Meeting Time: MTuWTh 11:40-1:20
Meeting Place: 206 Fawcett
Instructor: Dr. Irvine
Office: 383 Millett (Get off the elevator on the third floor. Take a left. Walk thirty paces. If there is an unmarked, open door on the left side of the hall, enter it; it is the secret shortcut to my office, and it is the only way to get to my office at night. If no unmarked door is open, go all the way to the end of the corridor and enter 370 Millett, the Philosophy Department office. Take a left, and another left after that. My office is on the right side, about halfway down the corridor.)
Office Phone: 775-2610 (If there is no answer, you can leave a message by calling 775-2274.)
E-mail: irvine@aphilosopher.com
Course Website: http://www.wright.edu/~william.irvine/ (I do not use Pilot!)
Office Hours: MTuWTh 3:20-4:20 and by appointment.

Expectations for Class Attendance: I do not take attendance. Nevertheless, students who miss class will typically do poorly in the course and cannot earn Charity Checkmarks (see below).

Course Work: Students will take two midterm exams, will be given verbal quizzes nearly every day over science items in the news, and will take a final exam. The links that will be covered in the verbal quizzes will be sent to your official university e-mail account. Be sure to check it daily!

Course Grade: To determine a student's course grade, I will turn student scores on the midterms, verbal quizzes, and final into percent scores. Then I will take a weighted average of these percent scores, with the midterms counting 25% each, the verbal quizzes counting 15%, and the final exam counting 35%. I will convert the resulting percent score into a letter grade, using the "standard" scale, with 90% or above being an A, 80% or above being a B, and so on. (This formula applies only to students who take all tests at the official times. Anyone who takes one or more makeup exams will be graded by a formula that might significantly “underweight” the makeup exam(s) in question.)

Missed Exams: If you are going to miss an exam, let me know immediately, and if possible, let me know before the exam. The best way to inform me of your miss is to call me during an office hour to schedule your makeup. If you cannot reach me by phone, the next best way to reach me is by an email, in which you explain why you missed the exam and when you will be available to take a makeup. If you miss an exam and wait more than 24 hours (from the start of the exam) to get in touch with me, you will receive a 0% on the exam, even if it turns out that you had a good reason for missing it. Makeup exams are given only if a student had a legitimate reason for missing the exam. Makeup exams will generally be given within 24 hours after the missed exam, and they will usually be essay exams.

Missed Verbal Quizzes. If you miss a verbal quiz, come to my office before class on the next day for a makeup verbal quiz. If you cannot do that, e-mail me no later than by noon on the next day to make arrangements to take a makeup verbal quiz. “Makeup” verbal quizzes will not be given after the final exam.

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

Warning! This class requires familiarity with algebra! If you once knew algebra but have subsequently forgotten it, I would be happy to help you relearn it.

Warning! In this class, we will be discussing creationism and evolution. As part of this discussion, we will examine the Bible in a critical manner. If you find such discussions upsetting, you would probably be happier taking another class.

Course Text: There is no textbook for this course. There is instead a "course outline," which is available (for free!) at my Wright State website: http://www.wright.edu/~william.irvine/ Click on the “PHL4710 Materials” link. It will ask you for a password: __________. You can download the outline chapters and print out hard copies for yourself. (If you read chapters while you are online, you can click on the links they contain.)

Dates to remember:
First Midterm: Thursday, June 27
No Class: Thursday, July 4
Second Midterm: Thursday, July 11
Last Regular Class: Wednesday, July 24
Final Exam: Thursday, July 25, 11:40-1:20 (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 my fault 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 halfway 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.

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.