PHILOSOPHY 2230: SYMBOLIC LOGIC I
SYLLABUS

Meeting Time: MTuWTh 1:30-3:10
Meeting Place: 033 Rike
Instructor: Dr. Irvine
Office: 383 Millett (enter through 370 Millett, the Philosophy Department office)
Office Phone: 775-2610 (If there is no answer, you can leave a message by calling 775-2274.)
E-mail: irvine@aphilosopher.com
Office Hours: MTuWTh 3:20-4:20 and by appointment.
Course Website: http://www.wright.edu/~william.irvine/ (I do not use Pilot!)

Course Prerequisites: There are no prerequisites for this course.

Course Objectives: Students will learn how to translate English sentences into symbolic sentences, and how to use derivations and truth tables to check the validity of English arguments.

Course Work: Students will take daily quizzes. There will also be a final exam. The quizzes and final exam will be open-notes!

Student Privacy: Unless students contact me and express a wish to have their quizzes handed back personally (thereby preserving their privacy rights), I will hand back quizzes by passing the stack of them around the classroom.

Expectations for Class Attendance: I do not take attendance. Nevertheless, students who miss class will miss their daily quiz, and this will have a substantial impact on their course grade. You will also miss the material on which I will test you on your next quiz, which will hurt your performance on that quiz. (Generally, about 1/6 of the students who sign up for this course end up dropping it, and another 1/6 end up failing it; almost all of those who drop or fail have missed multiple classes.)

Course Grade: I will add up a student's quiz scores half-way through the course and again at the end of the course. (These additions will be "non-cumulative.") At the end of the course, I will take a weighted average of a student's two quiz percentage scores and final exam percentage score (weighting them 30%, 30%, and 40%, respectively) to arrive at his course percentage score. I will convert this percentage score into a letter grade, using the "standard curve"—i.e., 90%=A, 80%=B, etc.

Missed Quizzes: In each half of the course, the first quiz a student misses, for either frivolous or non-frivolous reasons, will be dropped. After that, a student who misses a quiz for frivolous reasons will receive a score of 0 on the missed quiz, and a student who misses a quiz for non-frivolous reasons will, at the discretion of the instructor, either be given a make-up quiz or (more likely) be given an "average score" for the quiz missed. Students who miss no quizzes will have the option of dropping their lowest quiz score in each half of the course. Thus, it will behoove you to miss no quizzes; and even though you miss a quiz for "good" reasons, you will NOT (in a given half of the course) be allowed to drop a grade other than the grade for the quiz you missed.

Charity Checkmarks: Students who are able to answer questions asked in class will receive Charity Checkmarks. Those receiving what the instructor perceives to be an unusually high number of Charity Checkmarks might have their course grade raised above what the above formula would give them. Students who are unable, either for physical or psychological reasons, to participate in class discussions should let me know immediately.

Course Text: There is no textbook for this course. There is instead a "course outline," which will be sent--for free!--to students who are enrolled in the course. (It will be sent to your official Wright State e-mail account.) You should print out a hard copy so you can more easily take notes and follow class discussions.

Dates to remember:

Last class: Thursday, July 31
Final Exam: Thursday, July 31, 1:30-3:10

(turn over)
Instructor Policies

At the end of each quarter, there are students (e.g., graduating seniors, people on probation, people with scholarships, and people trying to get into certain programs) who come to me, tell me that they needed a certain grade in my course, and ask if there is anything they can do—now that the course has ended—to get it. Unfortunately, if the course has ended, I will not change a grade unless we can find evidence that your course work has been misgraded. It doesn’t matter how badly you need the grade in question; I will invariably give you the grade you earned, not the grade you want or need.

This means that if you need a certain grade in my course, you must work for it. You will find that I am more than willing to help you learn course material; I would much rather spend time helping you than have to give you a bad grade. There is no such thing as coming in to office hours too often; you will tire of seeing me long before I tire of seeing you. But if you do poorly in this course and make no effort to seek help, you leave me with no choice but to give you a grade that neither of us will be pleased with. I don’t give “pity grades” for the simple reason that I don’t think you are pitiful.

Infrequently Asked Questions

Q1. I already took this course and failed it. Is it true that since I am retaking it, I am sure to pass?
A. Certainly not. In fact, I have had students do worse in the course the second time they took it than the first time. I had one student who failed one of my courses three times. (She refused to come in for help.)

Q2. I am a graduating senior (or a person on a scholarship or a student visa) and I need to pass your course so I can graduate (or keep my scholarship or my visa). Can I assume that you will understand my situation and therefore won’t fail me?
A. I will give you the grade you earn, not the grade you need or want. And by the way, if you get an F in this course, it isn’t me who has failed you, it is you who has failed you; I am just the one whose job it is to deliver the bad news. People who desperately need to pass this course should become regular visitors to office hours at the very first sign that they are doing poorly; if they don’t do this, I can only conclude that despite what they say, it isn’t particularly important to them to attain their goals.

Q3. I am taking your class but won’t be able to attend very often because my life is very complicated. Will you overlook this and give me the grade I would have earned if my life hadn’t been so complicated?
A. If your life is too complicated, it is unlikely that you will succeed in college. I will certainly be willing to help you outside of class, but having done that, I will give you whatever grade you earn, exactly like any other student.

Q4. If I am not doing well in your class, will you come up with extra-credit projects for me to do so I can get a passing grade?
A. No. Your grade will be determined by class exams and assignments, just like it is for everyone else. If you aren’t doing well in class, you need to come in regularly for help. My view is that extra-credit projects are generally given so that students can pass a course without having mastered the course content. If you don’t master the content of this course, you will not pass.

Q5. I won’t get into Harvard Law School unless you give me an A. Will you raise my grade and thereby help me accomplish my goal?
A. Of course not. I will give you the grade you earned, not the grade you want.

Q6. I get As in all the other classes I take. Doesn’t it follow that you should give me an A as well?
A. It doesn’t follow. Maybe you are better in those classes than in this class.

Q7. Would you give a student a B even though doing so would ruin their perfect 4.0 GPA?
A. Yes, if they earned only a B, that is the grade I would give. My goal is to give you the grade you earned, not the grade that allows you to maintain or improve your GPA.

Q8. If I stop coming to class half-way through the quarter, will you give me an INC so I can finish the class (without signing up for it again) in the next quarter?
A. No. Some faculty members do this sort of thing, but I don’t. I will only give an INC to a student who has finished everything but the final, and has been forced to miss the final by circumstances beyond his control. If it becomes clear to you that you can no longer come to class, you should drop the class.

Q9. If I attend every class, will it guarantee that I will pass your course?
A. It depends on what you do in class. If you take lots of notes and participate in class discussions and see me when there are things you don’t understand, it is likely (but not guaranteed) that you will pass. If you don’t take notes and don’t participate, it is unlikely that you will pass even though you are “physically present” in the classroom.

Q9. If I come into office hours to get help, will it guarantee that I will pass your course?
A. It depends on what we do during office hours. If we talk about your pet cat, for example, it will probably have no effect at all on your course grade. If we discuss the course material, it will likely improve your chances of passing, but there are no guarantees.

Q10. If I failed your course in the past, will you sign me in for the next quarter so I can graduate on schedule?
A. It depends on what you did when you took my course in the past. If you, as a graduating senior who was doing poorly, didn’t routinely come to office hours, I can only conclude that you are not a serious student. My classes are invariably filled to capacity. Therefore, to sign you in would be to deprive another, quite likely more serious student, of a seat in the class and thereby slow down his or her academic progress. It would be unfair for me to do this.

Q11. If I felt that I understood the material in your course, will you give me a passing grade?
A. No. You must prove that you understood the material by passing exams.