

I. 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 recollec-

tion” 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. Objections to realism include the “third man” argument and the argument from ‘queerness.’ Extensions of the theory of forms include important forms like 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 sculptor (efficient), that marks the entrance of the city (final). What are the four causes of a human being?

R Feb 18 – “Lucretius” 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 – (No reading): The Logos: 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

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. 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. Time is the medium of our life – everything seems to happen in time. But what exactly is it? We measure time by clocks, by the movement of the sun, by seasons – but measurements of length aren't length. Time is more like length than like a ruler or a rotation of the earth. Time is either real, or a concept. Kant thought time was a feature of human reason, the very form of sensation. We sense things 'timed.' We sense in a timely manner. Time and space are the forms of experience. What time is or whether it is real he firmly insists we cannot answer. Plato thought time was a moving image. What is it an image of? It's an image of eternity. Time plays out like frames of a movie the eternally real moment. What

does Augustine say time is? Is it created or uncreated? What is God's relationship to time?

R Mar 17 – Confessions 11, 12: Creation

Augustine interprets Genesis 1.

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 a contingent matter of fact we sometimes observe. We do not observe causation itself, but only the constant conjunction of A and B (for instance, the ball flying through the window and the window shattering). So all 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? Either the world is at least partially intelligible or completely unintelligible. It is

not completely unintelligible, so it is intelligible. If it is intelligible, then it is either completely intelligible in itself or partially intelligible in itself. It is not partially intelligible in itself, so it is completely intelligible in itself. If it is completely intelligible in itself, it is either intelligible to us or unintelligible to us. It is not unintelligible to us, so it is at least partially intelligible to us. It is either completely intelligible to us or only partially. It is not completely intelligible to us, so it is partially intelligible to us. Why not think it is partially intelligible? 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?

T Apr 19 – 2001: A Space Odyssey (Stanley Kubrick Film): “Defense of Slow Movies” Handout Is humanity evolving into something more than human?

R Apr 21 – THANKSGIVING BREAK

Disputation 6: What is your question? For the final disputation, you must design your own question. I must approve the question before you begin. The prompt is due Tuesday Dec 1 The question must (a) Be clear (b) Deeply interest you (c) Admit of a yes/no answer (d) Be rooted in one of our semester books, handouts, or films. You don't have to write about “the Cosmos” unit — it could be any topic from Sophie's World, or Plato, or Aristotle, or Augustine, or anything that we covered or didn't cover much.

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 Final Exam TBA

Extra Credit (optional) Due Reflection Paper OR meeting due

(Subject to revisions due to snow days, instructor sickness, academic conferences, etc.)