

COURSE INFORMATION

1. OFFICE HOURS AND HOW TO REACH ME

I (Peter Vranas) will hold office hours every weekday (Monday through Friday) 8:40-9:40am at 432 Catt Hall (phone: 294-5306). That's five hours a week, so I intend to meet each of you several times during the term. You have no obligation to come (it doesn't count towards your course grade), but I hope you will take advantage of my willingness to give you individualized attention. I will be handing out sign-up sheets for my office hours, but feel free to make appointments if the above times don't suit you. You can best reach me by email (vranas@iastate.edu).

2. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

	Grade component	Due	Returned	Weight
1	16 mini-quizzes. During the <i>first</i> 4 or so minutes of each class we will have a mini-quiz consisting of 4 (usually true-false) questions on the reading for that class and on the previous lecture.	Beginning of each class	Next class	50%
2	16 email objections. <i>Before</i> each class you are to email me an objection on the <i>second half</i> of the assigned reading for that class.	3am on each class day	—	25%
3	Term paper (1,500 words maximum).	July 3	July 6	25%
<i>Extra credit:</i> (1) optional presentation; (2) bonus for perfect or near-perfect attendance.				100%

3. CLASS PARTICIPATION

My policy on class participation is motivated by two considerations. (1) On the one hand, I would like the atmosphere in class to encourage free, informed, and challenging discussion. I would like people to speak out of intrinsic motivation and interest in the topics, not to get a higher grade. And I wouldn't like people to be afraid of speaking because saying something less than brilliant might hurt their grade. (2) On the other hand, I would like *everyone* to participate: I believe that each of you has interesting things to say, and I would like to hear them.

For these reasons, class participation is **required but not graded**. On the one hand, *you have to speak in class at least once a week to pass the course*. On the other hand, your course grade will *not* be increased if you speak more and will *not* be affected by how clever what you say is. The participation requirement is redundant for most people: the topics we will discuss are sufficiently interesting to motivate you to talk out of sheer intellectual enjoyment.

Finally, in keeping with my goal of promoting *free* discussion, I will not call on people. With one exception: I will occasionally ask people to explain or clarify in class their email objection.

4. DISCUSSION RULES

The topics that we will discuss are highly controversial. It's important to keep the discussions civil. The fundamental rule is that we must **treat everyone with the utmost respect**. It's never acceptable to insult or ridicule people or views. Everyone should feel free to voice unpopular opinions, as long as the opinions are expressed respectfully and backed by arguments. *You should feel especially free to disagree with me*.

The fundamental rule of respect has two concrete consequences. (1) Interrupting others is disrespectful (and may also discourage shy people from participating): *please raise your hand and wait for your turn* before you speak. (2) Ignoring speakers is disrespectful: *please don't talk among yourselves* while someone is speaking.

5. MAIN COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. To help you become more open-minded by helping you realize that about every attempt to justify your positions is subject to powerful objections.
2. To help you realize that some positions are better justified than others, that one can give reasons for and against positions, that philosophy is not merely a matter of opinion.
3. To fight superficiality by emphasizing quality rather than quantity.
4. To help you develop valuable skills by emphasizing original thinking, clarity, and precision in your paper.

6. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS

If you would like me to make special arrangements for you because (1) you have a disability or because (2) you are observing certain religious holidays, please let me know as soon as possible. (Students with disabilities are advised to contact the Disability Resources Office, located on the main floor of the Student Services Building, Room 1076, 294-6624.)