

UC Course Certification Proposal  
MIRA COSTA HIGH SCHOOL  
[For 2015-2016 Master Schedule Consideration]

<i>School Information</i>
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Stacy Cabrera, <i>English Teacher</i> 310-318-7337 x5200 <a href="mailto:scabrera@mbusd.org">scabrera@mbusd.org</a> <a href="http://philinlit.weebly.com">http://philinlit.weebly.com</a>
<i>Introduction</i>
<p>Course Title: Senior Seminar, Philosophy in Literature  Transcript Title: English 12, Philosophy in Literature  Transcript Course Code: _____  Seeking Honors Distinction: No  Subject Area: English  Unit Value: 0.5 (semester equivalent, half year)  Previously Approved: No  Online Learning: No  Career Technical Education: No</p> <p>Course Description:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Philosophy in Literature will explore Western literature's use of philosophical traditions in order to advance personal thoughts, opinions, and perspectives. Students will be introduced to broad themes in World literature, including various responses to questions regarding the nature of identity, belief, choice, and living. Units are divided thematically, and so chronology will be alluded to (though not strictly followed), so as to provide historical context. Philosophical works will be paired to literary texts in order to give a holistic, diverse set of answers to central questions such as "What is the nature of existence?" "Who am I?" "Am I free?" and "How do I live?" Students will be asked to develop ways of thinking philosophically through critical analysis of primary and secondary sources in both the literary and philosophical traditions, while also synthesizing the way in which the history of Western thought correlates with major movements in artistic periods. In this course students should expect to actively <i>do</i> philosophy, involving more than just reading for understanding. Students will engage in critical thinking, class and small-group discussion, written expressions and responses to each other's papers, and topic-generated research papers.</p> <p>Prerequisites: English 11CP or equivalent</p>
<i>Textbooks</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Historical Introduction to Philosophy</i>  Edition: Fifth, paperback  Publication Date: 2005  Publisher: Pearson  ISBN: 978-0131900059  Author(s): Hakim, Albert B.  Usage: primary text, read in entirety or near entirety</li> </ol>

<p>2. <i>Out of the Silent Planet</i>  Edition: paperback  Publication Date: 2003  Publisher: Scribner  ISBN: 978-0743234900  Author(s): Lewis, C.S.  Usage: primary text, read in entirety or near entirety</p> <p>3. <i>Heart of Darkness and the Secret Sharer</i>  Edition: paperback  Publication Date: 2013  Publisher: Stonewell Press  ISBN: 978-1627300179  Author(s): Conrad, Joseph  Usage: primary text, read in entirety or near entirety</p> <p>4. <i>The Stranger</i>  Edition: hardback  Publication Date: 1989  Publisher: Random House  ISBN: 978-0812416695  Author(s): Camus, Albert  Usage: primary text, read in entirety or near entirety</p> <p>5. <i>Point Counter Point</i>  Edition: paperback  Publication Date: 1996  Publisher: Dalkey Archive Press  ISBN: 978-156781314  Author(s): Huxley, Aldous  Usage: primary text, read in entirety or near entirety</p>
<i>Supplemental Instructional Materials</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Asimov, Isaac. "The Last Question." Short story.</li> <li>Atwood, Margaret. <i>A Handmaid's Tale</i>. Novel, independent reading choice.</li> <li>Beckett, Samuel. <i>Waiting for Godot</i>. Drama, independent reading choice.</li> <li>Dostoevsky, Fyodor. <i>Crime and Punishment</i>. Novel, independent reading choice.</li> <li>Hesse, Hermann. <i>Siddhartha</i>. Novel, independent reading choice.</li> <li>Huxley, Aldous. <i>Island</i>. Novel, independent reading choice.</li> <li>Kafka, Franz. <i>Metamorphosis</i>. Novella, independent reading choice.</li> <li>Nabokov, Vladimir. <i>Lolita</i>. Novel, independent reading choice.</li> <li>Sartre, Jean-Paul. <i>No Exit</i>. Drama, independent reading choice.</li> <li>Sartre, Jean-Paul. "The Myth of Sisyphus," essay.</li> <li>Thoreau, Henry David. <i>Walden</i>. Treatise, independent reading choice.</li> <li>Tolkien, J.R.R. <i>The Fellowship of the Ring</i>. Novel, independent reading choice.</li> <li>Voltaire. <i>Candide</i>. Novella, independent reading choice.</li> <li>Vonnegut, Kurt. <i>Slaughterhouse-Five</i>. Novel, independent reading choice.</li> <li>Woolf, Virginia. <i>To a Lighthouse</i>. Novel, independent reading choice.</li> <li>Selections of short stories and poetry (to be determined as needed).</li> </ol> <p>**other stories, essays, and excerpts found within the <i>Historical Introduction to Philosophy</i> textbook.</p>
<i>Course Purpose</i>
<p>The purpose of this course is to serve as a college preparatory grade 12 English semester seminar, in which students are exposed to a specific, thematic, and philosophical approach to reading literature. In the class, students will be confronted with philosophical themes and questions, and will be exposed to various schools of thought and the expression of those thoughts through artistic, cultural, philosophical, and academic avenues. Ultimately, the goal is</p>

to broaden students' understandings of the reasoning behind authors' contextual and stylistic choices, while also providing a connection to the history of thought and the movement of philosophical ideas throughout various cultures – with specific emphasis on Western philosophy. The course will address the goals of the English requirement in the following manner:

*1. They are well-informed, thoughtful, and creative readers, writers, listeners, and thinkers*

Prior to this course, most English students through grades 9-11 curricula are little exposed to the expository nature of philosophical text. This course will give students an introduction to this style of writing, forcing them to grapple with different types of text, new modes of expression, new forms of thought, and more difficult and specific academic vocabulary. This class is also designed at its very core to be one of 'synthesis' – philosophical texts are paired to similar literary texts, a style with which students are far more familiar (narratives). As students complete the course, they will have the opportunity to question, develop, and evaluate their own personal views of the world, as will be represented in their exposures to the texts, their use of the text in general class and small group discussions, and further developed in the three major writing assignments they will complete over the course of the semester.

*2. They understand the ethical dimension of academic life.*

Research is a major component of the course expectations for this class. Students will complete three major writing assignments, two of which will have topics which are self-driven, and one of which will be a direct response paper to the writings of a designated class member. Thus, students will be instructed in proper research and writing techniques, academic formatting and citation, and formal academic protocol in tactful verbal and written discussion. Ethics – in a metaphysical sense – is also approached in class from the standpoint of its historical context within the nature of philosophical thought, and so will be a major thematic issue driving the course content as well.

*3. They comprehend and evaluate complex texts across a range of types and disciplines.*

With regards to students' use of the *Historical Introduction to Philosophy* alone, students will be exposed to writers from a multitude of time periods and cultural backgrounds – ranging from the ancient Greek Classicists to French, German, and English philosophers - as well as those whose writing emphasize topics from scientific perspectives, religions, to gender issues and political perspectives. This multiplicity of writings will be compared to, and coupled with, a variety of different narratives, including works of Russian Romantics to American Science-Fiction and Fantasy, covering a broad spectrum of styles, interests, and ideas.

*4. They respond to varying demands of audience, task, purpose, genre, and discipline*

Writing assignments, as well as formal and informal discussions alike (in the form of class discussions, small groups discussions, and more formal activities such as 'Socratic Seminars'), are developed in such a way as to engage students in different academic settings. Various lengths of papers – everything from one-page summaries, to ten to twelve page research papers – will give students varying degrees of academic writing and genre. The nature of the course also provides a synthesis of two specific disciplines – philosophy on the one hand and literature on the other – so as to give students a multitude of genres and expressions, particularly as utilized by the literary authors and the motives behind their textual choices. Audience will range from the teacher, to the academic community at large, to peers in their specific class-environment, or even their school community as a whole.

*5. They value evidence.*

Not only will students be exposed to a variety of different answers throughout history to the same basic questions as outlined above in the course description, students will be generating their own responses and interacting with a variety of responses to those same questions as generated by their immediate peers. In order to support positions – as understood by the writers of the philosophical and literary texts alike, as well as in their own oral and written arguments – students must be acquainted with the use of academic evidence in the form of textual citations. This will be utilized largely in discussions and much more formally in written submissions. Historical context will be crucial to understanding point of view, as will cultural background and heritage, as will be taught alongside each writer (both philosophical and literary) and will play an important role in students' own responses when asked to 'do' their own philosophy (e.g. when asked to support their own perspectives as derivative of their personal experiences). By the end of the semester, students will be able to understand and analyze philosophical perspectives of the four major topics of the class (as outlined in the course description above), and analyze the way in which literary authors utilize and expose those arguments in their narratives; ultimately, the end-goal is to provide students with the knowledge and capacity for actively engaging in philosophical discourse in such a way as to actively do philosophy versus passively reading or absorbing it.

*6. They use technology and digital media strategically and capably.*

As part of the research process, students will become acquainted and versed at the use of internet resources for academic research – specifically in the use of academic websites and journals – but will also become acquainted with the way technology allows for human discourse of philosophical topics on a much more consistent and personal

basis; this will become apparent through assignments which call for the creation and upkeep of student blog-rings, as well as the dissemination and utilization of social media for philosophical reflection and dialogue, in a variety of platforms which include text as well as graphic.

7. *They demonstrate independence.*

Discussion, reflection, and questioning of students' own personal philosophies will be relied upon heavily in this course – much of the direction students take in responding to and writing about the various pieces to which they will be exposed will rely upon self-generated topics of interest. Students will be led through dense literature – both expository and literary – in such a way as to provide foundational understanding, but will also allow for personal insight, creativity, and open-mindedness. Students are encouraged to look at a variety of perspectives, *especially* those to which the student might be initially averse, thus providing the student with the means for questioning and ultimately strengthening their current philosophical assumptions about the world, or developing new interpretations.

### Course Outline

#### Unit 1: The Nature of Belief

Essential Question(s): What is Real? What is Existence?

Purpose: to expose students to the basics of the metaphysical branch of philosophical discourse; students will begin questioning and analyzing the nature of time, space, purposeful existence, meaning, and the nature of the 'beyond'

Topics Addressed:

- Historical timeline of philosophical discourse, including major thinkers, movements, and shifting of emphasis and question
- Basic metaphysical systems, ranging from the Classical Forms (Plato), the modern 'cogito, ergo sum' (Descartes) and Categories (Kant), through post-modernism (Heidegger) and Deconstructionism (Derrida)
- Application of metaphysical approaches to the development and deviation of cultures, language, and community perspectives
- The nature of the Divine, Creation, and God – as well as alternative approaches (scientifically, atheistic and agnostic responses)

Possible Philosophical Text(s):

- Selections from Plato, *Phaedo*, *Timaeus* and *Politeia* (the divided line), "The Doctrine of the Forms"
- Selections from Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, "On the Soul"
- St. Anselm's *Ontological Argument for the Existence of God*
- Selections from Descartes' *Discourse on Method*
- Selections from Leibniz's *Monadology*
- Selections from Hume's *Essays Concerning Human Understanding*, "on Cause-Effect"
- Selections from Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*
- Selections from Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, on "God is Dead"

Possible Literary Text(s):

- C.S. Lewis, *Out of the Silent Planet*
- Isaac Asimov, "The Last Question"
- Selections of other short stories and poetry, for supplement

#### Unit 2: The Question of Identity

Essential Question(s): Who am I? Who do I Know what I Know?

Purpose: to introduce students to various forms of epistemology, with particular emphasis on the empirical and non-empirical understandings of the subjective 'I'; students will question the identity of characters in the coupled texts, which should ultimately lead to personal reflections of their own identities

Topics Addressed:

- Knowledge of the external (objective) world versus knowledge of the perceiving subjective self
- Empirical reality versus knowledge of the non-empirical
- Knowledge's role in subject's identity
- The failings of pure sense-perception, and the limitations of human understanding in space/time

Possible Philosophical Text(s):

- Plato's "Allegory of the Cave"
- Selections from Descartes' *Discourse on Method*, on "Mind-Body distinction"

- Selections from Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*
- Selections from Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, on the "Dialectical" process
- Selections from Kierkegaard's *Concluding Unscientific Postscripts*
- Selections from Heidegger's *Being and Time*, on Being in the World versus Dasein

Possible Literary Text(s):

- Joseph Conrad, *The Secret Sharer*

### *Unit 3: Of Individual Will and Choice*

Essential Question(s): Am I Free? Does Anything Have Meaning?

Purpose: to develop students' awareness of the balance between choice and responsibility and deterministic fate; students will become acquainted with deterministic views as found in religious philosophies, and compare with more free-will driven philosophies as found in the Existential and Absurdist movements, ultimately aiming to find balance to their own ideas of personal freedoms and liberties (may also include discussion of more psychological approaches, like Freudian psychoanalysis and Skinner's behaviorism)

Topics Addressed:

- Hard and soft Determinism, especially in religious approaches to the question of choice
- Freedom and Absolute Free-will, as found in the Theistic and Atheistic movements of Existentialism, and Absurdist, Nihilist philosophies
- Psychology's approaches to the freedom versus determinism debate, including thinkers such as Freud, Jung, and Skinner
- Defining evil
- Systemic responses – personal and political – to the free-will debate
- The way in which choices and 'fate' or 'chance' play a role in the outcomes of decisions, a person's experiences, traits, and personality, and the way in which these elements balance to create a narrative of one's life (in a more individualistic, personal setting)

Possible Philosophical Text(s):

- Selections from Epictetus, on "Stoicism"
- St. Augustine, "The Problem of Human Freedom"
- Selections from Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling*
- Sartre, "The Meaning of Existentialism," and selections from *Being and Nothingness*; "The Myth of Sisyphus"
- Selections from C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* on the "Problem of Pain"

Possible Literary Text(s):

- Albert Camus, *The Stranger*

### *Unit 4: On Proper Living*

Essential Question(s): How do I apply my perspectives to my choices? How do I live consistently? What do I live for? How do I give my life meaning?

Purpose: to expose students to the final two major branches of philosophy – ethics and aesthetics; students will receive instructions in various ethical systems, as then applied on micro-scale (in personal decisions) and ultimately to macro-scale (political systems); ultimately, students will be asked to challenge the nature of their own existences, take a look at and reflect upon their own systems and choices, and support or change their current lifestyles in order to align their beliefs to their actions

Topics Addressed:

- Ethical systems, ranging from objective to subjective, Ontologically-based, Consequentialism, or Utility
- Aesthetic discussions of the nature of Love, Beauty, Truth, and True Happiness (and to which aesthetic aim should one direct one's life)
- Consistency of belief both in theoretical thought and in practical application to living, and proper balance

Possible Philosophical Texts:

- Selections from Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*
- Selections from Epicurus, letters on "Hedonism"
- Selections from Aquinas, *summa theologiae*, on "The Unity of Man" and "Happiness"

- Kant's "Categorical Imperative" from the *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*
- Mill's *Utilitarianism*
- Selections from Marx's "On the Alienation of Man" from *Economic and Philosophical Manuscript*
- William James, on "Pragmatism"

Possible Literary Text(s):

- Aldous Huxley, *Point Counter Point*

### *Key Assignments*

#### *Phil-in-Lit Blog-Ring: Individual Reflection "Blogs"*

At the beginning of the semester, students will create personal online blogs, or journals, which they will update weekly. These blogs will be compiled into a class 'blog-ring' which other students in class will be able to read and respond to (some of which will be required). Each week, students will be given a prompt upon which to reflect – both academically (using the assigned readings for that week) as well as personally (utilizing their own experiences, thoughts, and opinions). They may also, on occasion, be required to respond to a classmate's postings, in efforts to create dialogue outside of the classroom as well. Word-minimum and maximum requirements will be given individually depending upon the prompts for the given week. Prompts may on occasion be self-generated, writing prompts based on the reading, or reflection questions prompted by in-class discussions, and will also incorporate aspects of students' independent reading novel choices as the semester progresses.

#### *Philosophical One-Pagers*

The four units of the class are divided by major philosophical and thematic questions (see outline above). Each unit incorporates a range of philosophical readings. Students will be expected to complete all required (and suggested) readings, several of which will be discussed in detail in class. To help students process and understand the reading, as well as provide them with preparation for class discussion, students will complete 'philosophical one-pagers' for selected readings, as scheduled (generally the larger philosophical readings). These assignments will be one-page responses in proper format, 1.5 spacing, and will ask students simply to summarize the philosophical texts as assigned, which will be submitted the day of discussion of that specific text.

#### *"Midterm" Short Papers*

Throughout the semester (though not necessarily right at the midterm) students will produce short 3-page papers specifically addressing one of the four basic thematic questions of the semester: "What is the nature of existence?" "Who am I?" "Am I free?" and "How do I live?" These short papers will essentially allow students to take a more specific, (mostly) self-generated question relating to the overall topic, and elaborate upon a possible, personal response. Students will be required to synthesize the philosophical texts as well as the literary texts in addressing their self-generated responses. Due dates will be staggered throughout the semester, so that students will emphasize different aspects of the reading and/or the class content. Students will do a 'seminar reading' of their papers, and will be expected to know the content well enough to be able to answer questions from both the class and the teacher at the end of their reading. Papers will be graded by philosophical and literary content, depth of insight and analysis, format and language, and speaking and answering questions as discussion in class. The expectation of the assignment is to give students a starting point for their larger research papers at the end of the semester. In order to expand upon the same level of creativity utilized by the literary writers being highlighted in the course, students may choose to format this paper as a 3-page research-style paper, a 3-page dialogue between author(s) and/or philosopher(s) as read in class and understood by the student regarding the topic in discussion at the time of the due date, or a more creative work such as an extended poem or short story utilizing similar stylistic techniques or philosophical systems as being studied at the time of the assignment. More creative choices, as always, need to show high level of depth and understanding; students will be expected to give commentary at the culmination of reading the primary work to class, so as to explain the techniques being used and the choices in philosophical content as implicit in the piece's construction.

#### *Response Papers*

Response papers will be completed in conjunction with the 'midterm' short papers. Students will be paired in such a way that one student will complete the 3-page short paper, and will submit their paper three days before the in-class due date to their peer. The peer will then read, critically examine, and then create his or her own one-page response to the individual's short paper. This one-page response should give a short explication of the 3-page paper (in a short introductory paragraph), should evaluate the paper's argument, and then further expand upon a question, concern, or

logical error or conclusion drawn from the short paper. This will also be presented in class, at the conclusion of the seminar reading of the 3-page short paper. Student completing the accompanying one-page response paper should also expect to answer questions in class from both students and teacher. Papers will be graded by philosophical and literary content, depth of insight and analysis, format and language, and speaking and answering questions as discussion in class.

#### *Socratic Seminar*

At the end of the semester, students will complete a Socratic seminar – a formalized student-led discussion – for the class finals period. The seminar will take an overall discussion topic, which will be based on the semester’s progress over the four philosophical themes/questions: “What is Real?” “Who am I and how do I know things?” “Am I Free?” and “How should I live?” Students will receive preparation information, and will be asked to generate multi-leveled (i.e. contextual, analytic, and evaluative) discussion questions and comments based on semester required texts and writings, supplemental materials, etc. They will bring preparation materials to class the day of the final. They will then be divided into groups – the first group will take seats in the middle circle of the room, which will be the ‘hot seats.’ The rest will be situated in an outer circle. Those in the outer circle will be paired to members in the inner circle, whom they will observe, critique, and grade for the duration of the first-half of the exercise. Students in the inner circle will begin the discussion, utilizing their prepared questions and comments. At the half-way point, students will switch roles so that all will be engaged in the full experience of the seminar. Students will be graded on preparation work, active participation, level of insight, listening skills, and understanding. The Socratic Seminar – both in preparation and in active practice – must also incorporate and showcase students’ independent reading novel choices in some major way.

#### *Major Research Paper*

At the end of the semester, students will craft an 8-10 page research paper responding to a self-generated topic regarding any of the major themes and philosophical questions pursued in the course. They are encouraged to focus on a specific, detailed aspect of one of the literary texts, and the way in which it utilizes one or several of the ideas presented by the philosophical works read in the semester. Students will engage in active research, using library and internet resources, author biographies, critical and analytic commentaries, etc. Papers must have a clearly-stated thesis, and must aim to reach conclusions tied to the issues raised and the thesis that is proposed. Students will be guided through the process of researching and crafting a paper of extended length, and process will be emphasized as well as the final product, and may be integrated to many of the above assignments as well (e.g. reflections about the process on the students’ blogs, use of the short papers as ‘stepping stones’ or prewriting in the creation of the longer work, etc. Thesis proposals and guidance in solidifying specific and detailed topics will be specifically emphasized.

### *Instructional Methods/Strategies*

#### *Engaging the Texts*

Much of the reading will be done on an individual basis, as part of ‘homework’ assignments. This is especially true of the literary texts, though some philosophical texts may be read at home as well. Due to the nature of difficulty surrounding several of the philosophical texts, however, students will be lead – in class – through segments which may be problematic, which the teacher will discuss and lecture on in advance. This is why the philosophical one-pagers (addressed above) will be crucial for students’ understandings of the works, and also prepare them for discussions as well.

#### *Philosophical and Literary Response and Reflection*

Written expression will be a major tool for not only assessment, but also for generating student thought and expression. Much of the class is student-centered, in that the direction of thinking and the way in which texts will be engaged is generated by student interest. Questions that are raised in the reading will become central to class discussion and will likely color the written response individuals in class produce for their assignments.

#### *Technology*

The blog-ring will serve as a way for students to connect to each other, to the teacher, and hopefully to the wider philosophical world. Students will be required to create their own blogs – and manipulate their individual sites to fit their own personalities and interests – and use them to comment on each other’s thoughts outside of the classroom, bringing dialogue to a more expanded platform. Students will also be directed toward articles and blogs of other thinkers in the philosophical tradition, and will be expected to comment and engage in dialogue.

Students will also engage in the research process using not only tradition library medias but also internet sources, academic journals, and library databases as means of producing synthesized, evaluative papers.

#### *Academic Tradition*

Students will have the opportunity to engage deeper in the academic tradition through guest speakers, observation of philosophical presentations and conferences, the possibility of publishing (a work in progress through partnerships with the school's Young Philosophers Society, which is in process of forging partnerships with professional non-profit organizations within the philosophical tradition) as well as – eventually – the presentation of their works not just in class in a less formal setting (with the aim to mimic the collegiate and professional-level conferences) but in a district, local, state, or national-wide Youth Philosophy Conference (again, in process with partnerships within Young Philosophers Society). These may/may not become requirements in the future of the program, but will for the time being be options for furthering interest and experience.

#### *Balanced Lecture and Discussion*

As students will be relatively new to philosophy, this course will be designed to give students a primary overview of the movements and traditions in thought, while connecting it to the literary traditions of which many students are already masters. Lecture will serve to supplement any areas in which students are unfamiliar, and provide contextual foundations for understanding the synthesis of both disciplines. The emphasis of the class will be placed much more heavily on collaborative discussion, on which students will be graded for participation, and so measures are taken in order to prepare students for meaningful, insightful, deep discussion on a personal and academic level.

#### *Collaboration*

Not only will students be working together informally through in-class discussions and online weblog exchanges, the short papers and response papers engage peers in dialogue in a more formalized way. They will also present these responses in conjunction with each other, and will be able to collaboratively work toward answers in the formal discussion questions generated by the teacher and the rest of the class in response to their written work(s). They will also work collectively as an entire class to explicate the final discussion question(s) posed to them during the final Socratic Seminar.

### *Assessment Methods/Tools*

#### *Group Discussion/Participation*

Students will receive credit for actively listening and participating in discussion, both formal and informal. They will also be assessed as to their responses on in-class activities, any quizzes or tests as assigned for comprehension of literary and philosophical texts/concepts, and homework/reading supplemental materials, and weblog maintenance and participation. This category will compose 10% of the final class grade.

#### *Philosophical One-pagers*

Students will be assigned these one-pagers throughout the semester in conjunction with specific philosophical readings – particularly those which connect most fully with the literary works to which they have been paired. These will assess students' comprehension and basic analysis of the philosophical texts in question. The lowest grade at the end of the semester will be dropped. This category will compose 15% of the final class grade.

#### *Midterm Short Papers/Response Papers*

Students will be assigned staggered due dates throughout the semester so that the class will benefit from different 'experts' (and being experts) on aspects of the curriculum. These assignments will assess two different areas: 1. Students' ability to concisely address a major, specific aspect of the literary and philosophical content of the course – with choice of doing so in an implicit, creative way; and 2. Students' ability to engage academically in critical analysis of a peer's work in formal written dialogue, using evaluative techniques and language. Students may use these papers as 'stepping stones' to their larger research topics (as an explorative assignment). This category will compose 25% of the final class grade.

#### *Socratic Seminars*

Students will be given preparation assignments and a prompt specific to the direction in which class has been philosophically leading during the semester (subject to slight variance depending upon the major interests in the class dynamic). This seminar will be geared specifically toward culminating the readings of both literary and philosophical traditions, with special emphasis on students' independent reading novel choices. Much of the



emphasis will be placed on subtle stylistic choices and narrative techniques used by literary authors in exploring philosophical themes. Students will be assessed through thoroughness and insight of preparation work, active listening and speaking skills in the activity of the discussion itself, and reflection upon the topics and their culmination in all of the work of the semester's readings and writings. This will compose 10% of the grade.

### *Major Research Paper*

This final paper will emphasize process as well as product. Students will be assessed in the thoroughness of the research process, formalized, specific thesis and topic production, outlining and note-taking techniques, and understanding, analysis, and depth-of-insight in conjunction with major themes of the course outline. As topics are self-generated, students will also be assessed in logical argument structure, use of research and critical theory, and reflective conclusions. Students will be actively doing philosophy in these papers, rather than just passively learning *about* it. This will compose 40% of the grade.

### *Reading*

Students will read, in entirety, four primary literary texts: *Out of the Silent Planet* by science-fiction/fantasy writer C.S. Lewis; the novella, *The Secret Sharer*, by Joseph Conrad; Camus' existential piece, *The Stranger*; and Huxley's human zoology, *Point Counter Point*. Students will also choose from a list of approved independent reading options, compiled specifically to supplement the same kinds of philosophical themes (i.e. "novels of ideas" and philosophical fiction). This list includes works by Dostoevsky, Tolkien, Sartre, Nabokov, Beckett, and Kafka, among others. Independent reading novels will play a role in blogging, as well as in the class final Socratic Seminar, and may factor into short and major papers depending on self-generated topics. Students will also read, discuss, and receive lecture and instruction on many segments of philosophical texts, generally excerpts from longer works, or stand-alone essays. The class may also draw from short stories and poetry to highlight specific aspects of philosophy in literary texts across genres (note that independent reading and required readings include various genres, styles, and structures).

### *Writing*

Students will utilize multiple writing styles and structures for expressing their literary and philosophical analyses and critiques. It will be not only a key mode of expression, but also a key mode for assessment.

### *Unit 1: The Nature of Belief*

Reading selections from Plato, Aristotle, St. Anselm, Descartes, Leibniz, Hume, Kant, and Nietzsche; literary texts by Asimov ("The Last Question," short story) and C.S. Lewis (*Out of the Silent Planet*, novel)

- Philosophical one-pagers for works by Plato, Hume, and Nietzsche.
- Assigned three-page papers discussing the major questions: "What is Real? What is Existence?" Students may utilize research structure, or creative outlets such as dialogues, poetry, or short fiction.
- Corresponding one-page response papers shall discuss, evaluate, and critique the assigned three-page papers.
- Blog reflections regarding the readings, including emphasis on the belief systems of the alien races in Lewis' novel, *Out of the Silent Planet*, the implications of the nature of the "God-computer" in Asimov's "The Last Question," and personal reflections on each individual's understanding of the nature of space, time, and universal creation (may also include short lectures on comparative religions).

### *Unit 2: The Question of Identity*

Reading selections from Plato, Descartes, Locke, Hegel, Kierkegaard, and Heidegger; literary text by Conrad (*The Secret Sharer*, novella)

- Philosophical one-pagers for works by Plato, Descartes, and Locke
- Assigned three-page papers discussing the major questions: "Who am I? How do I know what I know?" Students may utilize research structure, or creative outlets such as dialogues, poetry, or short fiction.
- Corresponding one-page response papers shall discuss, evaluate, and critique the assigned three-page papers.
- Blog reflections regarding the readings, including emphasis on the confrontation of the self versus 'other' as apparent through Conrad's *The Secret Sharer*, and personal reflections on each individual's

- understanding of composition of the self and identity, and source of knowledge.
- Instruction in formal research, topic/thesis generation, and MLA versus Chicago (for philosophical papers) formatting

### *Unit 3: Of Individual Will and Choice*

Reading selections from Epictetus, Augustine, Kierkegaard, Sartre, and Lewis; literary text by Camus (*The Stranger*, novella)

- Philosophical one-pagers for works by Kierkegaard, Sartre, and Lewis
- Assigned three-page papers discussing the major questions: “Am I free? Does anything have meaning?” Students may utilize research structure, or creative outlets such as dialogues, poetry, or short fiction.
- Corresponding one-page response papers shall discuss, evaluate, and critique the assigned three-page papers.
- Blog reflections regarding the readings, including emphasis on instance of choice versus fate, control versus lack of control, and personal responsibility in a variety of hypothetical situations (may also include short lectures on meta-ethics)

### *Unit 4: On Proper Living*

Reading selections from Aristotle, Epictetus, Aquinas, Kant, Mills, Marx, James; literary text by Huxley (*Point Counter Point*, novel) – students should also have finished at least one of the Independent Reading novel choices

- Philosophical one-pagers for works by Aquinas, Mills, Marx
- Assigned three-page papers discussing the major questions: “How do I apply my perspectives to my choices? How do I live consistently? What do I live for? How do I give my life meaning?” Students may utilize research structure or creative outlets such as dialogues, poetry, or short fiction.
- Corresponding one-page response papers shall discuss, evaluate, and critique the assigned three-page papers.
- Blog reflections regarding the readings, including emphasis on the systems specific to several of the major characters of Huxley’s novel, *Point Counter Point*, and each individual’s personal identification with any of the aforementioned characters; emphasis also on the difficulty of maintaining a philosophical standpoint and avoiding hypocrisy (may also include short lectures on “philosophies of life”)
- Major Research papers submitted based on self-generated topics, specific to any of the major questions noted throughout the course curriculum – students must cite at least one major philosophical text and one literary text, and must also synthesize criticisms, essays, articles, and biographical citations in final argument

### *Listening and Speaking*

This class is designed to mimic the discussion-based collegiate atmosphere of a seminar-style course, in which students spend much of each class in discussion of specific daily topics, personal reflections, and assigned readings. The atmosphere should be conversational, organic, but intellectual in nature and draw upon listening and speaking skills which are active, respectful, tactful, and mature. Along with their writing assignments, students will present some works orally and read aloud from their own writings (specifically in the case of the three-page papers and one-page responses, thus students will speak formally at least twice, three times including the formalized Socratic Seminars at the end of the semester). Students will also utilize these skill in the class final, and will use them informally through written expression as per their blog-ring posts. Students may utilize their own creativity and personalities as far as preferences and stylistic choice in many of these assignments, which may also play out in presentation in class as well.