

PHIL 100
TTH 11:50 B 1:30 PM (11J)
TTH 3:30 – 5:10 (03J)
Language Hall 202

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Office Hours: MW 1:30 - 2; TTH 2- 3
(other times by appointment)

Introduction to Philosophy

What is philosophy and why do we study it? Socrates, one of the earliest and most famous philosophers, claimed that the unexamined life is not worth living . . . but what does he mean by this? Certainly many different fields of study examine life in various ways: biology, history, and psychology each take specific approaches to this problem. How is philosophy different?

The purpose of this course is to introduce you to philosophy as the most original (in both the temporal and qualitative sense) of contributions to the “big” problems of life. Both in method and subject matter, philosophy’s task is to substantively reflect on the worth of our beliefs regarding any and all aspects of our existence. To this end, we will first examine the role of reason and logic in philosophical practice and then follow by considering theories of knowledge, belief, and faith. The final section of the course will allow us to apply these philosophical powers of analysis to the topic of free will and its relationship to moral responsibility.

Required Readings

Introduction to Philosophy, Pojman and Fieser–Oxford University Press
Plato’s “Euthyphro”
Plato’s Divided Line and Myth of the Cave (from the *Republic*)
Richard Taylor, additional excerpt for reading on November 13th.

The textbook is available in the bookstore. The remaining readings are available on Blackboard.

You will be **expected to have the assigned readings with you** in class each day. Please include the printing of any Blackboard documents as part of your book budget.

Assignments and Grading Policy

Class Participation: Discussion of philosophical material is an expectation of all of us as part of a community of learners. There are three ways in which you will be expected to participate during the semester: 1) two brief class presentations in which you address the main points of the previous class and identify a question, problem, or interesting point in the reading that you find it important for the class to consider (see handout on “synopses”), 2) one brief homework assignment on logic that demonstrates your familiarity with topics covered in class, and 3) general participation in classroom exercises and contributions to class discussion.

I realize that some of you are more comfortable talking in class than are others, and so a diligent student who gives thoughtful and considered synopsis presentations and does well on the logic homework assignment but is otherwise quiet in class can still earn a “B” in class participation. However, part of doing philosophy is discussing and examining ideas together so that we may

(kindly and respectfully!) divulge any weaknesses and (thoughtfully and articulately!) develop shared understanding. Therefore, excellent participation requires classroom interaction with both me and your peers. In addition, as critique and shared understanding are the goals of class discussion, excellence in participation is not reflected by the **quantity** of one's contributions but by their **quality**. Attentive listening with occasional well thought-out comments is preferable to frequent but off-the-cuff reactions.

Quizzes: There will be three short quizzes over the course of the semester, given at the beginning of class on a given sub-topic (see schedule). These will incorporate multiple-choice and true-false questions that test your understanding of the arguments presented in the readings for the course. They will assess your comprehension of the meaning of the material, not your ability to memorize facts, dates, terms, or definitions. Therefore, the best way to prepare for these is to be prepared for class each day: read carefully, reflect on what you think the author is trying to communicate, and have questions and ideas ready for class discussion.

Essays: There will be three short essay assignments (approx. 2-3 pp), each on a given sub-topic of the course. Essay questions and instructions will be provided a week before the essay is due. The essays **must** be submitted as an e-mail attachment on the due date and by the time listed on the schedule (.doc, .docx, or .rtf format only, please).

The general percentages that I will consider when determining your grade are as follows:

Participation (including synopses and logic homework):	25%
Quizzes (5% each):	15%
Essays (20% each):	60%

Please note that these percentages should be considered to be a general guideline so that you may understand the relative import of each area of your involvement. When assigning grades I will take into consideration—in addition to these quantitative percentages—such qualitative factors as noted improvement or utter disintegration of notable effort.

Classroom Policies

Attendance: Your attendance is required at all class meetings. Any unexcused absences will result in a “0” grade on overall class participation, even if you were active in discussion on the days you were present. Philosophical inquiry is a communal enterprise; the purpose of this policy is to ensure the continuity of our community. Absences will be excused only in the case of a serious illness, dire emergency, or observation of a recognized religious holiday (please notify me in advance of this required absence). Examples of events that do NOT constitute serious illnesses or dire emergencies are: fatigue, head colds, hay fever or other non life-threatening allergies, oversleeping/alarm clock failure, travel plans for early holiday getaway, studying for tests/catching up on work for other courses, or leveling up on World of Warcraft.

Lateness policy: You are expected to come to class on time, as am I. No more than two latenesses are considered appropriate. More than two latenesses will compromise your participation grade.

Cell phones and personal computers: The use of cell phones is prohibited in class. If you want to take notes on a laptop or tablet, that is fine, but you will be expected to disconnect your wi-fi connection during class time, as personal web surfing, emailing, tweeting, Facebook posting, etc., is both academically and socially unacceptable in a learning community. **NOTE:** If you are looking at your computer and smiling, this indicates to me that you may have ignored this expectation and are reading your e-mail or involved in some form of social media. Expect to be called on it, or better yet, just don't do it.

Welcome to the class and to philosophy!

TENTATIVE ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE
(Numbers in parentheses refer to page numbers in your text)

8/28	Introduction to the course: What is philosophy?
9/02	<i>The significance of reason</i> : Plato, Apology (11-19)
9/04	Plato, "Euthyphro," (on Blackboard 1-8)
9/09	Euthyphro, cont. (9-16)
9/11	A little logic, Pojman (668-672) -- homework handout provided
9/16	<i>Theories of knowing</i> : Pojman (31-32); Plato, Divided Line and Myth of the Cave (on Blackboard)
	Logic assignment due
9/18	Descartes, Meditation One (49-52)
	Quiz
9/23	Meditation Two (52-56)
9/25	Meditation Four (64-68)
9/30	Hume, Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding: Sect. II and Sect. IV, Part I
10/02	Hume, Section IV, Part. II and Section V
10/7	Popper, "Epistemology Without a Knowing Subject" (146-153)
10/09	Rorty, "Dismantling Truth" (154-160)
10/14	Fall Break
10/16	Essay on Theories of Knowing due by end of class period
10/21	<i>Belief, Reason, and Faith</i> : Peirce, "Fixation of Belief" (on Blackboard)
10/23	"Fixation of Belief," cont.
10/28	Flew, Hare, and Mitchell "A Debate on the Rationality of Religious Belief" (251-256)
10/30	Pascal, "Faith is a Rational Wager" and Clifford, "The Ethics of Belief" (256-63)
11/04	James, "The Will to Believe" (264-269)
11/06	<i>Freedom, Determinism, and Responsibility</i> : D'Holbach "A Defense of Determinism" (396-400)
	Quiz
11/11	Stace, "Compatibilism" (408-413)
	Essay on Belief, Reason, and Faith due at the beginning of class period
11/13	Taylor, "Libertarianism" (Blackboard excerpt, also 401-407)
11/18	Aristotle, "Voluntary Action and Responsibility" (436-440)
11/20	Epictetus, "Stoic Resignation to Fate" (441-444)
11/25	Strawson, "The Impossibility of Moral Responsibility" (445-454)
11/27	Thanksgiving Break

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE (cont.)

12/02	Levin, "A Compatibilist Defense of Moral Responsibility" (455-465)
12/04	Walker, "A Libertarian Defense of Moral Responsibility" (467-471)
	Quiz
12/09	Review/Discussion

Essay on Freedom, Determinism, and Responsibility due by 12 noon on the day of our scheduled final exam (see below).

Section 11J: Monday, 12/15

Section 03J: Wednesday, 12/17

There is no in-class, comprehensive final exam scheduled for this course.