

# INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

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

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**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*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Hackett); (3) René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy* (Hackett); (4) John Perry, *A Dialogue on Personal Identity and Immortality* (Hackett).

**Recommended Text:** (1) Antony Flew, ed., *A Dictionary of Philosophy* (any edition).

**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 it.

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## Requirements

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**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.

**Exams.** There will be three 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 nearly every day, given at the beginning of class on the readings for that day and previous class sessions. These exercises help keep me informed of your grasp of the material, and should also help motivate you to keep up with the readings. [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.]

**Interviews.** Each student will write two interview papers on topics to be announced later. Each paper should be about three typed pages (1500-1800 words). A first draft will be evaluated by other students, while the second (or final) draft will be evaluated and graded by the instructor. Due dates for the first paper: Tuesday, **March 25** (1st draft) and Thursday, **April 3** (final draft). Due dates for the second paper: Tuesday, **April 22** (1st draft) and Thursday, **May 1** (final draft). Please bring two copies of your first draft to class on the first due date, and hand in both evaluated 1st drafts along with your final draft on the second due date.

**Interview Evaluations.** You will be expected to evaluate four interviews written by others in the class (see Blackboard for guidance with this). Each evaluation will receive from 0 to 2 points depending on how helpful your comments are; 8 pts. total are needed for a perfect score. It is your responsibility to make sure that you evaluate the proper number of essays.

**Extra Credit Opportunities.** I will try to arrange ten or so optional opportunities (typically: philosophical presentations or discussions outside of class, or additional essays to read) that you may discuss in brief (2-3 pp.) essays for extra credit. Guidelines for writing these extra credit essays can be found on Blackboard. The maximum number of extra credit points (20) will add four %-points to your course grade.

**Grading.** The three exams are worth a total of 57% (19%, 19%, 19%); the set of quizzes is worth 13%; each interview paper is worth 14%; and the set of evaluations is worth 2%. 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.** 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. Cheating and deliberate plagiarism will result in automatically failing the class. For more information, see the college *Catalog*.

## SCHEDULE OF DISCUSSION AND READINGS

Most of the readings are found in the latter half of my handbook (H); some of the Plato and all of the Descartes is found in separate books. The rest consists of sections (§§) from the first half of the handbook (H).

### *Logic and Belief*

#### Thu, Jan 31

(1) Introduction to the Course, and some logic.

#### Tue, Feb 5

(2) Deductive Logic: Russell, "The Value of Philosophy" + H, §§1-4.

#### Thu, Feb 7

(3) Inductive Logic: H, §4.

#### Tue, Feb 12

(4) Leaving Plato's Cave: Postman, "The Darkness and the Light" + Plato, "Allegory of the Cave"

#### Thu, Feb 14

(5) On Method — deciding how to decide what to believe: Peirce, "Fixation of Belief."

#### Tue, Feb 19

(6) Are all methods permissible?: Clifford, "The Ethics of Belief."

### *Socrates and Plato*

#### Thu, Feb 21

(7) The Philosopher: Plato, "Apology" (*Five Dialogues*) + Sartre, "The Wall" + H, §§6-7.

#### Tue, Feb 26

(8) Definitions: Plato, "Euthyphro" (*Five Dialogues*) + H, §9.

#### Thu, Feb 28

(9) Citizen and State: Plato, "Crito" (*Five Dialogues*) + King, "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" + H, §10.

**Thu, Mar 4**

**First Exam**

### *Ethics*

#### Thu, Mar 6

(10) Why Be Moral? Plato, "Ring of Gyges" + Singer, "The Prisoner's Dilemma" + H, §§34-36.

#### Tue, Mar 11

(11) Moral Subjectivism: Benedict, "Anthropology and the Abnormal" + H, §37.

#### Thu, Mar 13

(12) Virtue Ethics: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* + H, §40

----- **Spring break!** -----

#### Tue, Mar 25

(13) Utilitarian Ethics: Mill, *Utilitarianism* + H, §§41-42.

#### Thu, Mar 27

(14) Deontological Ethics: Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals* + H, §§43-47.

### *Epistemology*

#### Tue, Apr 1

(15) Skepticism: Descartes, "1st Meditation" (*Meditations on First Philosophy*) + H, §§11-13.

#### Thu, Apr 3

(16) Cartesian Dualism: Descartes, "2nd Meditation" (*Meditations on First Philosophy*) + Borges, "The Circular Ruins" + H, §§14-16.

#### Tue, Apr 8

(17) Locke's Empiricism: Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* + H, §§17-18.

**Thu, Apr 10**

**Second Exam**

### *Philosophy of Religion*

#### Tue, Apr 15

(18) Belief & God: Smullyan, "A Conversation with God" + H, §§22-23.

#### Thu, Apr 17

(19) Faith and Reason: Rousseau, "The Creed of the Priest of Savoy" + Einstein, "Religion and Science" + H, §24.

#### Tue, Apr 22

(20) Ontological Argument: Anselm, *Proslogion* + H, §25.

#### Thu, Apr 24

(21) Cosmological Argument: Aquinas, *Summa Theologia*, 3<sup>rd</sup> article + H, §26.

#### Tue, Apr 29

(22) Argument from Design: Paley, *Natural Theology* + Begley, "Science finds Religion" + Holt, "Supernatural Selection" + H, §27.

#### Thu, May 1

(23) Problem of Evil: Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, Chs. 3-4 + Russell, "Why I Am Not a Christian" + H, §28.

### *Immortality and Personal Identity*

#### Tue, May 6

(24) Immortality: Perry, pp. 1-36 + H, §§34-35.

#### Thu, May 8

(25) Where am I?: Perry, pp. 37-49 + Dennett, "Where am I?" + H, §36.

**Finals Week**

**Third Exam**