

PHIL 3900:  
PHILOSOPHY WRITING WORKSHOP

SPRING, 2004

*Syllabus*

- Meeting time: Wednesday, 3:30-4:45 PM, 607 Dale Hall Tower
- Instructor: Zev Trachtenberg, 610 DaHT, 325-6324  
ztrachtenberg@ou.edu
- Office hours: T, R, 10:00-11:00 AM; and by appointment
- Teaching Assistant: Shannon Finnigan, 620 DaHT, 325-6324  
lebensform@ou.edu
- Office hours: TBA; and by appointment

Course goals

The purpose of this course is to help students improve their philosophical writing, so that they can better participate in the “conversation” that constitutes the field of Philosophy. The course will help students:

- recognize what makes for good philosophical writing
- state clearly a relevant thesis and construct a sound argument to defend it
- critically examine an argument, by explaining its significance, and framing and evaluating objections to it
- make appropriate use of texts under consideration
- express ideas in clear, correct, well-organized prose

Assigned texts

Joel Feinberg, *Doing Philosophy: A Guide to the Writing of Philosophy Papers*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2002)

William Strunk, Jr. and E.B. White, *The Elements of Style*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: Longman, 2000)

Both books are available at the University Bookstore.

Course web site

The URL for the course website is:

**<http://www.ou.edu/ztclasses/phil3900>**

You can reach the course home page by using iThink:

**<http://ithink.ou.edu/>**. Click on “My Courses,” log in, click on the link for

this course, and the click on the link that appears after URL near the bottom of the page. Once you have reached the home page for this course you should bookmark it, to make it easier to get to it again.

### Course work and grading

Your written work will not be graded for quality in this course – though it will be evaluated, and you will receive comments designed to help you improve your writing. The quality of your writing will be graded in the target course in which you are concurrently enrolled when you submit your term paper for that course.

Instead, your grade in this workshop will be based on my evaluation of your effort to make progress on the goals listed above. I will judge your effort by tracking your fulfillment of workshop assignments and participation in class activities.

Workshop assignments are listed in the Schedule below, and will be presented in detail in class and on the workshop web site. In general, you will do an assignment each week which involves research, reading and/or writing. Your assignment is due by noon on the Monday of the week it will be discussed. You must submit your work by e-mail. I will post each student's work on the web site. On the web site you will be assigned to write a response to another student's work, according to criteria I will provide. Your response will be due at the beginning of class on Wednesday, and you should be prepared to present your response during class discussion. Though you will be responsible for presenting your response to one other student's work, you should prepare for class by reading all other students' assignments.

All of your written work will be graded on a pass/fail basis: if I judge that you have made a reasonable effort you will receive credit, if I judge that you have not taken the assignment seriously you will receive a 0. Your assignments are worth 2 points each, your responses are worth 1 point each. You will receive a point of credit for attending class; you will receive an additional point for participating in class activities. You can earn a total of 74 points during the semester (5 per week x 14 weeks + 4 points given free). Your final grade will be calculated by dividing the number of points you have earned by 70. (This means that if you have earned 90% of the total possible points you will receive an A; 80% is equivalent to a B; 70% to a C; 60% to a D; below 60% to an F. (This means that you can miss 5 points without affecting your grade; after that, for each additional 7 points you miss your grade drops by a level.)

Late work: Assignments are due promptly at noon. If I receive your assignments after noon but before 5:00 PM you will receive half credit. If I receive your assignments after 5:00 PM I will read and comment on it, but

you will receive no credit. However, I will not accept any assignments after the class at which they are scheduled to be discussed. In addition, if you do not turn in your assignment by 5:00 PM you will not be assigned another student's work to respond to—so you will be unable to earn that point of credit. I will not accept responses to other students' work after the beginning of the class at which they are scheduled to be discussed. Exceptions to this policy will be made only on the basis of a serious and demonstrable hardship, e.g. family- or job-related emergencies.

## University policies

### *Academic conduct*

I will rigorously enforce the University's policies on academic conduct, as set forth in the Student Handbook. In written work you must cite all the sources you consult. However, respect for academic honesty is consistent with having others review and comment on your writing. In this course you should do your assignments and responses on your own. As you begin to work on your paper for the target course you should acknowledge general writing help in a note at the end. If someone in the workshop gives you a specific idea about the subject of your paper that you use you should acknowledge that in a footnote. Please ask me if you have any questions about academic honesty in general, or about specific situations that might arise during this course.

### *Religious observances*

It is the policy of the University to excuse the absences of students that result from religious observances and to provide without penalty for the rescheduling of examinations and additional required classwork that may fall on religious holidays. If any assignment in this class conflicts with your religious observance, or if you have any questions on this matter, please contact me.

### *Reasonable accommodation*

If you have a disability that may prevent you from fully demonstrating your understanding of the material in this course you should contact me personally as soon as possible so we can discuss accommodations necessary to ensure your full participation and to facilitate your educational opportunities. Students with disabilities must be registered with the Office of Disability Services prior to receiving accommodations in this course. The Office of Disability Services is located in Goddard Health Center, Suite 166, phone 405/325-3852 or TDD only 405/325-4173.

Week-by-week schedule

Homework Due (Monday)	Class Topic (Wednesday)
	Jan. 14: Introduction to the course; identifying good writing
Jan. 19: Analysis of assigned paper	Jan. 21: Anatomy of a paper Reading: Feinberg, Ch's 3 & 11
Jan. 26: Correcting bad sentences	Jan. 28: Sentences 1: grammar Reading: Feinberg, Ch. 5; Strunk & White, Ch. I
Feb. 2: Paraphrasing sentences	Feb. 4: Sentences 2: meaning
Feb. 9: Analyzing a paragraph	Feb. 11: Paragraphs 1: logic Reading: Feinberg, Ch's 8-10
Feb. 16: Analyzing a paragraph	Feb. 18: Paragraphs 2: using quotations Reading: Feinberg, Ch. 2
Feb. 23: Analyzing term paper assignment	Feb. 25: Responding to an assignment
March 1: "Pre-writing" for term paper	March 3: Sketching out the term paper
March 8: Outline of term paper	March 10: Structuring the term paper
March 22: Introduction to term paper	March 24: The introduction Reading: Strunk & White, Ch. II
March 29: Several paragraph section from term paper	March 31: Presenting the thesis
Apr. 5: Several paragraph section from term paper	Apr. 7: Framing and answering objections
Apr. 12: First draft of term paper	Apr. 14: Editing the paper 1: for structure
Apr. 19: Second draft of term paper	Apr. 21: Editing the paper 2: for style Reading: Feinberg, Ch. 7; Strunk & White, Ch. V
Apr. 26: Course assessment	Apr. 28: Assessing the course