

# Introduction to Philosophy

PHIL 101-01 (15555)

Fall 2022

M and W 5:00-6:15

Liberal Arts Hall (LBR)-A205

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Online Office Hours: By appointment

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## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is an introduction to fundamental philosophical issues through the analysis and discussion of outstanding philosophical works. We will begin with a brief analysis of arguments and their evaluation. The first two philosophical works that we will explore are Plato's dialogues *Euthyphro* and *Meno*. Our main concern will be his insightful and influential philosophical analysis of topics such as the relationship between religion and morality, the nature of virtue, the defining features of knowledge, and the very possibility of learning. Then, we will analyze René Descartes' *Meditations on First Philosophy*. We will pay particular attention to his ideas about the right method to obtain knowledge, the role of reason in this search for knowledge, God's existence, and the nature of the mind. The next philosophical work that we will study is David Hume's *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*. Hume is perhaps the greatest of the philosophers writing in English and his *Enquiry* is the clearest exposition of his metaphysical and epistemological views. Among other topics we will examine his ideas on causality, inductive reasoning, free will, and the possibility of miracles. The last philosophical work that we are going to study is John Perry's *A Dialogue on Personal Identity and Immortality* which deals with two key metaphysical issues, namely, how a person can endure the significant changes of a lifetime and yet be the same person all along, and, secondly, how could this possibility allow for immortality.

## REQUIRED TEXTS

1. Selections from Anthony Weston *A Rulebook for Arguments*.
2. Plato *Euthyphro* and *Meno*.
3. René Descartes *Meditations on First Philosophy*.
4. David Hume *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*.
5. Selections from John Perry *A Dialogue on Personal Identity and Immortality*.

All the required texts are available through MyCourses (<https://mycourses.rit.edu/>).

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND POLICIES

There will be five exams. Each exam is worth 20% of the final mark. The exams are of a mixed format, including true/false questions and questions requiring short answers.

These are the dates for each exam:

Arguments/Plato's *Euthyphro* – August 31

Plato's *Meno* – September 26

Descartes' *Meditations* – October 19  
Hume's *Enquiry* – November 16  
Perry's Dialogue – December 5

Attendance and participation are presumed. Although absences and/or lack of participation are not penalized, if your final mark is borderline your attendance together with your participation may be used as the deciding factor to give you extra credit. Your duty is to behave correctly and to respect your classmates even if you disagree with their opinions. It is your responsibility to catch up on the missed work due to absences by finding out what you missed. In the case of exams without a doctor's note or some similar document no make-ups are possible.

### COURSE SCHEDULE (\* exam)

- |     |                |  |
|-----|----------------|--|
| 1.  | August 22      | Introduction   |
| 2.  | August 24      | Arguments and their evaluation (Weston, selection)                         |
| 3.  | August 29      | Is morality based on religion? (Plato's <i>Euthyphro</i> )                 |
| 4.  | August 31 *    | EXAM 1   |
|     | September 5    | NO CLASSES – LABOR DAY   |
|     |                |  |
| 5.  | September 7    | Two Pre-Socratic problems (Plato's <i>Meno</i> )                           |
| 6.  | September 12   | Things and Properties; the Theory of Forms (Plato's <i>Meno</i> 70a-79b)   |
| 7.  | September 14   | What is virtue? Can evil be desired? (Plato's <i>Meno</i> 70a-79b)         |
| 8.  | September 19   | The nature of knowledge (Plato's <i>Meno</i> 79e-89c)                      |
| 9.  | September 21   | The puzzle of learning; is virtue teachable? (Plato's <i>Meno</i> 89d-96c) |
| 10. | September 26 * | EXAM 2   |
|     |                |  |
| 11. | September 28   | Descartes and his times.   |
| 12. | October 3      | The method of radical doubt (First Meditation)                             |
| 13. | October 5      | Cogito ergo sum (Second and Third Meditations)                             |
|     | October 10     | NO CLASSES – FALL BREAK  |
| 14. | October 12     | God's existence and attributes (Third and Fifth Meditations)               |
| 15. | October 17     | Substantial Dualism and the mind-body problem (Sixth Meditation)           |
| 16. | October 19 *   | EXAM 3   |
|     |                |  |
| 17. | October 24     | Naturalism and representation (Hume: Section 2)                            |
| 18. | October 26     | Knowledge and experience (Hume: Section 4)                                 |
| 19. | October 31     | Nature, habit, and beliefs (Hume: Section 5)                               |
| 20. | November 2     | Causation (Hume: Section 7)  |
| 21. | November 7     | The problem of free will (Hume: Section 8)                                 |
| 22. | November 9     | Freedom and compatibilism (Hume: Section 8)                                |
| 23. | November 14    | The possibility of miracles (Hume: Section 10)                             |
| 24. | November 16 *  | EXAM 4   |
|     |                |  |
| 25. | November 21    | The problem of personal identity and immortality (Perry: first night)      |
|     | November 23    | NO CLASSES   |
| 26. | November 28    | Mind, memories, and personal identity (Perry: second night)                |
| 27. | November 30    | Memory gaps and spatio-temporal entities (Perry: third night)              |
| 28. | December 5 *   | Conclusion (Russell: <i>Problems of Philosophy</i> , last chapter)         |
|     |                | EXAM 5   |