen Zenji' s understanding of meditation and thinking; differences between Japanese and Western arts; concepts used in East & West about our responsibility for nature and environmental problems.

Objectives:

Course Objectives & General Content:

- In this course, through the comparative studies we undertake, students will develop an appreciation and understanding of several major philosophical issues as they appear in several distinct cultural settings . And they will enhance their skills in critically and thoughtfully responding to such issues.
- Students will learn ways to uncover similarities and differences between different cultures and ultimately this means comparing views of the world, with special reference to philosophical and religious perspectives.
- Students will develop careful, thorough, and precise ways of reading works in philosophy with attention to making clear comparisons between philosophers & philosophies. But the course aims for general understanding and so, is not only for students specializing in philosophy.
- Students will improve their logical and critical skills. They will come to see how

arguments can be criticized and thus can come to be better understood.

- Students will come to see how the comparative study of philosophy can enrich their understanding of philosophies, religions and other aspects of various cultures as well.

Expected Academic Background:

Preparation : This is a course mainly for beginners : no prior background or courses in philosophy are required. A sincere interest in learning about the place of philosophy in human cultures is expected.

Textbook:

1. Required Textbook : Thomas P. Kasulis - Intimacy or Integrity. Philosophy and Cultural Difference. (Honolulu : University of Hawai'i Press, 2002.)

2. Recommended Textbook : Hee-Jin Kim – Dogen on Meditation and Thinking: a Reflection on his View of Zen. (New York: State University of NY Press, 2007.)

3. Selected short readings will be available for you to make your own photocopies. Handouts, such as question sets, charts and outlines, as well as other readings, will be made available during the course.

4. Usual reading assignments from the above (see 1, 2 & 3) will be approximately 20 pages per class.

5 We will use some video and audio recordings to enhance our understanding of various themes studied. And there will also be group presentations by class members.

6. We will use some on-line resources in philosophy.

Reference Books/Other Study Materials:

Please see above.

Assessment:

Methods of Evaluation and Grading:

Evaluation will be made on the basis of exams, 2 short papers, homework, class participation and presentations. These are:

1) Exams: There will be a mid-semester exam and a final exam consisting of multiple choice, short-answer and essay questions. Each exam counts as 25% of the final grade, but the final exam grade may count more if you do especially well on the final exam.

2) Papers : Students will write two short papers for the course. These will be critically and logically structured papers prepared following detailed instructions that will be provided separately. These papers will count for a total of 20%. Papers must be turned in on

time.

3) Homework, Class Participation and Presentations: You are expected to attend and fully participate in each class, to do all readings in preparation for each class and all assigned homework on time . You are expected to be prepared for each class and especially for in-class discussions or presentations that you will do. We will do

Policies & Remarks:

Policies :

Attendance and participation : All students are expected to attend and participate in all classes and complete all assigned work for the course on time. (See above also.)

Plagiarism or cheating : In accord with AIU policies and good practices in higher education, plagiarism or cheating on a paper, examination, test, or other assignment will result in the failure on that assignment as a minimum. Cases of plagiarism or cheating will be reported to the Dean of Academic Affairs for relevant action.

Plagiarism is the taking of words or ideas of another person and presenting them as your own. It is acceptable to use someone else' s words or ideas as long as you give the person or source proper credit. If you have doubts or questions about how to give credit to someone else in your own writing, please check with the course instructor or EAP faculty.

Cheating is making use of any assistance on an examination, paper, assignment or other class project beyond what has been authorized by the instructor for the assignment. If you have any questions about what is acceptable, please ask.

Class Schedule:

Week 1:

Please see attached copy of syllabus for topics for each class meeting.

AIU ACADEMIC DISHONESTY POLICY

Acts of Academic Dishonesty: In accord with AIU policies and good practices in higher education, acts of academic dishonesty such as plagiarism, cheating, forgery (on a paper, examination, test, or other assignment) will result in the failure of the course at a minimum. An act of academic dishonesty during the final examination or assignment in lieu of the final examination will result in failure of all courses registered in the relevant academic term. Cases of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Dean of Academic Affairs for relevant action.

AKITA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

INT 250 : Comparative Philosophy

Professor: Dr. Don Nilson

Fall, 2014

Style of Class: Lecture & Discussion

Credits: 3

Course Description: This course is an exploration of several key philosophical issues and concepts in the contexts of several distinct cultures, past and present, by investigating the intellectual or cultural background to the philosophers and issues studied. Themes for the course : knowledge and rationality; alternative understandings of what is real and the question of cultural relativism ; mind and selfhood ; concepts of the good and the ideal society; human responsibility; the role and appreciation of works of art. Examples of themes investigated in recent semesters : experience, self & personal identity in Descartes, Locke and Indian philosophers; the concept of the Good in Ancient Greek and Chinese philosophies; nihilism as interpreted in the work of Western philosophers such as Nietzsche, and in the philosophy of Nishitani Keiji; other themes in the Kyoto School of Philosophy (Nishida and Nishitani) in relation to key Western philosophers ; alternative views on the relation of philosophy and religion to creative expression in music; interpretations (old and new) of Dogen Zenji's understanding of meditation and thinking; differences between Japanese and Western arts; concepts used in East & West about our responsibility for nature and environmental problems.

About Studying Philosophy in a Global Context: In this course we seek a better understanding of key philosophical issues as they appear today in a global context and as ever-more-profoundly affected by diverse cultural influences. Careful reading and research are elements essential to gaining such understanding. The readings for the course are university-level readings, and generally speaking, university-level readings are most often a bit difficult. But we approach the process of close-reading in a structured way, looking for the writers' reasoning and responding to that reasoning. *Speaking personally, I truly hope you will come to see the value of, and to enjoy the study of, philosophy as presented via this course. I believe that that the kind of understanding we seek is vital for global culture today and for us as individual citizens .*

Course Objectives & General Content:

- In this course, through the comparative studies we undertake, students will develop an appreciation and understanding of several major philosophical issues as they appear in several distinct cultural settings . And they will enhance their skills in critically and thoughtfully responding to such issues.
- Students will learn ways to uncover similarities and differences between different

cultures and ultimately this means comparing views of the world, with special reference to philosophical and religious perspectives.

- Students will develop careful, thorough, and precise ways of reading works in philosophy with attention to making clear comparisons between philosophers & philosophies. But the course aims for general understanding and so, is not only for students specializing in philosophy.
- Students will improve their logical and critical skills. They will come to see how arguments can be criticized and thus can come to be better understood.
- Students will come to see how the comparative study of philosophy can enrich their understanding of philosophies, religions and other aspects of various cultures as well.

Class Materials:

1. Required Textbook : Thomas P. Kasulis - Intimacy or Integrity. Philosophy and Cultural Difference. (Honolulu : University of Hawai'i Press, 2002.)
2. Recommended Textbook : Hee-Jin Kim - Dogen on Meditation and Thinking: a Reflection on his View of Zen. (New York: State University of NY Press, 2007.)
3. Selected short readings will be available for you to make your own photocopies. Handouts, such as question sets, charts and outlines, as well as other readings, will be made available during the course.
4. Usual reading assignments from the above (see 1, 2 & 3) will be approximately 20 pages per class.
- 5 We will use some video and audio recordings to enhance our understanding of various themes studied. And there will also be group presentations by class members.
6. We will use some on-line resources in philosophy.

Methods of Evaluation and Grading:

Evaluation will be made on the basis of exams, 2 short papers, homework, class participation and presentations. These are:

- 1) Exams: There will be a mid-semester exam and a final exam consisting of multiple choice, short-answer and essay questions. Each exam counts as 25% of the final grade, but the final exam grade may count more if you do especially well on the final exam.
- 2) Papers : Students will write two short papers for the course. These will be critically and logically structured papers prepared following detailed instructions that will be provided separately. These papers will count for a total of 20%. Papers must be turned in on time.
- 3) Homework, Class Participation and Presentations: You are expected to attend and fully participate in *each* class, to do all readings in preparation for each class and all assigned homework on time . You are expected to be prepared for each class and especially for in-class discussions or presentations that you will do. We will do

some short in-class group presentations on various topics.' We plan to make two joint seminar meetings with a similar class being offered at Akita University during their Fall Semester. These meetings may also include interaction with a Buddhist priest (TBA) who will share his ideas about the various interpretations of Dogen texts. Together, all of these parts of the course will count for 30% of your grade.

Policies :

Attendance and participation : All students are expected to attend and participate in all classes and complete all assigned work for the course on time. (See above also.)

Plagiarism or cheating : In accord with AIU policies and good practices in higher education, plagiarism or cheating on a paper, examination, test, or other assignment will result in the failure on that assignment as a minimum. Cases of plagiarism or cheating will be reported to the Dean of Academic Affairs for relevant action.

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Cheating is making use of any assistance on an examination, paper, assignment or other class project beyond what has been authorized by the instructor for the assignment. If you have any questions about what is acceptable, please ask.

Preparation : This is a course mainly for beginners : no prior background or courses in philosophy are required. A sincere interest in learning about the place of philosophy in human cultures is expected.

TOPICS BY WEEK OF SEMESTER

1. Understanding the aims of philosophy.
2. Introduction to the relationships between philosophical orientation and culture. Seeing patterns by way of culture. Two philosophical orientations found in several distinct cultures: Integrity Orientation and Intimacy Orientation. Core ideas and examples. Seeing and understanding from different perspectives. More aspects of the Intimacy Orientation. External vs. internal relations.
3. The Integrity Orientation. Integrity and external relations. Examples from Western philosophy.
4. Intimacy and Integrity orientations as worldviews. Fundamental differences
Intimacy and Integrity orientations in relation to knowledge, reasoning and concepts of what is real. Ideas about relations of language to the world. Examples: Concepts of substance and essence in Descartes, Locke and Indian philosophers. Concepts of self.
5. Intimacy and Integrity orientations and normative questions. Exploring moral questions and ethical systems. Right and wrong. What is the basis of values? How do we understand and evaluate art works. Aesthetic questions viewed from a European perspective and from an Asian perspective. Examples and in-class presentations.
6. Intercultural conflicts understood from Integrity and Intimacy orientations. Examples.
Use of these orientations in comparing philosophies.
The concept of the Good and the real in Ancient Greek and in Chinese philosophies.
7. The problem of Nihilism. Our contemporary world and the problem of Nihilism.
Understanding Nihilism as investigated by Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and others.
**Video on Nietzsche's philosophy.
8. Nietzsche's affirmative nihilism. Nietzsche and the criticism of the traditional understanding of *values*.

Review / Mid-term Exam

9. Concepts of the Self: Self & world in Western philosophy & in Indian philosophy.
Concepts and Practices of the Self, Meditation and Thinking as seen in Buddhist Philosophy.
Dogen as a Buddhist Philosopher
10. Existentialism and the philosophy of Martin Heidegger. Heidegger's interpretation of Nietzsche and nihilism. Heidegger on the history of Western understanding of what is real.
11. Freedom and Nature in Japanese and Western contexts. The Kyoto School of Philosophy.
Nishitani on Nietzsche. Western contributions to dialogue with the Kyoto School.
12. Philosophy of Dogen Zenji I.
13. Philosophy of Dogen Zenji II.
14. Is there a relationship between the environmental crisis we face today and the problem of nihilism? Concepts used in East & West about our responsibility for nature and environmental problems. Perspectives on the environmental crisis from Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess and from Buddhist philosophers.
15. Summary & review / Final Exam

INF260-1 Information Science (2008 curriculum) (3 credits)

Marcin SCHROEDER

Year: 2014

Semester: Fall

Meeting-time/day: M, W 17:30-18:45

Office: A-3-7

Office Hours: TBA

E-mail: mjs@aiu.ac.jp

Website:

Course Description:

The course introduces students into the concepts and methods of information study, analysis, and management, and acquaints them with a wide range of information related issues in a variety of contexts, including the cultural and social role of information. The introduction into the concepts and methods of information science will provide a solid foundation for the more advanced future study in many possible areas of applications. The skills developed in the course together with the acquired conceptual framework will allow students to comprehend the literature of the disciplines in which information plays the central role (e.g. artificial intelligence, complexity, neuro-psychology, genetics, etc.) Classroom activities and discussions will give students an opportunity to test their competency in information analysis and to deepen their understanding of the subject. The course emphasizes an integrative role of information science in the study of various manifestations of information across a wide range of disciplines.

Objectives:

The objectives of this course can be viewed from the two perspectives. Since it is a course about information, one of its objectives is to introduce students into the new discipline of information science. This means, upon successful completion of the course, students will acquire the conceptual framework of information studies including the concept of information with its diverse meanings, the concepts of information processing, communication, computation, measures of information, etc. They will learn the rudiments of the methods used in studying phenomena and processes involving information in the disciplines such as theoretical computer science, artificial intelligence, psychology or cognitive science, sociology of information, economics of information, etc. The course has also objectives going beyond the subject matter. Since information has multiple manifestations in practically all domains of human intellectual or practical activities, the course presents the unified view of the central concept of information in the multiple contexts of its applications. Thus, in the second perspective, crucial for the Liberal Arts education, the course is intended as a demonstration of the unity of intellectual inquiry across the physical sciences, social sciences, psychology, and humanities. Students should acquire this view of intellectual inquiry, and should be able to search for this unified perspective in their studies of other themes.

Expected Academic Background:

There is no expected academic work at the college level preparing for the course. Although there will be frequent reference to the basic knowledge of several disciplines such as biology, history, psychology, computer science, physics, each time instructor will make an introduction reviewing the high school knowledge necessary for understanding. Genuine interest in the matters related to information and willingness to participate in the discussion of these matters will be of higher importance than the prior academic preparation.

Textbook:

Information Science is a new discipline in the process of consolidation from the interdisciplinary studies with diverse methods and interests. There is no textbook which could meet the demands of the course. Instructor will prepare materials for classes either in the form of handouts, or in the form of information regarding appropriate sites on the internet.

Reference Books/Other Study Materials:

For each topic studied in this course, there are extensive literature resources with different levels of difficulty and different levels of necessary preparation. In the following there is a short list of readings which are easily comprehensible without any specific prior preparation and which are related to the content of classes. The mandatory readings will be announced and/or distributed in the classroom. Please ask the instructor about more advanced texts regarding topics of special interest for you, if you want to expand your knowledge beyond the requirements of the course. The following is a sample of books which develop the themes of the course, but which are optional.

Tom Siegfried " The Bit and the Pendulum." Wiley, New York, 2000.

John R. Pierce " An Introduction to Information Theory: Symbols, Signals and Noise." 2nd rev. ed. Dover, New York, 1980.

Simon Singh " The Cracking Codebook." Harper Collins, London, 2004.

Arne Dietrich " Introduction to Consciousness." Pallgrave Macmillan, New York, 2007.

Gary Marcus " The Birth of the Mind." Basic Books, New York, 2004.

Roger Penrose " The Emperor' s New Mind." Penguin, New York, 1991.

Roger Penrose " Shadows of the Mind." Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1994.

Wolfgang Hofkirchner (Ed.) " The Quest for a Unified Theory of Information." Gordon and Breach, Amsterdam, 1999.

Roger R. Flynn " An Introduction to Information Science." Marcel Dekker, New York, 2000.

Assessment:

Student achievement of the course objectives is being measured in terms of student performance on the midterm test (25% ,) through the evaluation of homework assignments (25%) a major written assignment (25%) and its presentation in the class (25%).

Policies & Remarks:

Acts of cheating or other forms academic dishonesty will be dealt with harshly. Students

may work together on their assignments or preparation for classes, but every student must prepare individually and without help of others his/her assignments. Attendance in all classes is mandatory, whether it is being checked by instructor, or not. It is student's responsibility to submit all assignments by the announced deadlines.

Class Schedule:

Week 1:

Introduction

- Explanation of the expectations from the side of the instructor and from the side of students.
- Review and modification of the course plan based on the interests of students.
- What is information? Why is it so difficult to answer this question?
- Search for diverse manifestations of information across the academic disciplines and in everyday experience.
- The relationship of the concept of information to other concepts such as knowledge, communication, etc.

Week 2:

- The beginnings of information/communication studies: From Morse to Shannon.
- How to measure transfer of information?
- From the telegraph to the limits of human perception.
- The Magical Number Seven (Plus Minus Two).

Week 3:

Other Origins: Cryptography

- Codes and ciphers.
- Deciphering forgotten scripts.
- How to hide a message?
- How to send a message?
- The telegraphic message which involved the US in a world war.
- Enigma
- The case of Phil Zimmermann. What is more important: privacy of citizens or effective control of criminal activities?

Week 4:

Language, Logic, and Information

- Signs and symbols.
- What is logic?
- Semiotics and its subdisciplines.
- Boolean algebras and logic as calculation.

Week 5:

Computers and Computer Information Processing

- What is actually computer doing?

- History of computation from the abacus to Microsoft.
- Analog and digital information.
- Turing machines.
- Computer architecture and design.

Week 6:

Biological Information Systems – Genetics

- DNA, double helix, and the inherited information
- Evolution
- From “ monkey trial” to “ Kitzmiller vs. Dover”
- Emergence

Week 7:

Biological Information Systems – Information networks in a living organism

- Neural and hormonal transmission of information
- Neurons, synapses, microtubules
- Human brain
- The mechanisms of sensory perception

Week 8:

Review and Midterm Examination

Week 9:

Consciousness and AI

- What does it mean “ thinking” ?
- Can machine think?
- Models of cognitive processes.
- Artificial neural networks

Week 10:

Information is physical

- The Second Law of Thermodynamics
- Entropy
- Maxwell’ s Demon.
- Humans as “ informavores.”
- Solar battery for the eco-system.
- Can computer work without a source of energy?
- Quantum computer.

Week 11:

Culture and Information

- Cultural differences in information processing.
- Information society.
- Marshall McLuhan’ s “ global village” .
- Social information networks.

-The Internet.

Week 12:

Information perspective on Art and Music

- Alternative view of information.
- Integration of information.
- Information and aesthetics.
- “ Random ” music.

Week 13:

Discussion: Search for connections between different forms of information

Week 14:

Presentations of papers by students

Week 15:

Work on the final version of the paper

NOTE:

Generally, class sessions have format of lectures with frequent interactions between the instructor and students in form of questions and answers, with some regularly scheduled time for discussion in which all students are expected to participate. Students will have an opportunity to influence the proportion of time allocated for the topics considered in the course by asking questions regarding the issues of special interest for them.

In the second part of the course, each student will select a topic for his or her own study going beyond what was done in the class (with approval and advice of the instructor). Based on this study, he or she will write a paper and will make a short presentation of this paper in the class. Instructor will explain his expectations regarding the size, format, and style of the paper. The general rule is that the volume of the paper is of secondary importance. Even short, but informative and interestingly written paper can get high evaluation, while a long paper inflated by multiple quotations, but without student's own analysis or other significant contributions may get lower grade.

After each class, students are asked to write a conspectus summarizing the content of the class with the focus on the definitions or descriptions of the concepts introduced, main questions asked and answers given to these questions. Although these entries to the journal will not be evaluated by the instructor, they will be of great value for students in their preparation for the next class.

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