

INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

PHIL 201 (3 hrs), Manchester College, **Spring 2012** [TR 9:30-10:45AM]

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

Web Syllabus: <http://users.manchester.edu/Facstaff/SSNaragon/Online/201-S12/Welcome.html>

You will need to consult the web syllabus for every class session.

Required Texts: (1) Naragon, *"A Book is a Machine to Help One Think": An Introduction to Philosophy* (Fall 2011); (2) Plato, *Five Dialogues*, 2nd ed. (Hackett); (3) René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy* (Hackett).

General Education Goals. This course satisfies the Core 4PH (philosophy) requirement, whose goals for the student are:

1. to discuss the approaches that philosophers take to fundamental human questions, and
2. to acquire the vocabulary and skills necessary to engage in philosophical inquiry, especially through developing your ability to understand and evaluate arguments.

These goals are furthered by (a) your careful reading of the texts, (b) classroom and small group discussion, and (c) writing and responding to Discussion Forum posts on a number of central topics in philosophy. The goals are further elaborated, in the context of this course, under the "Course Objectives":

Course Objectives. Philosophy is a discipline in the **humanities**; as such it is interested in goals rather distinct from those of the natural and social sciences — although philosophy also pays close attention to the findings of these other areas of human inquiry.

Philosophy is concerned less with the accumulation of facts, than with the education of the individual. My primary goal — and the goal of the humanities in general — is to help each individual increase their level of self-understanding. This is not a small matter, and it lies at the heart of any human existence that is worth living.

So here's the deal: After a semester of hard work, deep confusion, and more hard work, you should be able to ...

1. demonstrate a basic understanding of the areas of Western philosophy and some of its perennial concerns;
2. demonstrate a basic command of logical reasoning and conceptual analysis;
3. critically evaluate arguments and beliefs — in particular, you will be able to think more critically about your own assumptions and beliefs;
4. discuss with more depth, and with greater appreciation of different perspectives, some of the most pressing questions confronting each of us as human beings, such as: Is there an objective difference between right and wrong, and true and false? If there is, can we come to know it? How might we best get on with each other? Are there better and worse ways for organizing our communal existence? Can we prove or disprove the existence of God? Is knowledge of the divine possible? 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 each of you will be required to live your life, and this you can do either with intelligence, understanding, and compassion — or not. You can aim to live a life filled with wonder and beauty, and seeking truth — or not. What shape such a life takes is up to you, but philosophy can provide you with some useful tools for shaping it.

You will be asked in this course to learn and understand various concepts and theories and arguments. In doing this, you will also develop your ability to think critically and creatively about the world around you, and about the role you see yourself playing in it.

Course 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.]

Discussion Forum. There are seven discussion forums, each of which will require **one post** and **two comments** from you. The posts have a 500 word minimum, and comments a 100 word minimum (see the rubric on the web). These will be completed on ANGEL.

Quizzes. There will be a quiz nearly every day at the beginning of class on the readings for that day and material discussed the previous class day. These exercises help keep us both informed of your grasp of the material. [**Makeup:** Missed quizzes can be made up in my office, but this has to occur before the next class meeting. It is entirely your responsibility to make this arrangement.]

Extra credit Journals. See the web syllabus for opportunities to explore additional texts, films, videos, podcasts, etc.

Students with Disabilities. See the web syllabus.

Grading. The set of three exams is worth 51% (17% each); the set of discussion forums is worth 40%; and the set of quizzes is worth 9%. 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. Don't bring these to class, if possible. If you do 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. Thank you.



Cheating and Plagiarism. See the web syllabus.

SCHEDULE OF DISCUSSION AND READINGS

Logic and Belief

Tue, Jan 31

(1) What is Philosophy? (N, §§1-3)

Thu, Feb 2

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

Tue, Feb 7

(3) Deductive Logic (N, §6)
 • Bertrand Russell, "The Value of Philosophy" (1912)

Thu, Feb 9

(4) Inductive Logic (N, §7)

Tue, Feb 14

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

Thu, Feb 16 — [No Class]

Socrates and Plato

Tue, Feb 21

(6) The Role of the Philosopher (N, §§9-10)
 • Plato, *Apology* (early 4th c. BCE)
 • Jean-Paul Sartre, "The Wall" (1939)

Thu, Feb 23

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

Tue, Feb 28

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

Thu, Mar 1

(9) The Citizen and the State (N, §13)
 • Plato, *Crito* (early 4th c. BCE)
 • M. L. King, Jr., "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" (1963)

Tue, Mar 6	Exam #1
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Ethics

Thu, Mar 8

(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, Mar 13

(11) From Moral Intuition to Moral Theory (N, §46)
 • Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885) (sel)

Thu, Mar 15

(12) Ethical Subjectivism (N, §47)
 • Jesse Prinz, "Morality is a Culturally Conditioned Response" (2011)

--- Spring Break ---

Tue, Mar 27

(13) Aristotle's Virtue Ethic (N, §50)
 • Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Bks. 1-2

Thu, Mar 29

(14) Mill's Utilitarianism (N, §51-52)
 • J. S. Mill, *Utilitarianism* (1863) (selection)
 • Ursula Le Guin, "Walk Away From Omelas" (1973)

Tue, Apr 3

(15) Kant's Deontology (N, §§53-55)
 • Immanuel Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785) (sel)

The Metaphysics of Being Human

Thu, Apr 5

(16) Minds, Brains, Selves (N, §§25-27)
 • René Descartes, *Discourse on Method* (1637) (selection)
 • Stephen Law, "Could a Machine Think?" (2003)
 • YouTube videos (web syllabus)

Tue, Apr 10

(17) Minds and Machines (N, §28)
 • John Searle, "The Myth of the Computer" (1982)
 • Terry Bisson, "They're Made out of Meat" (1991)

Thu, Apr 12	Exam #2
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Epistemology

Tue, Apr 17

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

Thu, Apr 19

(19) Cartesian Dualism (N, §§17-19)
 • René Descartes, "Second Meditation"
 • J. Borges, "The Circular Ruins" (1940)

Tue, Apr 24

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

Philosophy of Religion

Thu, Apr 26

(21) Believing in God (N, §§36-37)
 • Raymond Smullyan, "Conversation with God" (1977)
 • Albert Einstein, "Religion and Science" (1930)

Tue, May 1

(22) Faith and Reason (N, §38)
 • Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "Creed of the Priest of Savoy" (1762)

Thu, May 3

(23) The Argument from Design (N, §41)
 • Paley, *Natural Theology* (1802) (sel)
 • Begley, "Science finds Religion" (1998)

Tue, May 8

(24) The Problem of Evil (N, §42)
 • Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Brothers Karamazov* (1880) (selection)

Thu, May 10

(25) Pascal's Wager (N, §§43-44)
 • Blaise Pascal, "The Wager" (1662)

Finals Week	Exam #3
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