

INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

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

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Required Texts: (1) Naragon, “*A Book is a Machine to Help One Think*”: *An Introduction to Philosophy* (Fall 2008); (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’ 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 course website, accessed through the Angel program.

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.

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.]

Reading Journals. The majority of your time in this class will be spent reading texts and writing these journals. A journal entry will be due about once each week (the logic homework during the first two weeks will also count as journal entries). For further directions and the actual assignments, see the Journal Questions page (found on the Web-based syllabus). **Late Policy:** late journal entries will be accepted only in the case of unforeseeable emergencies. If you know you need to miss class, email the journal entry to me, or send a copy to class with a friend.

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.]

Extra credit Journals. These are opportunities for exploring additional texts, films, videos, podcasts, etc., and should be written like the Reading Journals, using the same guidelines and grading rubric, although your discussion will be of your own choosing (rather than following some study question). A total of 50 pts. can be accumulated, which will add 4% to your course grade. Appropriate materials for writing a response paper will include those “Other Resources” listed on the “Study/Exam Schedule” found on the course website (other than the YouTube videos and the Monty Python material). These journals are due no later than one week after the day where they are listed on the syllabus.

Grading. The three exams are worth a total of 75% (25% each); the set of reading journals is worth 20%; the set of quizzes is worth 5%. 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).

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, Sep 4

- (1) What is Philosophy? (N, §§1-3)
- Bertrand Russell, "The Value of Philosophy" (1912)

Tue, Sep 9

- (2) Analyzing Arguments (N, §§4-5)
- Plato's "Allegory of the Cave" (early 4th century BCE)
 - Neil Postman, "Darkness and the Light" (1995)

Thu, Sep 11

- (3) Deductive Logic (N, §6)

Tue, Sep 16

- (4) Inductive Logic (N, §7)

Thu, Sep 18

- (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, Sep 23

- (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, Sep 25

- (7) Plato's *Meno*: The Benefits of Philosophy (N, §11)
- Plato, *Meno* (early 4th c. BCE)

Tue, Sep 30

- (8) Plato's *Euthyphro*: The Nature of Definitions (N, §12)
- Plato, *Euthyphro* (early 4th c. BCE)

Thu, Oct 2

- (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, Oct 7

First Exam

Ethics

Thu, Oct 9

- (10) Why Be Moral? (N, §45)
- Plato, "Ring of Gyges" (from *The Republic*; early 4th c. BCE)
 - Peter Singer, "The Prisoner's Dilemma" (1981)

Tue, Oct 14

- (11) From Moral Intuition to Moral Theory (N, §46)
- Natalie Angier, "Why We're So Nice" (2002)

Thu, Oct 16

- (12) Moral Subjectivism (N, §47)
- Ruth Benedict, "Anthropology and the Abnormal" (1934)

----- Fall Break -----

Thu, Oct 23

- (13) Aristotle's Virtue Ethic (N, §50)
- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (4th c. BCE) (selection)

Tue, Oct 28

- (14) Mill's Utilitarianism (N, §§51-52)
- John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism* (1863) (selection)
 - Ursula Le Guin, "The Ones Who Walk Away From Omelas" (1973)

Thu, Oct 30

- (15) Kant's Deontology (N, §§53-55)
- Immanuel Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785) (sel)
 - Onora O'Neill, "A Simplified Account of Kant's Ethics" (1986)

Epistemology

Tue, Nov 4

- (16) What Can I Know? (N, §§14-16)
- René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, "First Meditation" (1641)

Thu, Nov 6

- (17) Cartesian Dualism (N, §§17-19)
- René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, "Second Meditation" (1641)
 - Jorge Luis Borges, "The Circular Ruins" (1940)

Tue, Nov 11

- (18) Locke's Empiricism (N, §§20-21)
- John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690) (sel)

Thu, Nov 13

Second Exam

The Metaphysics of Being Human

Tue, Nov 18

- (19) Minds, Brains, and Selves (N, §§25-28)
- René Descartes, *Discourse on Method* (1637) (selection)
 - John Searle, "The Myth of the Computer" (1982)
 - Stephen Law, "Could a Machine Think?" (2003)

Thu, Nov 20

- (20) 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, Nov 25

- (21) Do you believe in God? (N, §§36-37)
- Raymond Smullyan, "Conversation with God" (1977)

----- Thanksgiving -----

Tue, Dec 2

- (22) Faith and Reason (N, §38)
- Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "The Creed of the Priest of Savoy" (1762)
 - Albert Einstein, "Religion and Science" (1930)

Thu, Dec 4

- (23) Cosmological Argument (N, §40)
- Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, "Whether God Exists?" (1265-72)

Tue, Dec 9

- (24) Argument from Design (N, §41)
- William Paley, *Natural Theology* (1802) (selection)
 - Sharon Begley, "Science finds Religion" (1998)
 - Jim Holt, "Supernatural Selection" (2002)

Thu, Dec 11

- (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