

Syllabus, Spring 2016

Introduction to Philosophy: “Goodness, Truth, and Beauty”

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Office Hours: Tues 3-4, Kinlaw Library by Lewis Corner.

I. Course Description:

This class is an exercise in a different way of thinking. We will think deeply about the world, God, death, science, logic, language, and our own selves. Along the way, we will learn some facts of history, vocabulary words, philosophical concepts, and big names. But our main task is to *think*. You may be confused. You will be challenged.

We will think by discussing, reading, and writing. Thinking clearly, logically, accurately in each of these activities is the master skill. It is useful for academics, for work, and for life. For some, our study will convince you to major or minor in philosophy. For others, it will make you better in your own discipline. For the skills you learn in philosophy apply to any profession: the top five most coveted job skills are communication, teamwork, critical thinking, and creativity, and self-discipline.

For still others, thinking well will help you in motherhood or the monastery. For all of us, we want to 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, limited (often confused) thoughts, becoming part of the Conversation, and (by it) being forever changed.

Our goals then are:

- To become familiar with the thought of major philosophers such as Plato, Augustine, Hume, and others.
- To understand major philosophical questions, figures, and theories such as platonism, Augustinianism, and empiricism.

- To read, comprehend, and criticize difficult philosophical arguments.
- To use analytical and abstract thinking skills to evaluate arguments and philosophical theories.
- 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.
- To understand the Christian faith contrasted with metaphysical naturalism, nihilism, and deism.
- To practice reflect thinking upon our own lives, beliefs, attitudes, culture, and goals.
- To become more thoughtful, alert human beings, in pursuit of goodness, truth, and beauty.

II. Scope and Sequence:

To accomplish these goals, we will work through 10 Units. Each 2 week Unit consists of (1) readings and quizzes, (2) participation through talking and writing, (3) and a disputation paper. There is a midterm and final exam.

III. Grading:

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

Assessment category	Percent of semester grade
Readings (Quiz/reports)	20%
Participation (Talking, writing)	25%
Tests (Midterm, Final)	25%
Disputation Papers (6 papers, pass/fail)	25%
Extra Credit	3% (max)

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

IV. _____

V. _____-|_____

A = 99%-94% | A- = 90%-93%

B+ = 87%-89% | B = 84% - 86%

B- = 80% - 83% | C+ = 77%-79% C = 74% - 76% | C- = 70% -73% D = 69% - 60% | F < 59%

VI. Readings & Quizzes

- Jostein Gaarder, *Sophie's World* ISBN: 0374530718
- Plato, *Last Days of Socrates* (Apology, Phaedo) ISBN: 0140449280
- Augustine, *Confessions* ISBN: 0199537828
- Hume: *Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding*: ISBN: 002353110X (Not "Treatise")

Buy these ISBNs only, please. (New or used is fine.) Use hard copies please; they are better for notes, and make it easier to stay on the same page in class and when assigning pages.

Various handouts (All provided online)

- Genesis (Chps. 1-5)
- Bertrand Russell "Free Man's Worship"
- Peter Kreeft, "Is truth objective?"
- Peter Kreeft, "Is there a real moral law?"
- Peter Kreeft, "Are universals real?"
- Aristotle's "Four Causes"
- Lucretius, "On the Nature of Things"
- 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)

Various films (All provided for purchase or for free online viewing)

- Toy Story 3
- Matrix
- 2001: A Space Odyssey
- Tree of Life

The primary work if this class will be reading — and trying to understand — these books. I am requiring real books. This is harder but more interesting than a textbook. You'll be reading about 3 hours a week. Read well. Read every assignment entirely. Skimming is sometimes necessary, but don't skim every week.

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.
- Give yourself enough time to read carefully. You will get better and faster.
- *Try to understand* the book. What is the author's key terms? The author's main point?
- Dialogue with the book before class. Take notes. Email me. Talk with each other. Talk with other friends. Process your thoughts.
- Take notes on: Is the author correct? What confused you? What questions did you have? What does the book mean?
- 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.
- Don't read the introduction for the book (which is often more confusing than the book). If you do want to read it, read it after reading the primary source — that may help.
- Use things like Sparknotes sparingly. I want you to have your own encounter with the text. Get your own first impression. Sparknotes can be pretty useful but don't rely on it and only read it after reading the primary source.

VII. Attendance:

We need you here! Attendance is mandatory. Roll will be taken each class. (Being repeatedly or egregiously late will count as an absence.) 1 to 6 unexcused absences are freebies — no credit lost. 7 or more unexcused absences cause bigger and bigger deductions from your participation grade. (8 is a letter grade) You are paying for this education including this class, so why wouldn't you make the most of it?

VIII. Participation through dialogue/writing:

This is a dialogue-oriented class. Every person is responsible to participate.

Speaking Emphasis: “External processors” emphasize talking. You will be on my “go to” team to talk in class (instead of posting reflections after class).

Writing Emphasis: “Internal processors” 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.

Everyone starts at an 80% for the discussion 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.

Come *prepared*. Read, take notes, reflect, and come ready to share your viewpoint, defend it, listen to others’ viewpoints, and critique theirs.

A discussion is more than just sharing opinions; it is a friendly, eager, sincere search for truth. We can’t judge each other, but we must judge each other’s opinions, and test them for truth. We discuss because it is more interesting; it helps us retain the information; it challenges our own viewpoint; and because philosophy itself is a dialogue. Discussion ground rules are posted online.

IX. 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.

X. 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.

XI. Extra Credit?

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

XII. Miscellany

1. Bring the book for the day (on paper or computer), a pen or pencil, to every class.

2. Participate. Participation is your responsibility; I may or may not call on you. Do not distract yourself with side conversations, texting, Facebook, or doing anything else in class. A short mental break every once in a while when you get tired is fine. But come back.
3. Be respectful. This means paying attention in class to the instructor and your fellow classmates. If you have an important phone call or text, please step outside the class for a moment and return. Show others respect and you will be respected in turn. Listen attentively, don't make side conversation or say excessive frivolous comments. Be polite in your emails to me and in your comments to your fellow students. 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.
4. Don't use electronics. If you ask for permission, I will allow you to use Laptops/iPads on lecture days for note taking. If you need to take a phone call or text, please step outside the room for a moment and come right back. Otherwise, no phones, laptops, iPhones, or iPads, iPods, smartphones, etc. Unplug, listen and engage.
5. Communicate. 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'll try to respond within two business days. 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. For short, quick questions, try sending me a direct message on Twitter.
6. 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 / (859) 858-3511 x2283).
7. Make up work is not accepted after the due date. It must be submitted within a week of an excused absence, with written consent. Let me know if you are going to be absent for any reason.
8. 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.
9. 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.

XIII. 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.

XIV. Course Outline

Each line has a date, the reading due, the topic, and lecture notes. Why the lecture notes? Students asked for it. These notes help you prepare for discussion. But also, the only way to prepare is to think.

T Jan 12 – Syllabus

Class preview: This class will be awesome. It's a lot of reading, so you have to work hard. But more importantly, you have to think hard. Today we'll get to know each other and our expectations, how to get an A, etc.. I'll give you three personal problems philosophy can (maybe) help you with.

R Jan 14 – *Sophie's World*, Garden of Eden, Top Hat, the Myths, Natural Philosophers, Democritus, and Fate: Time and Cause

Sophie is asked by a mysterious stranger two key questions: who are you? Where did the world come from? We will do our best to begin answering those questions by examining two big ideas: Time and causes. Causes answer the question "why?" And time is a condition of all life on earth.

T Jan 19 – Genesis 1-5: Mythology

A myth is not a false story but a likely story. In that sense, Genesis is a myth. We'll analyze it for its presentation of freedom, humanity, goodness, God, sin, and redemption. (Today, we assign groups and "internal/external" processors today as well.)

R Jan 21 – "Truth" and "Goodness" Handouts: Are truth and goodness objective?

All semester we will be seeking truth. To be successful, we have to know whether truth exists. We'll examine arguments for and against the proposition that truth and goodness are real. We will also discuss the "Tao" to see examples of universal, common morality. (We'll also go over how to do papers.)

Disputation Paper 1 will be due next Tuesday by 11:59. Please carefully review the "Disputation Paper" instructions online.

T Jan 26: Plato, *Eutypbro*; *Sophie's World*, Socrates, Athens, Plato: What is Holiness? The best way to be introduced to philosophy is to be introduced to Socrates, his character, his conversation, his way of life. How do you react to him? Socrates begs a priest, Euthyphro, to explain what piety is. Socrates is on trial for impiety, so his life is on the line. Euthyphro can't answer. Can you?

R Jan 28 – Plato, *Apology*: Is Socrates Guilty?

Is Socrates' way of life meaningful or meaningless – obedient to God or dangerous? Socrates does

not “apologize” but “defends” himself (*apologia*, like apologetics). All of Athens, and all of history, is the jury. Is he guilty? Is philosophy a great subversive evil for the city or a great good?

T Feb 2 – Plato, *Phaedo* 116-143: The soul is immortal because opposites come from opposites

Plato’s *Phaedo* shows Socrates’ last days. Should we grieve when our friends die? Is the soul immortal? Socrates argues that the soul lives on when the body dies. The first of three arguments builds off the natural opposites, cold from hot, big from small, life from death. Is this a good argument? Why or why not?

R Feb 4 – *Phaedo* 143-199: The soul is immortal because we existed before we were born

Without the help of Scripture or revelation, Socrates argues the soul is immortal. He also warns against “misology” a hatred of argument that leads to skepticism and laziness. Hating the logos is perhaps a danger we begin facing at this point in the semester, too. Is the “argument from recollection” a good one? Why or why not?

T Feb 9 – *Phaedo* (all): The soul is immortal because it is more like forms than matter.

Socrates introduces “forms”, real beings like equality or goodness, that explain properties. Forms are contrasted with individuals, like chairs or horses. The soul is supposed to be more like forms than particulars. Is this a good argument? Why or why not?

R Feb 11 – “Forms” handout

“Equality itself” is a form. Forms are also call “universals”. Universals contrast with individuals. They explain how the same property exists in multiple things, places and times. Forms cause individuals to be what they are. “The third man” and ‘queerness’ objections will be discussed. Important forms include the One, the Good, and Soul. Are forms real entities in the world (platonic realism) or just concepts in the mind (conceptualism)?

Disputation 2 Prompt: Does the soul live on after bodily death?

T Feb 16 – “Aristotle” Handout; Sophie’s World, Aristotle: Aristotle and his Four Causes.

Aristotle was a “meticulous organizer.” He categorized thoughts into logic, knowledge into sciences, and reality into ten categories of beings. His influence extends even to today. The “four causes” of an entity are the four properties that make it what it is. For example, think about a piece of bronze (material) made into a statue of a soldier (form), by a sculpter (efficient), that marks the entrance of the city (final). What are the four causes of a human being?

R Feb 18 – “Material Causes” Handout (10 pages): Material and Final Causes

The material cause is what a thing is made of; the formal cause, its configuration. The final cause is its purpose, function, or end. Aristotle would say that scientific explanations need to give all four causes. But Bacon and Lucretius say that “scientific” explanations only give one or two causes. Descartes caused a massive change in thinking by his famous wax experiment. Are a thing’s form and purpose incidental or essential to what it is?

T Feb 23 – (No reading): Logic

Logic is the science of inference. We need data to make inferences. The sources of data are observation, memory, testimony, and authority. These data are the premises of arguments. Solid inferences become principles. Principles are the premises of new arguments. The most common kind of argument is a “syllogism.” Syllogisms have three statements: a major premise, a minor premise, and a conclusion. There are three kinds of major premise: categorical, hypothetical, and disjunctive. Dilemmas and other forms of argument compound syllogisms. How does logic relate to science?

R Feb 25 – Bertrand Russell, “Free Man’s Worship” Handout: Christianity and Nihilism as worldviews

Christ as the Logos is at once creator, redeemer, and our goal. Substitutes for Christ include other gods, worldly pleasures, humans, or nothingness itself. But other gods, pleasure, and other humans are all consumed by nothingness in the end. So there are only two options: Logos or nothingness. Nothingness is mistaken by some as the origin of all things, and the conclusion — the alpha and omega — that which was, is, and ever shall be.

T Mar 1 – Toy Story 3 (Pixar Film): How do we survive devouring time?

This is a movie about devouring time. How is Andy’s relationship to Woody and Buzz changing. Also, Lotso is clearly evil. But what is his vice, or his sin? Does it have to do with his rejection of devouring time?

R Mar 3 – MIDTERM EXAM & Toy Story 3 Discussion

After the midterm, we will discuss the salvation of the toys. Who saves them, and why? Is it salvation from devouring time? What do you make of this salvation? How does Andy's relationship to Woody and Buzz change and how does it remain?

Disputation 3: Do forms (universals) exist in reality or only in our minds? Are forms things and concepts or just concepts?

T Mar 8 – Augustine, *Confessions* chapter 1, 2, 4; Sophie's World "Two Cultures", "Middle Ages"

We transition to medieval philosophy. The union of Athens and Jerusalem after the resurrection of Jesus created a new civilization: Christendom. Augustine was a key leader in this civilization. The *Confessions* details Augustine's personal and intellectual struggles. It tells his conversion story and honors his mom, Monica. It concludes with philosophical explorations of time, memory, and creation. Augustine's early error was thinking God was physical. What does this mean? Why is it an error? And how did he get corrected?

R Mar 10 – Augustine, *Confessions* Chapter 6, 7, 9: Does evil exist?

A major theme of the *Confessions* is sin and evil. Evil for both platonists and Christians and atheists is an essential component of their worldview. What is evil? Augustine's presuppositions make this question difficult. They force him into a dilemma. God made everything that exists. Evil exists. Therefore God made it. Or Evil exists. God did not make evil. Therefore God did not make everything. Those options are intolerable. He settles on the view that evil does not actually exist. What does this mean? What is a "privation" of good? Does this notion make sense and does it make sense of active evil and suffering in our world?

T Mar 15 – *Confessions*, 10, 11: Time

Augustine says he knows what time is as long as you don't ask him what it is. When you ask him, he doesn't know. What is the relation of time to eternity? What is time? Also, how are we to interpret Genesis in light of our philosophical understanding of time? Time is a big idea. What exactly is it? Three notions of time from Augustine, Plato, Kant. Also some poems on time.

R Mar 17 – *Confessions* 11, 12: Creation

Augustine interprets Genesis 1. What is Moses' intent? What range of interpretations will the text support? What range does it encourage?

Disputation 4 Prompt: Does evil existence as a substance or only as a property?

T Mar 22 – Aquinas Handout: Can God’s existence be proven? (26 pages): Does God exist?

Aquinas is the most influential medieval philosopher. He cites Aristotle (and Plato) and Augustine almost as much as the Bible. He wrote numerous books, but his *Summa Theologica* is his masterpiece. He argues, in a little over 600 topics, about 3,000 disputations. The questions cover God, man, creation, evil, angels, theology, church, and the end of the world. In this first discussion we will look at his arguments for whether God’s existence can be proven – he thinks so – and the five ways of doing so.

R Mar 24 – Aquinas Handout: Is happiness the beatific vision? Today we examine Aquinas’ definition of happiness, which is the vision of the divine essence. Aristotle argued that human happiness is one object for the whole species, even though people are very different. Aquinas builds on this argument.

T Mar 29 – Sophie’s World, Renaissance, Baroque, Hume, Enlightenment: The Enlightenment

Now we transition to the modern world. The Enlightenment defines America and through the U.S. much of the developed world. The core idea to help you understand the Enlightenment and counter-enlightenment is a tradition. Alasdair MacIntyre defines a tradition as “a socially-embedded argument extended through time”. Modernity is a tradition of empiricism, rationalism, skepticism, increasing atheism. Today we will work on distinguishing the Enlightenment tradition from the medieval tradition (which resembles the counter-Enlightenment) What makes Hume a modern?

R Mar 31 – Hume, Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding Sections 1-3: Impressions

The foundation of Hume’s work is that knowledge is either impressions (from the present) or impressions from the past (ideas). The source of all knowledge is impressions, sensory, empirical, input from the world through our five senses, then modified by the mind and imagination in various ways to result in all our thoughts. Any thought that does not originate directly from a sensory impression is nonsense, fantasy. The upshot of this view is radical – much of our supposed knowledge is fantasy.

T Apr 5 – Hume, Enquiry Sections 5-6: Cause and Effect

Relations of ideas (necessary, analytic truths) and matters of fact (contingent, synthetic truths) are all the kinds of truth there is. Cause and effect is contingent. We do not observe causation itself, but only the constant conjunction of A and B. Our supposed “knowledge” of cause-effect, including science and everyday matters, rests on a custom, a habit, an imaginary connection. It turns out that the notion of causation – so important to Plato and Aristotle – does not come from an impression. We only see the conjunction of two events, not the cause of one by the other.

R Apr 7 – Hume, Enquiry Sections 7, 8, 10: Miracles

Hume’s famous argument concludes that even if miracles ever occur, we can never know that they occur. How does this argument work, and is it true? What kind of testimony (against our experience) would be sufficient to overturn our experience? Do we have experience of miracles?

Disputation 5 Prompt: Does the idea of God arise from impressions or recollection?

T Apr 12 – Feser Handout: Can we make sense of the world? Is the world intelligible?

This question asks not just about the “earth” but the cosmos. Is it “readable”, able to be understood? If so, then perhaps we can understand reality, the cosmos. If not, then all of our attempts to understand it are ultimately just constructions of our own imagination. Feser argues that there are six possible positions on this question, and only two make any sense. Of those two, one is superior to the other. Why? There are brute facts, but why not think the laws of nature are brute facts? Because they are contingent, and brute facts are most likely necessary facts.

R Apr 14 – Dawkins Handout: There is almost certainly no god.

Dawkins argues that everything god might be invoked to explain can be explained by a combination of the anthropic principle and natural selection. He also argues that religion and science aren’t “separate spheres” of inquiry, each sovereign with their domain. Religion and science have overlapping questions about the origin of the world, the origin of life, the teleology (or purposiveness) of the cosmos, and human nature. What is natural selection? What is the anthropic principle? And how do these two (with luck as a third) explain everything that can be explained?

Remember: Watch 2001!

T Apr 19 – “Defense of Slow Movies” Handout; 2001: A Space Odyssey (Stanley Kubrick Film)

Is humanity evolving into something more than human?

R Apr 21 – Disputation Workshop: Create your own question!

*Disputation 6 prompt: Create your own question. See instructions.

Remember: Watch Tree of Life!

T Apr 26 – The Tree of Life (Terrence Mallick Film)

Mallick's film is, in one way, very difficult. It is not as traditional a Hollywood film. It does have a 3-act structure, but it uses poetic story-telling along with narrative storytelling. The best way to view it is to surrender to Mallick's lead. Let him show you, let him tell you, let him make you feel, let him even disturb you... You will get more out of the film if you surrender than if you try to control and understand and analyze. That said, ask yourself: "What is the way of nature?" How is it portrayed? What is the way of grace?

R Apr 28 – The Gospel of John (21 pages) The word of God recreates the cosmos and fulfills it. How does John 1:1-2:1 re-tell the story of Genesis? What's the big difference that Jesus makes?

Finals Week

T Disputation 6 Due.

R Reflection paper due; extra credit (optional) due; Final Exam TBA.

- (Outline subject to revisions due to snow days, instructor sickness, academic conferences, etc.)