



Introduction to Problems of Philosophy PHIL 2101 – Fall 2015

Philosophy's distinctive ways of understanding and thinking about perennial human questions: "What can I know?"; "What is real?"; "What is the basis of moral judgments?" Contemporary and traditional examples of philosophical analysis and criticism.

Instructor Information

Instructor: Jesse Rappaport

Instructor E-mail: JRappaportCUNY@gmail.com

Office Hours: By appointment

Course Information

Class Time: Monday and Wednesday, 9:30_{AM} – 10:45_{AM}

Location: Boylan 4129

Code: 13065 Section: MW9 Credits: 3.0

Course Information and Readings Available at:

<https://sites.google.com/site/bcphilosophy2101/>

Grading Information

Attendance/Participation: 10%

Homework: 10%

First Essay: 15%

Midterm Exam: 20%

Second Essay: 20%

Final Exam: 25%

Grading Scale

90-100: A-, A, A+

80-89: B-, B, B+

70-79: C-, C, C+

60-69: D-, D, D+

0-59: F

8/31	What Is Philosophy?	
9/2		Russell: "The Value of Philosophy"
9/9	Rationalism and the Method of Doubt	Descartes: <i>Meditations I</i>
9/10		Descartes: <i>Meditations II</i>
9/16		Descartes: <i>Meditations III</i>
9/21	Can God's Existence Be Proven? FIRST ESSAY ASSIGNED	St. Thomas Aquinas: "The Existence of God"
9/28		Bertrand Russell: "Why I Am Not a Theist"
9/30		Pascal's Wager
10/5	Empiricism and the Senses	David Hume: <i>An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding</i>
10/7		
10/14	Personal Identity	John Locke: "Of Identity and Diversity"
10/19	FIRST ESSAY DUE	David Hume: "Of Personal Identity"
10/21		Thanissaro Bhikku: "No-self or Not-self?"
10/26		
10/28	MIDTERM EXAM	
11/2	Free Will and Determinism	Thomas Nagel: "Free Will"
11/4		Galen Strawson: "Your Move: The Maze of Free Will"
11/9		W.T. Stace: "Free Will and Determinism"
11/11	Crime and Punishment	Angela Davis: <i>Are Prisons Obsolete?</i>
11/16	Kantian Ethics SECOND ESSAY ASSIGNED	Immanuel Kant: "Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals"
11/18		Onora O'Neill, "A Simplified Account of Kant's Ethics"
11/23	Utilitarianism	Mill: "Utilitarianism"
11/25		Louis P. Pojman: "Assessing Utilitarianism"
11/30		Thomson: "The Trolley Problem"
12/2	Animal Rights	Peter Singer: <i>Animal Liberation</i>
12/7	Charity SECOND ESSAY DUE	Peter Singer: "Famine, Affluence, and Morality."
12/9		Slavoj Zizek: TBD
12/14	Spillover / Review	

FINAL EXAM (tentative): Friday, 12/18, 8:00 – 10:00 AM

Lateness & Attendance

Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class session. Students who come in late are responsible for ensuring that their attendance has been noted. Chronic lateness will result in a lower grade for attendance. Multiple absences will also result in a lower grade.

All students must respect classroom etiquette rules. These will be discussed in class.

The attendance policy is subject to NY State Education Law regarding non-attendance for religious belief. Details of the College's policy can be found on page 72 of the current undergraduate bulletin.

Essay Assignments

Essays will be assigned 2-3 weeks before the due date. Students will not be allowed to submit re-writes on essay assignments.

Late assignments will be penalized by one "letter point" per day late. For example, an (A) paper that is one day late will receive an (A-); a (B) paper that is two days late will receive a (C+)...

Exams

Exams will consist of multiple-choice questions, short-answer questions (a few words or sentences) and short essay questions (a few paragraphs).

Readings and Homework Assignments

Students are required to keep up with weekly reading assignments.

There will be brief, written homework assignments. These will be discussed in class.

Learning Objectives:

- 1) Students will improve critical thinking by developing skills of explaining, critically examining, and responding to philosophical theories, issues, and claims in the philosophical areas of epistemology, metaphysics, and ethics.
- 2) Students will improve writing skills by explaining, exploring, and critically examining philosophical theories, issues, concepts, and arguments relating to the philosophical areas of epistemology, metaphysics, and ethics clearly in writing.

- 3) Students will improve communication skills by explaining orally philosophical theories, issues, claims, concepts, and arguments relating to the philosophical areas of epistemology, metaphysics, and ethics.
- 4) Students will improve skills of interpreting and evaluating philosophical writings.
- 5) Students will develop an openness to having their beliefs challenged, will learn to hear and comprehend the views of others, and to entertain objections to their own views.
- 6) Students will be able to explain several classic ethical theories, to compare and contrast ethical theories, and to apply these to justify conclusions relating to concrete moral issues.
- 7) Students will acquire a familiarity with and an understanding of some classic and contemporary philosophical literature and some fundamental philosophical issues, and will be able to explain important contributions to the history of philosophy and their relation to present viewpoints.
- 8) Students will be able to explain several classic epistemological theories, and to compare and contrast theories of what knowledge is and how it is acquired.
- 9) Students will be able to show that issues may be regarded from multiple viewpoints, and will be able to present reasons in support of each viewpoint.
- 10) Students will improve reasoning skills and ethical decision making skills by acquiring an understanding of ethical theories and philosophical concepts that will enable them to develop their own opinions on conceptions and practices of moral interaction and democracy.
- 11) Students will develop a conceptual foundation for future learning by exploring philosophical theories and arguments and will acquire related critical thinking and communication skills.

Academic Integrity Policy

The faculty and administration of Brooklyn College support an environment free from cheating and plagiarism. Each student is responsible for being aware of what constitutes cheating and plagiarism and for avoiding both. The complete text of the CUNY Academic Integrity Policy and the Brooklyn College procedure for implementing that policy can be found at this site:

<http://www.brooklyn.cuny.edu/bc/policies>. If a faculty member suspects a violation of academic integrity and, upon investigation, confirms that violation, or if the student admits the violation, the faculty member MUST report the violation.

Disability Services

In order to receive disability-related academic accommodations students must first be registered with the Center for Student Disability Services. Students who have a documented disability or suspect they may have a disability are invited to set up an appointment with the Director of the Center for Student Disability Services, Ms. Valerie Stewart-Lovell at 718-951-5538. If you have already registered with the Center for Student Disability Services please provide your professor with the course accommodation form and discuss your specific accommodation with him/her.