

# INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

PHIL 201 (3 hrs), Manchester College, Spring 2009

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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 2008 or Spring 2009); (2) Plato, *Five Dialogues*, 2<sup>nd</sup> 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’ 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 aim to 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.

A more detailed set of learning objectives can be found on the web syllabus, listed under each reading module.

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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.]

**Journals.** Much of your time in this class will be spent reading texts and writing these journals. Of the ten journal assignments given on the web syllabus, you need to write on five of them. A journal entry will be due about once each week. For further directions and the actual assignments, see the Journal Questions page (found on the Web-based syllabus). **Late Policy:** Because you are permitted to choose from a set of assignments, no late journals will be accepted; but you are always welcome to complete any of these assignments for extra credit (be sure to drop it into the “EC” journal drop box).

**Interviews.** Two interview papers will be assigned (700-900 words each). See the web syllabus for details.

**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. There is also a set of three online quizzes covering the logic material at the beginning of the semester. [**Makeup:** Missed quizzes can be made up in my office until the end of the following day, but it is your responsibility to make this arrangement.]

**Extra credit Journals.** These are opportunities for exploring additional texts, films, videos, podcasts, etc. — see the web syllabus for details.

**Grading.** The three exams are worth a total of 60% (20% each); the set of journals is worth 20%; the two interviews are worth 14% (7% each); the set of quizzes is worth 6% (the three logic quizzes are 1%). 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).

**Cell Phones.** Please don’t bring these to class. If you bring a cell phone, it needs to be turned off and put away, preferably at the bottom of a very deep pocket or book bag. If you are unable to part company with your cell phone, or are unable to keep it turned off and stowed, then please don’t come to class. Thank you.

**Students with Disabilities.** Manchester College, in compliance with federal guidelines, is committed to providing students with disabilities an access to programs and activities that is equal to the access provided to students without disabilities. If you believe that you need an accommodation due to a disability, please contact Bonnie O’Connell, the director of services for students with disabilities (Success Center, second floor of the Union); please telephone 982-5076 to schedule an appointment.

**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

### Logic and Belief

#### Thu, Feb 5

(1) What is Philosophy? (N, §§1-3)

#### Tue, Feb 10

(2) Analyzing Arguments (N, §§4-5)

- Plato's "Allegory of the Cave" (early 4th century BCE)
- Neil Postman, "Darkness and the Light" (1995)

#### Thu, Feb 12

(3) Deductive Logic (N, §6)

- Bertrand Russell, "The Value of Philosophy" (1912)

#### Tue, Feb 17

(4) Inductive Logic (N, §7)

#### Thu, Feb 19

(5) On the Method of Deciding What to Believe

- C. S. Peirce, "Fixation of Belief" (1877)
- W. K. Clifford, "The Ethics of Belief" (1877)

### Socrates and Plato

#### Tue, Feb 24

(6) Plato's *Apology*: The Role of the Philosopher (N, §§9-10)

- Plato, *Apology* (early 4th c. BCE)
- Jean-Paul Sartre, "The Wall" (1939)

#### Thu, Feb 26

(7) Plato's *Meno*: The Benefits of Philosophy (N, §11)

- Plato, *Meno* (early 4th c. BCE)

#### Tue, Mar 3

(8) Plato's *Euthyphro*: The Nature of Definitions (N, §12)

- Plato, *Euthyphro* (early 4th c. BCE)

#### Thu, Mar 5

(9) Plato's *Crito*: The Citizen and the State (N, §13)

- Plato, *Crito* (early 4th c. BCE)
- Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" (1963)

**Tue, Mar 10**

**First Exam**

### Ethics

#### Thu, Mar 12

(10) Why Be Moral? (N, §45)

- Plato, "Ring of Gyges" (from *The Republic*; early 4th c. BCE)
- Peter Singer, "The Prisoner's Dilemma" (1981)
- Natalie Angier, "Why We're So Nice" (2002)

#### Tue, Mar 17

(11) From Moral Intuition to Moral Theory (N, §46)

- Mark Twain, selection from *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885)

#### Thu, Mar 19

(12) Moral Subjectivism (N, §47)

- Ruth Benedict, "Anthropology and the Abnormal" (1934)

#### Spring Break

#### Tue, Mar 31

(13) Aristotle's Virtue Ethic (N, §50)

- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (4th c. BCE) (selection)

#### Thu, Apr 2

(14) Mill's Utilitarianism (N, §§51-52)

- John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism* (1863) (selection)
- Ursula Le Guin, "The Ones Who Walk Away From Omelas" (1973)

#### Tue, Apr 7

(15) Kant's Deontology (N, §§53-55)

- Immanuel Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785) (sel)

### Epistemology

#### Thu, Apr 9

(16) What Can I Know? (N, §§14-16)

- René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, "First Meditation" (1641)

#### Tue, Apr 14

(17) Cartesian Dualism (N, §§17-19)

- René Descartes, *Meditations...*, "Second Meditation" (1641)
- Jorge Luis Borges, "The Circular Ruins" (1940)

#### Thu, Apr 16

(18) Locke's Empiricism (N, §§20-21)

- John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690) (sel)

**Tue, Apr 21**

**Second Exam**

### The Metaphysics of Being Human

#### Thu, Apr 23

(19) Minds, Brains, and Selves (N, §§25-27)

- René Descartes, *Discourse on Method* (1637) (selection)

#### Tue, Apr 28

(20) Minds and Machines (N, §28)

- John Searle, "The Myth of the Computer" (1982)
- Stephen Law, "Could a Machine Think?" (2003)

#### Thu, Apr 30

(21) Are We Free? (N, §§29-32)

- Paul-Henri Thiry, Baron d'Holbach, *The System of Nature* (1770) (selection)
- Walter Stace, "The Problem of Morals" (1952)

### Philosophy of Religion

#### Tue, May 5

(22) Do you believe in God? (N, §§36-37)

- Raymond Smullyan, "Conversation with God" (1977)

#### Thu, May 7

(23) Faith and Reason (N, §38)

- Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "The Creed of the Priest of Savoy" (1762)
- Albert Einstein, "Religion and Science" (1930)

#### Tue, May 12

(24) Argument from Design (N, §41)

- William Paley, *Natural Theology* (1802) (selection)
- Sharon Begley, "Science finds Religion" (1998)
- Jim Holt, "Supernatural Selection" (2002)

#### Thu, May 14

(25) Problem of Evil (N, §§42, 44)

- Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Brothers Karamazov* (1880) (selection)
- Bertrand Russell, "Why I am not a Christian" (1927)

**Finals Week**

**Third Exam**