*World of Ideas Course Syllabus*

*Instructor: Mr. Bordner
rich.bordner@pisd.edu*

**Needed Materials**

* Writing utensils
* Notebook
* A curious mind
* A great attitude!

**Purpose**

* To give you a greater sense of wonder at the world you live in by thinking deeply about it.
To introduce you to the major categories and concerns of philosophy.
* To pursue truth and avoid error by helping you think more critically and with greater precision about nearly everything.
* To help you express your own ideas with greater clarity, precision, and logical rigor.
* To help you use good arguments when expressing your opinions, as well as recognize bad ones.
* To enrich your understanding of and intellectual engagement in all your other courses of study.
* To apply the tools of clear thinking to current issues in science, ethics, art, politics, religion, economics, and psychology.
* To study the most important ideas that have shaped Western culture as we know it and the thinkers who expressed them.
* To show you how ideas have consequences in *every* facet of life.
* To not only become more learned, but more *skilled* at life through the acquisition of intellectual and moral virtue: in other words, we ought to become *better people* as a result of our studies.

**Content**

In this course, students will:

* Engage with various ideas, viewpoints, beliefs, and their consequences.
* Understand, ponder, and evaluate truth claims from a diverse array of worldviews.
* Express, justify, and clarify their thinking clearly through writing and various discussion/debate activities.

**A Few Things:**

* This will be an intellectually challenging class. You will be pushed.
This should excite you. This should make the class fun.
* Active participation is a consistent requirement!
* “Tolerance” does not mean you *approve* *of* or *agree with* what another person is saying (indeed, the word *implies* some kind of opposition)—but it *does* mean that you should respect the person with whom you disagree andtheir freedom to express him/herself.
* It is possible to critique an idea/argument *without attacking the person who holds the idea/makes the argument*!
* Ideas can and should be critiqued in a friendly, non-threatening manner using reason, not emotions, as the *primary* tool of philosophical analysis, while recognizing the important role that our emotions play in our intellectual life.
It is possible to examine deeply-held beliefs critically without necessarily having to abandon them.
Indeed, looking critically at such beliefs can be a way to *strengthen* them.
* A fair amount of controversy is commonplace in this class, for we will examine several fundamental questions on morality, meaning, and existence. A majority of our current day hot-button issues flow from these issues. Students will wrestle with the views and arguments from both sides of these questions. This means that somewhere along the line—most likely often—students will interact with views directly opposite their own. Adherence to any particular view, belief, or creed is, of course, not a requirement to do well in the course, but rigorous engagement with all viewpoints, including ones that some students might find offensive, is.

**Reasons why this is good:**

* Philosophy is intrinsically interesting. Ideas birth curiosity.
* Philosophy is objectively important. Ideas have consequences.
* Everyone is a philosopher. It’s just a matter of whether you are a good one or bad one.
* Not “if,” but “when:” students \*will\* come across these ideas sooner or later. Most already have, probably without realizing their influence on them. This course is a chance for them to coherently form their thoughts on these issues prior to striking out on their own. *Note: you, the parent, play a crucial role in helping them walk through this!* In other words, they get to think and ponder in safety.

**All of this above can be condensed down to the following:**

* THE goal of this course is to help students see the value of a deliberate and intentional life, and to help them figure out how to lead such a life.

This kind of life is exceptional in the sense that very few people do it. Henry David Thoreau said “the mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation.” That’s most people in the West. Most lead lives of quiet desperation (note: this describes even most people who are very entertained and therefore quite happy in life!) because they have not examined their lives. As Socrates argued before he was executed, “the unexamined life is not worth living.” To avoid the quiet desperation of which Thoreau speaks, you must be deliberate in thought and action. Purposeful. Intentional. This kind of thought process and life based upon it takes a considerable amount of effort, at least at first. But it is worth your while. The payoff is big.

**Parents!**

* I encourage parental involvement! Knowing the curriculum your student is learning from is a good thing. I therefore welcome questions and inquiry into the content from parents and guardians. They are your sons and daughters, afterall, so I acknowledge \*you\* as the primary educator and influence in their lives. They will benefit more from the course if they are conversing about the content at home with you. It is therefore imperative that we work together. Feel free to contact me at the email above.

**Class Procedures**

* Respect Mr. Bordner
* Respect your classmates
* Respect yourself
* Arrive on time each day, with a great attitude, ready to work, improve, and have fun!

**Tardy Procedures**

* Parent phone call/detention after 3rd tardy. Referral to student center for 4th and subsequent tardy
* If you are tardy more than 10 minutes, you will be marked absent (PSHS school policy)

**Absence/Late Work Procedures**

* Students risk not being able to make up work/quizzes/tests for unexcused absences and truancies
* The student has 1 day for each day absent to complete missed work without penalty
* Work that was assigned before absence and due during absence is due upon return
* If a test or quiz was scheduled on the first day of a student’s absence, then the student should be prepared to make up the test or quiz on the first day he/she returns to school
* For work that is officially late, students will lose 10% of the points per day late
* Quizzes/tests given after the original quiz/test date will be alternative versions (different than the one originally administered in class)
* Students will need to complete make up work for missed discussions that happened in class during the absence

**Grading:**

* Standard grading scale
* You must earn a 70% or better to pass the class

**Alternative assignments:**

* If a student has substantive objections (e.g, moral, religious) to learning certain material in any unit, he or she may opt out. This request must be made in a timely manner. In the case of an opt out, the student will be given alternative assignments in lieu of the original work. If the alternative assignments are thoroughly completed, the student’s grade will not be negatively impacted by the opt out.

**Tutorial Hours: in the morning before school, by appointment**

I am looking forward to a great year!
Rich Bordner

English Department

\*\*\*Note: parts of this syllabus are from Eric Twisselman’s Intro to Philosophy Syllabus, Whittier HS, Whittier, CA.

Dear Parent(s)/Guardians,

Please fill out this sheet indicating you have read and understand this packet, and return to me for 5 points by the end of the week.

Student name (please print \*legibly\*):\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Parent/guardian name(s) (please print):\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Parent/guardians signature(s):\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ We have read and understand the expectations of this class.

\_\_\_\_\_ We are aware that we can access grades, assignments, and other information on Pinnacle

\_\_\_\_\_ We understand the effective use of tutorials, and understand that it is a time to get help from Mr. Bordner, as well as make up quizzes, tests, and late work from ***excused absences***.

Parent/guardian contact information:
Email:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Phone:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_