

INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

PHIL 201 (3 hrs), Manchester College, January 2008

Time: M-F, 9:00-11:50 AM, **Place:** Admin 219

Instructor: Dr. Steve Naragon, Office: Ad Bldg., #231c (Phone — *office:* 982-5041; *home:* 982-6033)

Required Texts: (1) Naragon, *"A Book is a Machine to Help One Think": An Introduction to Philosophy* (Fall 2006); (2) Plato, *Five Dialogues*, 2nd ed. (Hackett); (3) René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy* (Hackett).

Course Objectives. After a semester of hard work, deep confusion, and more hard work, you will have: (1) become acquainted with the nature of Western philosophy and some of its perennial concerns; (2) further developed your logical and analytic skills for critically evaluating arguments and beliefs; (3) had the opportunity to reflect on some of the most pressing questions confronting each of us as human beings (once our material needs are met), such as: Is there an objective difference between right and wrong, and true and false? If there is, can we come to know it? Can we prove or disprove the existence of God? What is it to be human?

After this semester, most of you will never again be asked to explain Descartes's argument against skepticism or Kant's moral theory, but all of you will be required to live; and this you can do either intelligently or not, either well or not. You can live lives of wonder, filled with beauty, and seeking truth — or not.

You will be asked in this course to learn and understand various concepts and theories and arguments; but in doing this, you will also be developing your skills in thinking critically and creatively about the world around you, and about the role you see yourself playing in this world.

Requirements

Attendance. If you do not plan to attend class and participate constructively, then you should withdraw from this class. A course on philosophy is by its nature aimed at self-examination and discussion; consequently, doing well in this class requires being there. Missing class does not directly affect your grade, although students with poor attendance typically do quite poorly in the class. On the average, students missing more than two classes during the semester receive grades below the class average. In Jan Term, missing a day is like missing an entire week during fall or spring semester.

Exams. There will be two non-cumulative exams over the readings and lectures. [Makeup: Exams missed due to an excused absence are to be taken as soon as possible or else will be forfeited. It is your responsibility to see me about this.]

Quizzes. There will be a brief quiz at the beginning of every, or almost every class on the topic for the day (and possibly also including material from previous class sessions). These quizzes help keep me informed of your grasp of the material, and should also help motivate you to keep up with the readings. They will consist of either four objective questions (multiple choice) or else a "short essay" question. [Makeup: Missed quizzes can be made up in my office the following day or at the very beginning of the next class session, but it is your responsibility to make this arrangement.]

In-Class Writing. There will be brief writing assignments completed in class.

Short Response Papers. You will need to complete evaluation forms for **six** of the films that we watch as a class. We will watch seven of these in the evening and one during class, for a total of eight. The form is available on Blackboard; you can either type in your responses, or handwrite them (if you can write neatly). The completed forms are due at the beginning of the next class.

Long Response Papers. You will need to write two longer, four-page (about 1200-1600 words) response papers to films drawn from a list found on Blackboard ("Course Assignments" folder). These are due on **Thur, Jan 10**, and **Fri, Jan 18**. You may complete a third response paper for extra credit, if you wish. This paper would be due on the last class day.

Grading. The two exams are worth a total of 60% (2 x 30%); the set of quizzes is worth 10%; in-class writing is worth 6%; the group of short papers is worth 12% and each of the longer papers is worth 6% (for a total of 12%). I use the following letter grade conversion scale: A (94-100), A- (90-93), B+ (87-89), B (83-86), B- (80-82), C+ (77-79), C (73-76), C- (70-72), D+ (67-69), D (63-66), D-(60-62), F (0-59).

Cheating and Plagiarism. Everyone knows what cheating is, and knows how to avoid it; plagiarism, on the other hand, is a little trickier. *Plagiarism* consists of submitting the statements, ideas, opinions, or findings of another *as if they were your own*. It is *not* plagiarism to copy from or paraphrase a source as long as this is acknowledged and the source is cited. Deliberate plagiarism will result in your automatically failing the class. For more information, see the college *Catalog*.

SCHEDULE OF DISCUSSION AND READINGS

All readings are in my textbook, except for those supplied on Blackboard (Bb), or in the Descartes and Plato texts.

Logic and Epistemology

Thu, Jan 3

(1) Logic and Good Arguments

Read: Naragon (§§1-4).

Thursday Movie Night: *Twelve Angry Men (1957)*

Fri, Jan 4

(2) What should I believe?

Read: Naragon (§§6-7), Plato (“Allegory of the Cave” + *Apology*), Clifford (“The Ethics of Belief”).

Sunday Movie Night: *Waking Life (2001)*

Mon, Jan 7

(3) Can I know anything at all?

Read: Naragon (§§11-16), Descartes (*Meditation 1 and 2*), Borges (“Circular Ruins”), Russell (“The Value of Philosophy”).

Tue, Jan 8

(4) Can I distinguish appearance and reality?

Read: Naragon (§§17-19), Locke (*Essay on Human Understanding*), Berkeley (*Treatise*).

Tuesday Movie Night: *Being John Malkovich (1999)*

Mind and Body

Wed, Jan 9

(5) What am I?

Read: Naragon (“Mind and Self,” §§1-3 [Bb]), Descartes (*Discourse on Method*).

Thu, Jan 10

(6) Am I the same person through time?

Read: Naragon (§§31-33), Locke (“Identity and Diversity” [Bb]), Dennett (“Where am I?”).

Thursday Movie Night: *Artificial Intelligence (2001)*

Fri, Jan 11

(7) Can computers think and feel?

Read: Naragon (“Mind and Self,” §4 [Bb]), Lycan (“Robots and Minds”), Searle/Dennett (“The Myth of the Computer”).

Mon, Jan 14

(8) Am I free?

Read: Naragon (“Free Will and Determinism” [Bb]), Stace (“The Problem of Morals” [Bb]).

First Exam (in second half of the morning).

Monday Movie Night: *The Apostle (1998)*

Philosophy of Religion

Tue, Jan 15

(9) Faith and Reason

Read: Naragon (§§22-24), Smullyan (“A Conversation with God”), Rousseau (“Creed of a Priest of Savoy”).

Wed, Jan 16

(10) Can I prove God’s existence?

Read: Naragon (§§26-27), Aquinas (*Summa Theologia*, 3rd Article), Paley (“Natural Theology”), Begley (“Science finds Religion”), Holt (“Supernatural Selection”).

Wednesday Movie Night: *The Seventh Seal (1957)*

Thu, Jan 17

(11) The Problem of Evil

Read: Naragon (§28), Dostoyevsky (*The Brothers Karamazov*, Chs. 3-4), Russell (“Why I Am Not a Christian”).

Fri, Jan 18

(12) Betting on God

Read: Naragon (§§29-30), Pascal (“The Wager” [Bb]).

In-class movie: *Life is Beautiful (1998)*

Sunday Movie Night: *Crimes and Misdemeanors (1989)*

Ethics

Mon, Jan 21

(13) Why be moral?

Read: Naragon (§§34-37), Plato (“Ring of Gyges”), Benedict (“Anthropology and the Abnormal”).

Tue, Jan 22

(14) Virtue and Happiness

Read: Naragon (§§40-42), Aristotle (“Nicomachean Ethics”), Mill (“Utilitarianism”).

Wed, Jan 23

(15) Doing the right thing for the right reason

Read: Naragon (§§43-47), Kant (“Foundations”), LeGuin (“Omelas” [Bb]).

Second Exam (in second half of the morning).