FACULTY CONTACT INFORMATION

Instructor: Associate Professor Dr. Eric Roark, Philosophy Department
Office: 326 Schilling Hall
Office Hours: Tuesday/Thursday (after class for an hour or by appointment)
Office Phone: 424-3521
E-mail Addresses: eroark@millikin.edu

COURSE TEXTS


**In addition the course will have a number of supplemental texts outlined in the course schedule. These texts will be distributed via email and specifically address global issues associated with conspiracy theories.

COURSE OBJECTIVES (Consistent with Both PH360 and IN350 goals)

This course is intended to:

(1) Allow students to critically analyze the ethical implications of conspiracy theories in a global context through the use of primary and secondary sources.

(2) Allow students to consider the role that ethics plays in the making and fostering of various conspiracy theories around the world.

(3) Allow students to consider the ways in which democratic citizenship intersect with the topic of conspiracy theories at the global level.

(4) Develop students’ facility in writing clearly and creatively about philosophical issues; and

(5) Develop the students’ critical thinking skills.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course introduces students to some of the most central theoretical issues within the topics of conspiracy theories in a global context. The very fact that various conspiracy theories have a wide following both domestically and internationally plays a major role in our social world and political process. There are also many ethical implications, globally, in respect to the belief in conspiracy theories. Conspiracy theories have the potential to shape the way that we see others in the global community and it is in that seeing and treatment where ethical implications abound.

PHILOSOPHY DEPARTMENT LEARNING GOALS

This course is a required course within the Philosophy Major. The accompanying table shows how this course connects to the Philosophy Department learning goals.
### Philosophy Department Learning Goal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Philosophy Department Learning Goal</th>
<th>Course in Relation to Department Learning Goals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Students will be able to express in oral and written form their understanding of major concepts and intellectual traditions within the field of philosophy.</td>
<td>Students must complete multiple written reflective essays in response to prompts designed to emphasize major concepts and ideas in the history of philosophical thought. There will be an emphasis on class discussion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Students will demonstrate their ability to utilize the principles of critical thinking and formal logic in order to produce a sound and valid argument, or to evaluate the soundness and validity of the arguments of others.</td>
<td>Student reflective essays will be assessed, in part, on the basis of how well the essays demonstrate critical thinking and, where appropriate, the employment of the tools of formal logic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Students will demonstrate their ability to complete research on a philosophy-related topic, analyze objectively the results of their research, and present arguments to support their point of view in a variety of venues, including an individually directed senior capstone thesis in philosophy.</td>
<td>While this course does not require a substantial research component, all assignments will require students to engage in textual analysis and interpretation, present arguments in support of a thesis generated in response to a writing prompt, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### GRADE DISTRIBUTION

Course grades and percentage of points received will be correlated as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>92.5% and above</td>
<td>Outstanding 😊😊😊</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90%-92.4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>86.5%-89.9%</td>
<td>Above Average 😊😊</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>82.5%-86.4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80%-82.4%</td>
<td>Satisfactory 😊</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>76.5%-79.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>72.5%-76.4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70%-72.4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>66.5%-69.9%</td>
<td>Un satisfactory 😊😊</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>62.5%-66.4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>60%-62.4%</td>
<td>Failure 😊😊😊 (Yes, it exists…)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>less than 60%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### GRADING

Plus/minus grading will be used. There are 300 total points in the course. Grades will be assigned as follows:

**Attendance and Participation:** 1/3 of total grade (100 points)

One-third of your class grade will be based upon your class attendance and class participation. In Summer classes were the total number of days for a meeting are short and the classes are small it is imperative that you all come to class ready to discuss and critically consider the class material.

**Final Term Paper:** 2/3 of total grade (200 points)

Two-thirds of your course grade will be based upon the course term paper. I will pass out instruction for this paper and paper topics as the class moves forward. The papers will be due the Wednesday June 5th at midnight.
SCHEDULE OF READINGS

Tuesday Jan 19th
Reading: Aaronovitch: Intro and Chapter 1, pp. 1-49

Wednesday Jan 20th
Aaronovitch: Intro and Chapters 2 and 3, pp. 50-122
Basham, “Malevolent Global Conspiracy”

Thursday Jan 21st
Aaronovitch: Chapter 4 and 5, pp. 123-194

Friday Jan 22nd
Aaronovitch: Chapters 6 and 7 1, pp. 195-269
Byford and Billig, “The emergence of Anti-Semitic Conspiracy Theories in Yugoslavia During the War with NATO”

Saturday Jan 23rd
Aaronovitch: Chapters 8 and 9 and conclusion, pp. 270-356
Keeley, “Nobody Expects the Spanish Inquisition: More Thoughts on Conspiracy Theory”

ACADEMIC HONESTY POLICY

College of Arts & Sciences Academic Honesty Policy Statement

Academic Honesty Policy
All students are expected to uphold professional standards for academic honesty and integrity in their research, writing, and related performances. Academic honesty is the standard we expect from all students. Read the Student Handbook for further details about offenses involving academic integrity at: http://www.millikin.edu/handbook/. Staley Library also hosts a web site on Preventing Plagiarism, which includes the complete university policy. It is located at: http://www.millikin.edu/staley/services/instruction/Pages/plagiarism-faculty.aspx. Visit and carefully read the Preventing Plagiarism web site.

The Faculty has the right and the responsibility to hold students to high ethical standards in conduct and in works performed, as befits a scholar at the university. Faculty members have the responsibility to investigate all suspected breaches of academic integrity that arise in their courses. They will make the determination as to whether the student violated the Academic Integrity Policy. Should the faculty member determine that the violation was intentional and egregious, he or she will decide the consequences, taking into account the severity and circumstances surrounding the violation, and will inform the student in writing, forwarding a copy of the letter to the Registrar and to the Dean of Student Development.

This letter will be destroyed when the student graduates from the University unless a second breach of integrity occurs, or unless the first instance is of sufficient magnitude to result in failure of the course, with an attendant XF grade recorded in the transcript. If an XF is assigned for the course, the faculty letter of explanation becomes a permanent part of the student’s record. If a second violation occurs subsequent to the first breach of integrity, the Dean of Student Development will begin disciplinary and judicial processes of the University, as outlined in the Student Handbook.
If a student receives an XF for a course due to academic dishonesty, this remains as a permanent grade and cannot be removed from the transcript. However, students may repeat the course for credit toward graduation. Some programs and majors have more explicit ethical standards, which supersede this Policy, and violation of which may result in dismissal from some programs or majors within the University. If you have difficulty with any assignment in this course, please see me rather than consider academic dishonesty.

College of Arts & Sciences
Disability Accommodation Policy Statement

Disability Accommodation Policy

Please address any special needs or special accommodations with me at the beginning of the semester or as soon as you become aware of your needs. If you are seeking classroom accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act, you should submit your documentation to the Office of Student Success at Millikin University, currently located in Staley Library 014.

Faculty and Student Responsibilities

Faculty Responsibilities: Faculty should call the issue of plagiarism to the attention of the students. Faculty should spend some time in class (e.g., on the first day of class) emphasizing the importance of the issue, clearly stating their policy for violations, and providing resources to assist students in their efforts to understand and avoid plagiarism. Faculty should make themselves available to students in order to discuss the issue with students who have questions and/or refer them to our campus experts on the issue of plagiarism. If faculty members do the above, then their responsibility is discharged. Importantly, faculty members do not have the responsibility to teach the topic of plagiarism either to individual students or to each of their classes. There are specified locations in the university curriculum where this takes place.

Student Responsibilities: The burden is on the student to know what plagiarism is and to make sure that he avoids engaging in acts of plagiarism. “Ignorance of the law is no excuse.” As a rough and ready guide, students should ask themselves this question: “Did what I just write come out of my own head?” If the answer to that question is “Yes,” then the student is typically on safe ground. If the answer to that question is “No,” then the student needs to provide citations that allow the faculty member to locate the source of the ideas. If the answer is “I am not sure,” then the burden is on the student to resolve his doubt by taking active steps—go see the faculty member teaching the course, go see library staff, go see English faculty, etc.

Here are some examples of actual instances of plagiarism that I have encountered over the past few years:

Web Source: Historically, there are two distinct dream-related skeptical doubts. The one doubt undermines the judgment that one is presently awake—call this the Now Dreaming Doubt. The other doubt undermines the judgment that one is ever awake—call this the Always Dreaming Doubt. Both kinds of dreams doubt appeal to some version of the thesis that the experiences we take as dreams are (at their best) qualitatively similar to the experiences we take as waking—call this the Similarity Thesis.

Student Paper: Traditionally, there are two divergent dream-related skeptical suspicions. The one uncertainty destabilizes the conclusion that one is at the moment awake—call this the Presently Dreaming Skepticism. The other doubt destabilizes the judgment that one is ever awake—call this the Always Dreaming Skepticism. Both dreams doubt the appeal to some
account of the idea that the experiences we take as dreams are, at their best, qualitatively alike to the experiences we take as waking—call this the Likeness Idea.

Web Source: First, it’s important to distinguish between two kinds of evil: moral evil and natural evil. Moral evil results from the actions of free creatures. Murder, rape and theft are examples. Natural evil results from natural processes such as earthquakes and floods. Of course, sometimes the two are intermingled, such as when flooding results in loss of human life due to poor planning or shoddy construction of buildings.

Student Paper: There are two kinds of evil: moral evil and natural evil. Moral evil comes from the actions of free beings. Natural evil comes from nature, things such as earthquakes and floods. Sometimes these two will intermingle, but we will deal with them separately for this paper.

Web Source: It’s also helpful to distinguish between two types of the philosophical or apologetic aspect of the problem of evil. The first is the logical challenge to belief in God. This challenge says it is irrational and hence impossible to believe in the existence of a good and powerful God on the basis of the existence of evil in the world.

Student Paper: Another important distinction is between two types of the problem of evil. The first is the logical challenge, which we will examine in detail, and there is the evidential challenge. The logical challenge states that it is irrational to believe in the existence of God based on evil in the world.

Web Source: The logical challenge is usually posed in the form of a statement such as this:

1. A good God would destroy evil.
2. An all-powerful God could destroy evil.
3. Evil is not destroyed.
4. Therefore, there cannot possibly be such a good and powerful God.

On the other hand, the evidential challenge contends that while it may be rationally possible to believe such a God exists, it is highly improbable or unlikely that He does. We have evidence of so much evil that is seemingly pointless and of such horrendous intensity.

Student Paper: A logical argument would include the following:

1. A totally righteous God would prevent all the evil that he can.
2. An omniscient, omnipotent, and omni benevolent God can prevent all evil, and knows how to.
3. Evil exists.
4. Therefore, either God is not all-good, all-knowing, or all-powerful because there is still evil in the world.

The evidential challenge states that it might be rational that God does exist; this claim is highly improbable based on so much evil in the world.

Web says: God is a righteous judge; people get what they deserve. If someone suffers, that is because they committed a sin that merits such suffering.

Student Paper: In addition, one might say that God is a righteous judge; and thus people get what they deserve. If someone is suffering it’s because they did something that merits their suffering; such as committing a sin.
Web Source: We give up our right to ourselves exact retribution for crimes in return for impartial justice backed by overwhelming force. We retain the right to life and liberty, and gain the right to just, impartial protection of our property.

Student Paper: First, in order to live with our rights preserved we give up the right to exact retribution for crimes against the law of nature in return for justice backed by the force of the societies government. Through the legislature we are able to retain the right to life and liberty and protect our property.

***Professor Comment: In all of these examples, the mere change of words (underlined in the first example) is nowhere near sufficient to make the ideas the student's own. Direct quotations, slightly modified quotations, as well as paraphrases must have citations to appropriate sources. What the student did in most of these cases is not even properly classified as paraphrasing since the student did not take the material and put it in her own words. And even if she had paraphrased, citations would still be required.

Web Source: Friedrich Nietzsche is not only one of the most influential philosophers the world has seen, but he is also one of the most controversial. He has influenced twentieth century thought more than almost any other thinker. In his numerous works, Nietzsche constantly criticizes and restructures the strongly held philosophical and religious beliefs of his time. One such principle that he refutes belongs to his predecessor Rene' Descartes, and concerns the apparent distinction and significance of the human mind over the body.

Student Paper: Friedrich Nietzsche is not only one of the most influential philosophers the world has seen, but he is also one of the most controversial. He has influenced twentieth century thought more than almost any other thinker. In his numerous works, Nietzsche constantly criticizes and restructures the strongly held philosophical and religious beliefs of his time. One such principle that he refutes belongs to his predecessor Rene' Descartes, and concerns the apparent distinction and significance of the human mind over the body.

***Professor Comment: Obviously, this is simply lifted word for word from an Internet source. Absolutely pathetic.

A. Resources for Consultation in Cases of Doubt

The following web site has been constructed by Millikin University library staff. It provides students with detailed information about what plagiarism is and how to avoid it.

http://www.millikin.edu/staley/research/prevent_plagiarism.asp

B. Final Comment

Students are encouraged to explore issues and problems in further depth by consulting secondary sources, including Internet sources. My policy does not seek to discourage the use of secondary sources. Students are welcome to use secondary sources to assist them in understanding the readings. When such sources are used, however, students must admit to that use. Proper use of quotation marks, citations, and a works cited page and/or bibliography ensure that students avoid plagiarizing. By all means, consult secondary sources. Just make sure you tell me that you have done so.

PHILOSOPHICAL PAPERS: GENERAL ADVICE AND GRADING CRITERIA

(1) Correct spelling and grammar. Make sure that your paper is easy to read. Adopt the perspective of your reader. It may help to read it out loud or to have someone else read it. Proofread your paper! Spelling and grammar will be factored into the grade.
(2) Have a **clear thesis**. Make sure that you clearly state the main point(s) for which you will be arguing. Let the reader know what to expect. Tell the reader what your paper is about and what you will be doing. Have this in the introductory paragraph. The introductory paragraph should be an outline-in-miniature of the entire paper.

(3) **Argue for your thesis.** After you tell the reader what you’re going to do, do it! Support your thesis with clear argumentation. Use expressions like “I believe that” or “I would argue that” instead of expressions like “I feel that.”

(4) **Anticipate objections and reply.** Rarely (if ever) in philosophy is a position “foolproof.” Anticipate possible objections to your position and attempt to reply to them. This shows that you have a firm grasp of the issue and your position with respect to the issue.

(5) **Write in the first person.** The paper is designed to be a vehicle by which you express your views. The use of the first person is perfectly acceptable and is encouraged.

If you cite passages from our classroom text, you need only indicate the page location of the passage. Do so by noting the page number(s) in parentheses at the end of the quotation. If you cite to any other source, incorporate the following information into a footnote/bibliography: author’s first and last name, title of the source, publisher of the source, page location of the passage(s) within the source.

### RESPECT

Please be respectful to faculty and fellow students. Do not carry on side conversations that are not a part of class discussion. Do not do work for another class, read for pleasure, take naps, balance your checkbook, etc. during class. All of these are important activities, but they are not to take place in my classroom. If you engage in them, you will be asked to leave the classroom and you will be marked absent. Be prepared for class. Please turn cell phones to silent or vibrate mode and properly dispose of your trash by the end of class.

### OTHER POLICIES

Once the class period begins, students are expected to remain in the classroom for the duration of the class period. Students who leave the classroom will have their participation grade lowered. Students who leave the classroom and remain absent from the classroom for extended periods of time will have their participation and attendance grade lowered. Students who repeatedly leave the classroom for extended periods of time will be denied reentry to the classroom. Attendance and participation points are awarded on the basis of attendance and participation during class...the whole class, not part of class. Moreover, students who exit the classroom and then reenter at a later point distract both the teacher and other students. Such behaviors will not be tolerated. Occasionally, there may be an emergency that requires a student to leave the classroom (e.g. illness). If such a situation should occur, the student should leave the classroom and seek the appropriate help or take other appropriate actions. If there is an emergency, there is no expectation that the student return to class. The student should inform the professor of the nature of the emergency and provide appropriate documentation of the emergency prior to the next class in order to avoid penalization of grade.

Except under extreme and dire circumstances, using the restroom or taking/placing phone calls is not a legitimate reason for leaving the classroom. There are ten to fifteen minute breaks between classes when these activities should take place. The desire to get a drink, purchase food, or wash up after eating food is **never** an acceptable reason for leaving the classroom. I will not
tolerate such behavior. Along with your academics, learn to time manage your stomach and bladder.

I will not discuss grades with a student on the day that an assignment is returned. When graded work is returned, the student must wait 24 hours before coming to talk with me about his grade. During that time period, I expect the student to read my comments and seek to understand the reasons why I assigned the grade that I did. If a student has questions or concerns that are not addressed by my written comments, then he should contact me and schedule an appointment to discuss the assignment.

PHILOSOPHY DEPARTMENT WRITING RUBRIC

The following rubric connects the Philosophy Department’s three learning goals to our assessment of major written assignments, including the senior thesis.

A: In light of Department learning goals, student work earning an “A” grade should meet the following criteria of assessment:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Presentation</th>
<th>Very few grammatical errors or misspellings, if any.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sentence structure is appropriately complex.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vocabulary is used correctly. Work reflects a college level use of words and understanding of their meanings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarity</td>
<td>Each sentence clearly expresses an idea.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Each paragraph forms a coherent whole. Paragraphs do not include several unrelated sentences without any overarching structure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The logic used in the analysis is explicitly stated or clearly implied.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The overall structure and organization of the introduction and the analysis is appropriate, logical and coherent. The organization adds to the strength of the arguments being presented.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality</td>
<td>Analysis reflects a high level of integration of information from multiple questions and multiple sources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Analysis reflects consideration of multiple causes and alternative explanations, while maintaining a clear focus on the explanations utilized.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In addition to there being no flaws in the reasoning presented, it is also clear that the most effective arguments are being made. The arguments being presented are compelling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The analysis elicits substantive questions regarding your interpretation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B: In light of Department learning goals, student work earning a “B” grade should meet the following criteria of assessment:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Presentation</th>
<th>Few grammatical errors or misspellings.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Overall, sentence structure is appropriately complex, incorrect sentence structures occur rarely.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vocabulary is used correctly. Overall, work reflects a college level use of words and understanding of their meanings. Occasional incorrect use of vocabulary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarity</td>
<td>Overall, each sentence expresses an idea.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Overall, each paragraph forms a coherent whole. Level of coherence is varied. Paragraphs may include some unrelated sentences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The logic used in the analysis is generally clear.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The overall structure and organization of the introduction and the analysis is appropriate, logical and coherent.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Quality | Analysis reflects integration of information from multiple questions and multiple sources. 
Analysis occasionally reflects consideration of multiple causes and alternative explanations. A clear focus on the explanations utilized is generally present. 
There are no glaring flaws in the reasoning presented. Effective arguments are being made. 

C: In light of Department learning goals, student work earning a “C” grade should meet the following criteria of assessment:

| Presentation | Some grammatical errors or misspellings. | Occasionality sentence structure is appropriately complex. Simplistic sentence structures are used. Common errors in sentences such as run-on sentences occur. | Some vocabulary is used correctly. Work minimally reflects a college level use of words and understanding of their meanings. Frequent use of simplistic vocabulary. |
| Clarity | More sentences clearly express ideas than do not. Rambling sentences or unclear structure occurs. | Level of coherence in paragraphs is varied. Paragraphs may include some unrelated sentences. Paragraphs may be too long or too short. | The logic used in the analysis is occasionally clear. |
| Quality | Analysis reflects occasional integration of information from multiple questions and sources. | Analysis rarely reflects consideration of multiple causes and alternative explanations. Occasional clear focus on the explanations utilized present. | There are few glaring flaws in the reasoning presented. Occasional effective arguments are being made. |

D: In light of Department learning goals, student work earning a “D” grade should meet the following criteria of assessment:

| Presentation | Grammatical errors or misspellings occur, penalties for affect final grade. | Sentence structure is rarely complex. Simplistic sentence structures are used. Common errors in sentences such as run-on sentences occur. Non-sentences occur occasionally. | Minimal appropriate use of the language. Work only rarely reflects a college level use of words and understanding of their meanings. Frequent use of simplistic vocabulary. When sophisticated vocabulary appears, it is often incorrect. |
| Clarity | Sentences occasionally clearly express ideas. Rambling sentences or unclear structure occurs. | Low levels of coherence in paragraphs. Paragraphs frequently include some unrelated sentences. Paragraphs may be too long or too short. | The logic used in the analysis is rarely clear. |
| Quality | Analysis reflects little or no integration of information from multiple questions or sources. | Analysis does not reflect consideration of multiple causes and alternative explanations. Clear explanations are missing. | Many glaring flaws in the reasoning presented. Only rarely are effective |
| arguments are being made. |

**F:** In light of Department learning goals, student work earning an "F" grade does not meet the standards for a "D" and is totally unacceptable work for a college senior, much less a philosophy major.