PHIL 399.14 Lec 01
Topics in Philosophy (D&D and Philosophy)
SPRING 2022
MW 9:00-11:45 Taylor Institute Studio DE

COURSE OUTLINE

Instructor Name: Dr. Archie Fields III
Email: archie.fieldsiii@ucalgary.ca (response time typically 24-48 hours)
Office: Social Sciences 1207 (12th floor)
Office Hours: MW 12:00-13:00
Office Phone: N/A

COURSE INFORMATION
This course will explore philosophical topics related to the popular fantasy roleplaying game *Dungeons & Dragons* (D&D). This course will encompass both philosophy *through* D&D and philosophy *of* D&D. By 'philosophy through D&D,' I mean that students will engage in short sessions of D&D in which they will roleplay their way through philosophically-charged scenarios akin to extended, collective thought-experiments concerning topics such as death, free will, and personal identity. Having participated in the game, students will be better prepared to consider questions concerning the 'philosophy of D&D,' including assessments of issues like immersion, character bleed and identity, the ethics of simulated violence, and racism and sexism in D&D and gaming communities more broadly.

PREREQUISITE(S)
There are no prerequisites for this course. Please note that NO PRIOR EXPERIENCE with D&D is assumed or expected.

COURSE OBJECTIVES/LEARNING OUTCOMES
 • Become familiar with a variety of philosophical issues surrounding D&D as well as gaming more broadly including the ethics of simulated killing, immersion, and racism and sexism in fantasy worlds.
 • Critically engage with philosophical topics such as death, free will, and identity through D&D.
 • Develop critical reasoning and argumentative ability through discussion and writing assignments.
 • Engage in constructive, cooperative, respectful, oral and written argumentation.

REQUIRED/RECOMMENDED TEXTBOOKS, READINGS AND MATERIALS

Required:
Dungeons and Dragons and Philosophy: Read and Gain Advantage on All Wisdom Checks. Edited by Christopher Robichaud and William Irwin. Wiley-Blackwell, 2014.

Other required readings/articles will be posted to D2L.

Optional:
Mearls, Mike and Jeremy Crawford. *Dungeons & Dragons Player's Handbook*. Fifth Edition. Wizards of the Coast, 2014.

COURSE ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

Assessment Components

- **Participation in Game Sessions (10%)** After the first week of the course, you will be broken up into groups of five which will serve as your gaming and discussion group throughout the term. Five times during the term, groups will be asked to play a short D&D session written by the instructor in which group members are asked to grapple with certain philosophical problems or challenges. Participation in each session is worth 2% of the final grade.
- **Running ONE Game Session (10%)** For each game session, one member in each group will serve as the 'Dungeon Master' (DM) who arbitrates the game and the discussions that may take place during it. This role will rotate each session, so that each group member will serve as the DM once by the end of the term. The DM will run the game session (the instructor will be available to help and answer questions) and will write a short report (300-600 words) about the outcomes, challenges, and discussions that occurred during the game. Running the session is worth 5% of the final grade, and the report is worth another 5%.
- **Game Session Reports (30%)** Students must write a brief (300-600 words) report on three of their five gaming sessions, due at the end of the week on which the session occurs. This report should focus primarily on explicating and responding to the philosophical issue(s) present in the session, which may take the form of explaining/defending choices made in game in response to various dilemmas/scenarios presented. More detailed instructions on these reports will be posted to D2L. Each of the three reports is worth 10% of the final grade.
- **Discussion Activity Responses (20%)** For each of the seven weeks of the course there will be at least one specially designated group discussion activity which will prompt students to write a short (200-300 word) response to the discussion question(s). Students must complete four of these responses over the course by uploading them to D2L, with each response counting 5% towards the final grade.
- **Critical Reflective Paper (30%)** Students will write a 1500-2000 word essay on a topic related to the course. In this essay, students are asked to critically engage with one or more of the readings for the class as well as reflect on how their gaming experience has influenced their understanding of the topic and/or how the discussion of course topics has influenced their approach to gaming. More detailed instructions and a rubric will be posted to D2L. This essay will be due on D2L by 11:59 PM on Monday, June 20.

Assessment Policies
- Late work will be accepted with up to a 5% per day grade penalty as long as you let me know at least 24 hours before the due date (with exceptions for genuine last minute emergencies where advance notice is impossible).
- It is my hope that this course will be fully accessible to all students, without the need to seek formal accommodations (in addition to the official university policy that must be included below). Please let me know if there are things that I can do to make this class more accessible for you.
- Writing and the grading thereof is a factor in the evaluation of students' work.
- It is not necessary to receive a passing grade on any particular component of a course to pass the course as a whole.

Exams

There are no exams in the course.

Letter Grade Conversion Table
A+ 95-100%
A 90-94.9%
A- 85-89.9%
B+ 80-84.9%
B 75-79.9%
B- 70-74.9%
C+ 65-69.9%
C 60-64.9%
C- 55-59.9%
D+ 50-54.9%
D 45-49.9%
F 44.9% or lower

IMPORTANT DEPARTMENTAL, FACULTY AND UNIVERSITY INFORMATION

Academic Accommodations
It is the student's responsibility to request academic accommodations according to the University policies and procedures. The student accommodation policy can be found at ucalgary.ca/legal-services/sites/default/files/teams/1/Policies-Student-Accommodation-Policy.pdf.

Students needing an Accommodation because of a disability or medical condition should communicate this need to Student Accessibility Services in accordance with the Procedure for Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: ucalgary.ca/legal-services/sites/default/files/teams/1/Policies-Accommodation-for-Students-with-Disabilities-Procedure.pdf. Students needing an Accommodation in relation to their coursework or to fulfil requirements for a graduate degree, based on a protected ground other than disability, should communicate this need, preferably in writing, to their instructor.

Absence or Missed Course Assessments
Students who are absent from class assessments (tests, participation activities, or other assignments) should inform their instructors as soon as possible. If the reason provided for the absence is acceptable, instructors may decide that any arrangements made can take forms other than make-up tests or assignments. For example, the weight of a missed grade may be added to another assignment or test.

Student Support and Resources
Full details and information about the following resources can be found at ucalgary.ca/current-students/student-services

- Wellness and Mental Health Resources
- Student Success Centre
- Student Ombuds Office
- Student Union (SU) Information
- Graduate Students' Association (GSA) Information
- Emergency Evacuation/Assembly Points
- Safewalk

Academic Advising

If you are a student in the Faculty of Arts, you can speak to an academic advisor in the Arts Students' Centre about course planning, course selection, registration, program progression and more. Visit the Faculty of Arts website at
https://arts.ucalgary.ca/current-students/undergraduate/academic-advising
 for contact details and information regarding common academic concerns.

For questions specific to the philosophy program, please visit arts.ucalgary.ca/philosophy. Further academic guidance is available by contacting Jeremy Fantl (Undergraduate Program Director jfantl@ucalgary.ca) or David Dick (Honours Advisor dgdick@ucalgary.ca).

Writing Assessment and Support
The assessment of all written assignments—and, to a lesser extent, written exam responses—is based in part on writing skills. This includes correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc.), as well as general clarity and organization. Research papers must include a thorough and accurate citation of sources. Students are also encouraged to use Writing Support Services for assistance. For more information, and other services offered by the Student Success Centre, please visit ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success.

Required Technology
In order to successfully engage in their learning experiences at the University of Calgary, students taking online, remote, and blended courses are required to have reliable access to the following technology:
- A computer with a supported operating system, as well as the latest security, and malware updates;
- A current and updated web browser;
- Webcam (built-in or external);
- Microphone and speaker (built-in or external), or headset with microphone;
- Current antivirus and/or firewall software enabled;
- Broadband internet connection.

Most current laptops will have a built-in webcam, speaker and microphone.

Responsible Use of D2L
Important information and communication about this course will be posted on D2L (Desire2Learn), UCalgary's online learning management system. Visit https://ucalgary.service-now.com/it for how-to information and technical assistance.

All users of D2L are bound by the guidelines on the responsible use of D2L posted here:
https://elearn.ucalgary.ca/commitment-to-the-responsible-use-of-d2l/. The instructor may establish additional specific course policies for D2L, Zoom, and any other technologies used to support remote learning. Instructional materials, including audio or video recordings of lectures, may not be posted outside of the course D2L site. Students violating this policy are subject to discipline under the University of Calgary's Non-Academic Misconduct policy.

Media Recording
Please refer to the following statement on media recording of students:
https://elearn.ucalgary.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Media-Recording-in-Learning-Environments-OSP_FINAL.pdf

Academic Misconduct/Honesty
Cheating or plagiarism on any assignment or examination is as an extremely serious academic offense, the penalty for which will be an F on the assignment or an F in the course, and possibly a disciplinary sanction such as probation, suspension, or expulsion. For information on academic misconduct and its consequences, please see the University of Calgary Calendar at
ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html.

Intellectual honesty requires that your work include adequate referencing to sources. Plagiarism occurs when you do not acknowledge or correctly reference your sources. If you have questions about referencing, please consult your instructor.

University Policies
The Instructor Intellectual Property Policy is available at
ucalgary.ca/legal-services/sites/default/files/teams/1/Policies-Intellectual-Property-Policy.pdf

The University of Calgary is under the jurisdiction of the provincial Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act, as outlined at
https://www.ucalgary.ca/legal-services/access-information-privacy. The instructor (or TA) must return graded assignments *directly* to the student UNLESS written permission to do otherwise has been provided.

All students are required to read the University of Calgary policy on Acceptable Use of Material Protected by Copyright
(https://www.ucalgary.ca/legal-services/sites/default/files/teams/1/Policies-Acceptable-Use-of-Material-Protected-by-Copyright-Policy.pdf) and requirements of the copyright act
(https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-42/index.html).