

## Fall 2016 Syllabus

### PHL 200, Introduction to Philosophy: “Goodness, Truth, and Beauty”

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**Office Hours:** Mondays 12-1, Kinlaw Library by Lewis Corner.

### Course Description:

Who are you? Where does the world come from? This class is an exercise in answering these questions by practicing a different way of thinking. We will think deeply about the world, God, death, science, logic, language, and our own selves. We will learn some facts of history, vocabulary words, philosophical concepts, and big names. But our main task is to *think*. We will think slowly, carefully, methodically, and deeply about important things, such as our own identity, the existence of God, the structure of the cosmos, and the moral law. At times, you will *probably* be confused. You will *certainly* be challenged. You *may* be changed forever.

Every week we will read, write about, and discuss a primary source from western history. You will get better at reading actively, discussing intentionally and writing logically. These skills are not just useful for philosophy. They will make you better in computer programming or chemistry, better in motherhood or the ministry. (The top five most coveted job skills are communication, teamwork, critical thinking, and creativity, and self-discipline.)

Most importantly, this new way of thinking will help us love God with all our minds. We will become more connected, integrated, thoughtful, reflective human beings. The ultimate motivation for having the conversation we call philosophy must be that it can make us better. We are also entering into the Great Conversation with our own, often confused thoughts, becoming part of the Conversation, and being forever changed.

#### **Our goals then are:**

- To read, comprehend, evaluate and discuss difficult philosophical arguments.

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- To become familiar with the thought of major philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, and to understand the major questions they seek to answer.
  - To understand the Christian answers to questions about the meaning of life, the structure of the cosmos, the possibility of scientific knowledge, and the ground of morality, as contrasted with metaphysical naturalism, nihilism, and deism.
  - To practice reflect thinking upon our own lives, beliefs, attitudes, culture, and goals, in order to become more thoughtful human beings in the pursuit of goodness, truth, and beauty.

## Books

- Jostein Gaarder, *Sophie's World* ISBN: 0374530718
- Plato, *Last Days of Socrates (Euthyphro, Apology, Phaedo)* ISBN: 0140449280
- Augustine, *Confessions* ISBN: 0199537828

Buy these books right away. Use these ISBNs only, please. Please, no Kindle unless cost is prohibitive since paper books are better for taking notes, and make it easier to stay on the same page. (New or used is fine.)

### Handouts & Films, provided online

- Genesis (Chps. 1-2)
- Peter Kreeft, "Is truth objective?"
- Peter Kreeft, "Is there a real moral law?"
- Aristotle's "Four Causes"
- Aristotle "Happiness"
- Peter Kreeft, "Are universals real?"
- Bertrand Russell "Free Man's Worship"
- Aquinas, "God and Happiness"
- Edward Feser, "Can We Make Sense of the World?"
- Richard Dawkins, "Why there is almost certainly no god"
- Dargis, "In Defense of Slow Movies"
- The Gospel of John (without chapters, verses, or cross-references)

### Films, provided for purchase or free viewing

- Toy Story 3
- Matrix

- 2001: A Space Odyssey
- Tree of Life

## Course Outline

Follow the link to the course outline. It tells you the reading due and the topic for each day. It also provides detailed notes to help you prepare your thoughts.

*Subject to minor changes. The online version is always up to date.*

## Scope and Sequence:

To accomplish our goals, each (2-week) Unit consists of readings, quizzes, discussion and writing, and possibly a paper. There is a midterm and final.

## Grading:

You will be graded equally on each component, plus applicable extra credit.

Assessment category	Percent of semester grade
Readings (Quizzes)	25%
Participation (Talking, writing)	25%
Tests (Midterm, Final)	25%
Disputation Papers	25%
Extra Credit	3% (max)

I typically do not round up. So 89.5 is a “B”

Letter Grade	Percentage
A	99%-90%
B	89%-80%
C	79% - 70%
D	69% - 60%
F	< 59%

## Readings

The primary work of this class (about 3 hours a week) will be reading and understanding these books. Real books are harder, but more interesting, than a textbook. Reading tips are online.

## Quizzes

A short reading quiz is due almost every class day. These assess whether you read, and how well. They are mandatory and graded. You have 10 minutes for each quiz, and they are due at the beginning of class.

## Reading Tips

- Read ahead.
- Read carefully. You will get faster, but start slow.
- *Try to understand* the book. What is the author's main point? Is it true?
- Dialogue with the book before class. Take notes. Email me. Talk with each other. Process your thoughts.
- The two most important questions for each reading 1. What is the main truth claim? 2. What is the evidence?
- Pay attention to what confuses you and what you disagree with. Bring your questions to class.
- Read the book first, and any "Introductions" last, if at all. The introduction is often more confusing than the book.
- Read the book first, and Sparknotes, Cliffnotes, etc. last, if at all. I want you to have your own first impression.

## Attendance:

We need you here! Attendance is mandatory. 1 to 4 "Personal absences" are freebies — no points lost. After that, absences must be excused or will cost 2% deduction from the semester grade *per absence*. 9 absences is a letter grade and 10 will cause you to fail the class.

1 = 0

2 = 0

3 = 0

4 = 0

5 = -2%

6 = -4%

7 = -6%

8 = -8%

9 = -10% (a letter grade)

10 = -50%

Roll will be taken each class. (Being repeatedly or egregiously late will count as an absence.)  
You are paying for this education including this class, so why wouldn't you make the most of it?

### **Participation through dialogue/writing:**

This is a dialogue-oriented class. Every person is responsible to participate, through speaking in class and writing after class. Everyone starts at an 80% (B-) for the participation grade; you can move up from there or down, depending on whether you speak or write once per week, pay attention, and offer helpful contributions.

*Speaking Emphasis:* By default, everyone is an “external processor”. To earn participation points, you will voluntarily share your thoughts in discussion once per week, and/or respond when called upon. You are not required to write posts on the discussion board online.

*Writing Emphasis:* Those who opt out of speaking are “Internal procesors” and emphasize writing. To earn participation points, you will post class reflections online every week. You may elect to speak in class as well, and may be called upon.

Come *prepared*. Read, take notes, reflect, and come ready to share your viewpoint, defend it, listen to others' viewpoints, and critique theirs. Discussion ground rules are posted online.

### **Tests:**

There are two exams: midterm and final. These exams will assess your knowledge of historical facts, philosophical definitions, and the ability to synthesize and apply concepts. The Study Guide is posted online.

### **Philosophical Disputation Papers:**

Every 2 weeks or so, you will write a 400+ word disputation. Each disputation is pass/fail and worth approximately 4% of the semester grade. The instructions are posted online.

## Extra Credit?

For those who may need or desire to do extra credit, there are three opportunities for extra credit. Instructions are posted online.

## Miscellany

1. **Bring your book** to every class.
2. **Participate.** Participation is your responsibility; I may or may not call on you.
3. **Stay focused.** Do not distract yourself with side conversations, texting, Facebook, or doing anything else in class. Take a short mental break or bathroom break if you need to, but come back. If you have an important phone call or text, please step outside the class for a moment, then return.
4. **No smart phones.** Laptops/iPads must sit in front row. No other electronics, laptops, iPhones, or iPads, iPods, smartphones, etc. Unplug, listen and engage.
5. **Be respectful.** Pay attention to each other. Show others respect and you will be respected in turn. Unkindness, even in the form of jokes and teasing, will not be tolerated. Come to class on time, but don't leave (nor pack up) before we're done.
6. **Communicate.** For short, quick questions, try sending me a direct message on Twitter. Email me anytime but only between 8am-5pm Monday – Friday, or as I'm available. Include your full name and section number (I teach two sections, so I want to get your identity straight). I try to respond within two business days. If you don't hear from me, send a reminder. Take advantage of office hours. Call, tweet, or Google Hang Out during office hours or by appointment for any question, big or small, about this course.
7. I can accommodate you: If you have a documented disability that might require academic accommodation, please make sure you are registered with the Academic Support Program. Contact Pam Downing ([pamela.downing@asbury.edu](mailto:pamela.downing@asbury.edu) / (859) 858-3511 x2283).
8. Make up work is not accepted after the due date, unless you obtain prior (email) permission.
9. Enjoy philosophy. We are not merely solving abstract puzzles here, but digging deeply into human thinking in a way that could change your life forever. The more you and your fellows allow yourselves to acquire a “taste” for the material, the more inclined you will be to give it the real effort required to master it.
10. Don't cheat. Cheating or plagiarism will result in a zero for the assignment. Cite your sources. Unintentional plagiarism is still plagiarism. Egregious instances or repeat instances will result in formal disciplinary action from the university. Also, do not intentionally take anyone else's work nor provide your work to anyone else (under whatever auspices). Academic integrity, the embodiment of the moral and spiritual principles to which we adhere, is the essential basis of the Asbury University academic community.

## **I. Appendix on Academic Integrity**

Integrity, as partially defined by the Student or Program Handbook on Community Life Expectations, is “both knowing the right thing to do and doing it regardless of the circumstances.” This definition may be applied to all of the scholastic interactions of the academic community. Every member of the community shares responsibility for maintaining mutual trust, respect, and integrity. Violations of such trust and specific acts of academic dishonesty will be subject to disciplinary action.

Academic dishonesty can be defined as any type of cheating relative to a formal academic requirement. Academic dishonesty is typically thought of first as plagiarism. Plagiarism, whether intentionally or unintentionally, occurs when credit is taken for what someone else worked hard to discover and record if there is no clarification from where or from whom information is taken. Plagiarism is the use of another’s ideas, words, thoughts, or organization without appropriate credit and documentation when used for a project, paper, presentation, or exam.

More examples of academic dishonesty include, but are not limited to: unauthorized collaborations, fabrications of data, unauthorized access to sources on an exam, excessive revision by someone other than the student, re-use of previous work without permission, and other situations described by faculty for specific purposes.

Faculty will address suspected occurrences of academic dishonesty as follows: The faculty member will meet with the student individually to discuss the incident. At the faculty member’s discretion, the department chair will either be notified of the meeting or be asked to be present for it. The student will be informed of the department chair’s involvement. At the faculty member’s discretion the student will receive a lowered grade, an F or 0% on the assignment in question. The faculty member will report the incident in writing to the Registrar who will maintain a record of academic integrity violations. If the incident is the student’s second offense of academic dishonesty as verified by the Registrar, the student will meet with the Dean of the college or school where the most recent incident occurred. At the Dean’s discretion, the student will receive an F in the course. If the incident is the student’s third offense, the student will be suspended from Asbury University.

Students desiring to appeal a determination of academic dishonesty will follow the ‘Academic Appeals Procedure’ found in the Probation, Suspension, and Appeals section of the Asbury University Bulletin, specifically item 1. A.