

## SAMPLE SYLLABUS FOR

Philosophy 388 GS (Capstone)

Pleasure, Goodness, Beauty, and the Sublime

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This course is a General Studies Capstone course, as such it is to *"help students acquire knowledge and abilities to: understand the world, make connections across disciplines, and contribute to the solution of contemporary problems."*

The following GS program level outcomes will be met by the course:

- 1) Evaluate information appropriate to the task.
- 2) Apply principles of critical thinking to demonstrate integrative learning.
- 3) Communicate effectively in spoken form.
- 4) Communicate effectively in written form.

The courses' graded requirements for daily reading and discussion as well as regular writing will also ensure that the following Capstone course outcomes are met:

- 1) Evaluate information from more than one academic discipline.
- 2) Formulate logical connections between disciplines as they relate to the topic.
- 3) Employ the approach of more than one academic discipline in completing a Capstone project.
- 4) Synthesize knowledge related to the topic in completing a Capstone project.
- 5) Communicate effectively in the medium chosen for the Capstone project.

### Course description:

"I just like it." But why do you like it? and in what way do you like it? and what kinds of experience are included in our varieties of liking? Should you like that? This course will investigate some important distinctions in what we mean when we say we like something; the hope is that by clarifying these different sorts of likings the students will be able to judge their various degrees of worth and importance so that "I like it" won't be the decisive conclusion of a discussion--even with oneself, but the beginning of a more rigorous investigation at which you will have developed some expertise.

### Primary Works:

Plato, *Philebus, Symposium*.  
Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals, Critique of Judgment*.  
*A variety of cultural artifacts (sculpture, painting, movie scenes, music, literature, etc.) will be considered in relation to issues raised in the texts..*

Readings will follow the approximate order of the course title. We will begin with the discussion of pleasure, *Philebus*; the good, as laid out by Kant in the *Foundations*; beauty (and its relation to pleasure and virtue) as both discussed and dramatized in *Symposium*, We conclude with Kant's *Critique*, which orients all kinds of liking together.

Assignments/grading: Final semester grade is determined by **(A)** a series of bi-weekly papers (25%), **(B)** the semester project (50%), and **(C)** by your participation/attendance in class of which a daily record is kept (25%)

Details concerning the forgoing:

**(A)** A 2 page paper will be due every other week, focusing on aspects of the readings and discussion for those weeks; many of the prompts for those papers will require you to consider a specific work of art (painting, sculpture, music) or piece of popular culture (e.g. scene from a movie, series of advertisements, short work of literature) or political problem and consider how the reading or character in the reading sheds light on the work of art, cultural problem, etc. My hope is that several of them will challenge you to think about how the distinctions being discussed in the course apply to your particular field of interest/study and thereby help you develop your semester project. Grades will be determined by the clearness of explication of the relation between text and work/problem, or coherence of interpretation of characters in (or solutions to problems in) the readings. Opportunities will be given for re-writing.

Here is a sample short paper topic: Consider the following pictures in relation to Kant's distinctions about the sublime: Caspar David Friedrich, "Wanderer above a sea of fog," "Sea of Ice," the photo of the man in front of the line of tanks, Tiananmen Square, 1989, and the astronomy picture of the day for 2014 November 18 or 2014 December 5, available at <http://apod.nasa.gov>. (all can be found easily on the web) Which form of the sublime might each arouse in you? Does the absence or presence of a human figure in the picture make the picture more or less effective at producing the sublime? Would it matter if we could see the human face? Why? Why not? Does the picture actually produce the sublime? Explain.

**(B)** The semester project will be designed by each student in accord with the student's own interests and likings, in consultation with the professor. It may be a project which uses the concepts developed in the readings to analyze some works of an artistic nature (music, painting, sculpture, architecture), or perhaps to produce one or several such works; perhaps the project will analyze a work of literature, political arguments/decisions or even a series of advertisements to show how they depend upon, include, illustrate or destroy the possibility of the referents of the concepts. In other words, a philosophical explication of the concepts alone will not be sufficient for this multi-disciplinary semester project.

**(C)** You will be expected to have read in preparation for the class discussion, with your participation in that discussion a required element of the course. Each day your oral participation will earn one of the following grades: +,  $\sqrt{\quad}$ , -, 0; at the end of the semester these will be added up (3, 2, 1, 0) and the totals graded on the curve, with one predefined point: showing up every day without a miss, but not saying

anything earns a D for this part of the course. Since class participation is a requirement, it is possible to fail just for missing too many classes. So don't miss.

**Administrative notices:**

**Students with Disabilities or Students who are Pregnant**

Students with disabilities or those who are pregnant are encouraged to contact me for a confidential discussion of their individual needs for academic accommodation. It is the policy of the University of Nebraska at Kearney to provide flexible and individualized reasonable accommodation to students with documented disabilities or those who are pregnant. To receive accommodation services for a disability, students must be registered with UNK Disabilities Services Coordinator, David Brandt, in the Academic Success Office, 163 Memorial Student Affairs Building, 308-865-8214 or by email [brandtdl@unk.edu](mailto:brandtdl@unk.edu).

If you already have an accommodation plan please review it with me as soon as possible, so we can make any arrangements necessary for your learning. No accommodations will be provided until a Reasonable Accommodation Plan is in place. Please remember, plans are not retroactive and cannot be used for assignments or events prior to the date of my signature.

To the greatest extent possible, UNK, shall observe confidentiality with respect to any request for accommodation.

For those needing accommodation due to pregnancy, you need to visit with Student Health. The following link provides information for students and faculty regarding pregnancy rights: <http://www.nwlc.org/resource/pregnant-and-parenting-students-rights-faqs-college-and-graduate-students>