

## **PHIL 230: Introduction to Practical Wisdom**

Fall 2018

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### **Course Description**

Philosophy, as it was traditionally conceived, had both a theoretical and a practical side. The theoretical side had to do with attempting to answer certain perennial questions: what is real? what can we know? how should one live? It was primarily an intellectual project. The practical side was about learning to live the human life well. It was more than an intellectual project and involved more than just thinking and discussing. It required immersion in a *way of life*, organizing one's life around a set of practices, spiritual exercises, or methods whose purpose was to form the soul, to bring transformation of the self unto virtue, wisdom, tranquility, and happiness.

This course will introduce students to the practical side of philosophy. We'll start with a close reading of the gospels, focusing on the question, "What way of life was Jesus enjoining on his followers?" We'll then read Aristotle (on eudaimonism), Epictetus (on Stoicism), Saints Benedict and Francis (on Christian monasticism and mendicantism), Thich Nhat Hanh (on Buddhism), and Gandhi (on Gandhism), asking of each of these traditions what can be appropriated unto more effective practice of the Way of Jesus. Each tradition (except Aristotle) will be paired with a book by or about a practitioner of the way on offer in that tradition, with an eye toward gaining a deeper understanding what life in that way looks like, "on the ground," so to speak.

The course is paired with a "lab" course (PHIL 231), the point of which is to provide students an opportunity to experiment with practices from the wisdom traditions treated in PHIL 230, with an eye toward the question whether any of these practices can be appropriated unto more effective pursuit of the Way of Jesus.

### **Student Learning Outcomes**

At the end of term, the student should be able to

1. Explain, in some detail, the Way of Jesus.
2. Explain the essential contours of the five wisdom traditions surveyed in the course.

3. Describe how insights from the five wisdom traditions we survey can be appropriated unto more nuanced practice of the Way of Jesus.

### **Required Texts**

- Dorothy Day, *The Long Loneliness* (HarperOne, 2009) 978-0060617516
- Bruce W. Longenecker, *The Lost Letters of Pergamum: A Story from the New Testament World* (Baker Academic, 2016) 978-0801097966
- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 2nd edition, trans. Terrence Irwin (Hackett, 1999) 978-0872204645
- Epictetus, *Discourses and Selected Writings* (Penguin, 2008) 978-0140449464
- William B. Irvine, *A Guide to the Good Life: The Ancient Art of Stoic Joy* (Oxford University Press, 2009) 978-0195374612
- Saint Benedict, *The Rule of St. Benedict* (Vintage, 1998) 978-0375700170
- Omer Englebert, *St. Francis of Assisi: A Biography* (Servant Books, 2013) 978-1616366087
- Jon M. Sweeney, ed., *Francis of Assisi in His Own Words: The Essential Writings* (Paraclete Press, 2013) 978-1612610696
- Thich Nhat Hanh, *The Pocket Thich Nhat Hanh* (Shambhala, 2012) 978-1590309360
- Louis Fischer, *Gandhi: His Life and Message for the World* (Signet Classics, 2010) 978-0451531704
- Gandhi and Fischer, *The Essential Gandhi: An Anthology of His Writings on His Life, Work, and Ideas* (Vintage, 2002) 978-1400030507

### **Office Hours**

Mondays, 1:30-5 pm, and by appointment (Emerson Hall, Room 202). Come on by! I'm most excited to discuss this material with you!

### **Course Requirements**

*Attendance:* Attendance is vital to the success of the course. More than two absences, for any reason, will result in a full letter-grade reduction for the course. More than three absences, for any reason, will result in an automatic failing grade for the course. Tardy arrival to class or early departure from class will count as half an absence, as will leaving class during lectures or class discussions (for restroom breaks, etc.).

*Participation:* Participation is likewise vital to the success of the course. Those participating at a notably high level of preparedness, cogency, and frequency will see their final course grade raised by a half-letter grade.

*Reading:* The benefit you receive from this course will be directly proportionate to the attention you give to the reading. Do your best to read everything and read it carefully!! You'll get much more from the lectures and discussions if you do.

*Précis, Quotes, and Comments (60%):* For each numbered reading assignment below, you'll submit a 100-or-so word précis (concise summary) of the piece, together with two memorable quotes from the piece and a minimum 100-word comment on each quote. Précis-Quote-Comment assignments are due on Canvas by the start of the class period on the due date of the assigned reading. **Please include word counts after the précis and each comment section of the assignment.** Quotes and Comments assignments will be graded according to the following rubric: **5 pts:** Thoughtful engagement with the text; followed assignment directions. **2.5 pts:** Only somewhat thoughtful engagement with the text; less than perfect attention to assignment directions. **0 pts:** Perfunctory effort or did not follow assignment directions. I'll drop your lowest two scores when calculating the Précis, Quotes, and Comments portion of your grade. **No late assignments will be accepted.**

*Midterm Exam (20%):* There will be a midterm, in-class essay examination covering the main ideas covered in lectures and the reading. An exam study guide will be distributed a week or so ahead of time to help you prepare.

*Final Exam (20%):* There will be a cumulative, in-class essay examination covering the main ideas discussed in lecture and in the reading. A final-exam study guide will be distributed at the end of the term to help you prepare.

## **Course Policies**

*Note Regarding Students with Disabilities:* Disability Services exists to assist any student who thinks he or she may need such assistance. Students desiring accommodations for this class on the basis of physical learning, psychological and/or emotional disabilities are to contact The Learning Center that houses both learning assistance and disability services. The Learning Center is located in the Biola Library, Upper Level, Room U-137, and this department can be reached by calling 562.906.4542 or by dialing extension #4542 if calling from on campus.

*Note Regarding Academic Honesty:* We are committed at Biola University to ethical practice in teaching, scholarship, and service. As such, plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Please see the undergraduate/graduate student handbook and/or the departmental/program/school policy on academic honesty. It is imperative that you present all written, oral, and/or performed work with a clear indication of the source of that work. If it is completely your own, you are encouraged to present it as such, taking pleasure in ownership of your own created work. However, it is also imperative that you give full credit to any and all others whose work you have included in your presentation via paraphrase, direct quotation, and/or performance, citing the name(s) or the author(s)/creator(s) and the source of the work with appropriate bibliographic information. *To do otherwise is to put oneself in jeopardy of being sanctioned for an act of plagiarism, which carries a minimum penalty of a score of '0' for the assignment in which the plagiarism occurs and the risk of much more severe consequences up to and including expulsion from the university.*

*Course Grades:* Course grades will be calculated as follows:

$$\text{Course Point Total} = (\text{Précis, Quotes, and Comments} \times .6) + (\text{Midterm Exam Grade} \times 0.2) + (\text{Final Exam Grade} \times 0.2)$$

Your course point total will be converted to a letter grade using the following scale:

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|             |    |              |
|-------------|----|--------------|
| 93 points ≤ | A  | ≤ 100 points |
| 90 points ≤ | A- | < 93 points  |
| 87 points ≤ | B+ | < 90 points  |
| 83 points ≤ | B  | < 87 points  |
| 80 points ≤ | B- | < 83 points  |
| 77 points ≤ | C+ | < 80 points  |
| 73 points ≤ | C  | < 77 points  |
| 70 points ≤ | C- | < 73 points  |
| 67 points ≤ | D+ | < 70 points  |
| 63 points ≤ | D  | < 67 points  |
| 60 points ≤ | D- | < 63 points  |
|             | F  | < 60 points  |

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*Laptops, cell phones, etc.:* No personal electronic technology is permitted in this class. The presence of such technology would be utterly disruptive to the atmosphere of discussion we are attempting to cultivate.

*Basic needs:* Any student who has difficulty accessing sufficient food to eat every day,

which may affect their performance in the course, is encouraged to speak with the professor or email [biola.shares@biola.edu](mailto:biola.shares@biola.edu) for support and to be connected to campus resources.

*Restroom breaks:* There will be a break period approximately half-way through each class. Please restrict your restroom breaks to this period, as it is disruptive of class lecture and discussion to have people leaving during class time. See the above attendance policy for grade penalties (though do please alert me to any need for special accommodation regarding more frequent class breaks).

*Internet Resources:* Course materials (syllabus, reading assignments, etc.) may be found on the course Canvas site.

## **Course Schedule<sup>1</sup>**

**9/6:** Course Intro, The Way of Jesus

**9/13:** The Way of Jesus

1. Matthew, Mark, Luke
2. Crisp, "Finding God in Brother and Sister" (C)
3. Crisp, "Finding God in the Poor and Marginalized" (C)

**9/20:** The Way of Jesus

1. Hart, "Christ's Rabble" (C)
2. Longenecker, *The Lost Letters of Pergamum: A Story from the New Testament World*

**9/27:** The Way of Jesus

1. Day, *The Long Loneliness*

**10/4:** Aristotle

**10/18:** Aristotle

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<sup>1</sup>This is a tentative schedule and subject to revision. Readings marked with a (C) are available on Canvas.

1. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Books 1-4, 8-9

**10/25:** Midterm

**11/1:** Stoicism

1. Epictetus, *Discourses and Selected Writings*

**11/8:** Stoicism

1. William B. Irvine, *A Guide to the Good Life: The Ancient Art of Stoic Joy*

**11/15:** Christian Monasticism and Mendicantism

1. Omer Englebert, *St. Francis of Assisi: A Biography*

**11/29:** Christian Monasticism and Mendicantism

1. Jon M. Sweeney, ed., *Francis of Assisi in His Own Words: The Essential Writings*
2. Saint Benedict, *The Rule of Saint Benedict*

**11/6:** Buddhism

1. Thich Nhat Hanh, *The Pocket Thich Nhat Hanh*

**12/13:** Gandhi

1. Louis Fischer, *Gandhi: His Life and Message for the World*
2. Gandhi and Fischer, *The Essential Gandhi: An Anthology of His Writings on His Life, Work, and Ideas*