

Introduction to Philosophy

Fall 2012 MWF 1:15-2:20 Humanities Hall 206

Instructor: David Marshall Miller

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Office Hours: T 2-4, and by appointment. (I'm willing to meet anytime I can. Email me to set up a time.)

Course Description

This course is an introduction to philosophy in a seminar format. We will discuss classic and contemporary philosophical texts, examining issues in Metaphysics and Epistemology and Ethics. Topics include theories of knowledge, skepticism, ontology, the mind-body problem, the problem of free will, ethical theories (Consequentialism, Deontology, Virtue Ethics), and political philosophy. Throughout, we will concentrate on the evaluation and construction of philosophical arguments, emphasizing the method of philosophy.

Course Objectives

Students should gain a basic sensibility to good and bad argumentation. They should be able to identify the parts of arguments they encounter, as well as the ability to analyze arguments to specify their strengths and weaknesses. They should develop the reading, verbal, and writing skills needed to recognize and construct coherent and persuasive arguments. Students should also acquire a basic understanding of important issues of interest to contemporary philosophers, especially in Metaphysics and Epistemology.

Text

There is only one textbook for this course:

Gendler, Siegel, Cahn, eds. *Elements of Philosophy*. Oxford University Press, 2008.

This text should be available at the Oxford College Bookstore. Additional material will be made available via Blackboard. Please make sure you have signed onto the course.

Policies

All policies here outlined are subject to change at the instructor's discretion.

Class Organization

Class meetings will consist primarily of open-ended discussions concerning the assigned reading. As noted below, students will be responsible for beginning class discussions, and students are expected to engage the discussion meaningfully.

One aim of this class is to teach the ability to argue convincingly. Stating your point of view loudly, assertively, or simply rudely is *not* equivalent to a convincing argument. Nor are insults, condescension, or *ad hominem* attacks legitimate refutations of another's position. In the course of discussion, try to keep your own statements modest while remaining sensitive and attentive to what others have to say. Effective response to criticism is an essential feature of good philosophy. By the same token, feel free to speak your mind, but allow others the same privilege.

Attendance

I will not record attendance in this class. However, I will pay attention to your participation, and it will play a part in your final grade. Missing one or two classes will not be a problem, but missing five or six will be trouble. Besides, you will not gain much from the (rather dense) readings if you do not attend class.

Readings

Special care has been taken to prevent the assigned reading from becoming onerous. In the ebb and flow of college life, it may nevertheless become difficult to stay on top of the reading. Also, note that some sessions require more reading than others. As a result, it is imperative that students *plan ahead*. Read ahead when you have the opportunity, so that you do not have to read too much when more is assigned or when you are otherwise occupied. Reading ahead gives you a valuable sense of where the class is going. If you know what is coming, you will be able to identify what is important about the present topic. However, be aware that reading philosophy is more difficult and time-consuming than reading for other contexts. We will discuss how to read philosophy in class.

In any case, it is imperative that you come to class prepared to discuss the assigned texts.

Electronics

The use of computers and other electronic devices (iPads, cellphones, etc.) in class has a tendency to distract attention and interfere with classroom discussion, even for those not actively using them. They are not to be used in class, except when necessary for a presentation (or for some other compelling purpose).

Assignments

Class Presentations

Each student is responsible for two in-class presentations: a short (five-minute) introduction of the discussion material for that session and a longer (fifteen-minute, plus discussion) "Philosophy in the Wild" segment. Students will be assigned dates for these presentations.

Introduction. A class introduction consists of a short summary of the day's material in order to begin the broader discussion. The student should state the main theses of the paper or papers read

for class and outline the main arguments given for those theses. The student should also be prepared to pose one or two substantive questions to the class in order to catalyze discussion.

Philosophy in the Wild. A “Philosophy in the Wild” segment is something like philosophical show-and-tell. The presenter will bring to class an argument they find in the media—a news clipping, a YouTube video, etc.—and present the argument to the class. This will involve reconstructing and evaluating the argument. More details about this assignment will be provided. Note, however, that the argument to be presented must be communicated to and approved by the instructor *in advance* of the class—so plan ahead.

Papers

Three 3-4 page papers will be required in this course. For the first two papers, *complete* drafts will be exchanged with a partner—*by hard copy and by email*—who will then be responsible for comments and criticisms before the final paper is due. (Deadlines are listed on the course schedule.) For the third paper, students have the *option* of submitting a draft directly to the instructor for comment. All drafts, comments, and final papers must additionally be submitted to the instructor—*by hard copy and by digital dropbox*. Topics for the papers will be assigned.

Exams

There are no exams planned for this course.

Evaluation

Evaluation in this class will be based on overall performance. Students should therefore strive to perform well in all aspects of the class. That said, a *rough* guide to the consideration given to each component is 15% for class presentations, and 25% for each essay. Participation and attendance will also be considered (10%).

Honor Code

The Honor Code is in effect in this class, as it is in all classes at Oxford College. Academic and personal integrity are serious matters, and will be treated as such in this course. The instructor and students alike are responsible for upholding both the spirit and the letter of the Code. Students must understand its content—especially regarding academic honesty, integrity, and plagiarism—and should clarify any questions they might have. All students are also expected to act with civility, personal integrity; respect other students’ dignity, rights, and property, including their intellectual property; and help create and maintain an environment in which all can succeed through the fruits of their own efforts. Details about the Honor Code are available online:

http://oxford.emory.edu/audiences/current_students/Academic/academic-success/student-honor-code/index.dot.

Philosophy is a collaborative enterprise. Ideas are best developed in discourse where criticism and suggestions are freely exchanged. You should not interpret the honor code to impact your ability to work together, and you are encouraged to do so. However, anything represented as your own work must be your own, with the remainder of submitted material properly attributed to its sources.

Citations

Plagiarism is not the same thing as incorrect citation style. I am not very concerned with how you cite sources, so long as they are cited in a way that enables the reader to find the source.

Nevertheless, there are standard conventions for citing sources, and it is worthwhile to begin using them early in your academic career. You will find some models on the course website. Additionally, there are software applications available that can help with citations (e.g., EasyBib, EndNote, and Zotero), and you are encouraged to learn how to use at least one of these. See

<http://oxford.library.emory.edu/conduct-research/plagiarism-and-academic-honesty/citing-your-sources> for more information.

Accommodations

Students requiring special accommodations should contact the Oxford College Office of Access and Disability Resources at (770) 784-8415 to register.

Assessment

Student work submitted as part of this course may be reviewed by Oxford College and Emory College faculty and staff for the purposes of improving instruction and enhancing Emory education.

Schedule

The schedule is subject to change. I anticipate falling behind, in which case students are still responsible for keeping up with the reading in line with class discussion. If you are responsible for a presentation on a certain date and will not be able to present, let the instructor know as far ahead of time as possible.

(Bb) indicates material on Blackboard.

August 29	Welcome
August 31	Introduction to Philosophy Reading: Blackburn, "What Is Philosophy?"; reading philosophy websites (Bb)
September 3	LABOR DAY
September 5	Philosophical Argument Reading: Blackburn, "The Elements of Logic"; Argument Analysis Worksheet (Bb); Fallacy Primer (Bb)
September 7	Philosophical Argument Assignment: Argument Analysis Worksheet exercises (Bb) PITW: DMM
September 10	What is Knowledge? Reading: Plato, "What is Knowledge?" from the <i>Meno</i> ; Plato, <i>Theatetus</i> 201c-210d (Bb) Introduction: _____
September 12	Gettier Problems Reading: Gettier, "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?" Introduction: _____
September 14	Paper Writing Reading: Paper Writing Handout (Bb)
September 17	Theories of Knowledge Reading: Nozick, "Knowledge." Introduction: _____
September 19	Skepticism Reading: Descartes, <i>Meditations</i> 1 and 2; Sextus Empiricus, the Five Modes (Bb) Introduction: _____
September 21	Responses to Skepticism

	<p>Reading: Moore, “Proof of an External World”; Vogel, “Cartesian Skepticism and Inference to the Best Explanation.”</p> <p>Introduction: _____</p> <p>Introduction: _____</p>
September 24	<p>Responses to Skepticism</p> <p>Reading: Moore, “Certainty”; Nozick, “Skepticism.”</p> <p>Introduction: _____</p> <p>Introduction: _____</p>
September 26	<p>YOM KIPPUR</p> <p><i>Paper 1 draft deadline—email to partners.</i></p>
September 28	<p>Paper Writing Workshop</p> <p>Reading/Assignment: Partner paper comments.</p>
October 1	<p>Transition: Brains in Vats</p> <p>Reading: Putnam, “Brains in a Vat”; Chalmers, “The Matrix as Metaphysics.”</p> <p>Introduction: _____</p> <p>Introduction: _____</p>
October 3	<p>Plato and Reason</p> <p>Reading: Plato, <i>Phaedo</i> (Bb); Plato, “Allegory of the Cave” from the <i>Republic</i>.</p> <p>Introduction: _____</p> <p>Introduction: _____</p>
October 5	<p>PITW Day</p> <p>PITW: _____</p> <p>PITW: _____</p> <p>PITW: _____</p> <p>PITW: _____</p>
October 8	<p>Berkeley and Perception</p> <p><i>Paper 1 due.</i></p> <p>Reading: Berkeley, selections from <i>Principles</i>; Berkeley, selections from <i>Dialogues</i> (Bb)</p>

	Introduction: _____
<i>October 10</i>	Quine and Sense-Data Realism Reading: Quine, "Posits and Reality." Introduction: _____
<i>October 12</i>	PITW Day PITW: _____ PITW: _____ PITW: _____ PITW: _____
<i>October 15</i>	FALL BREAK
<i>October 17</i>	Dualism Reading: Descartes, Meditation 6. Introduction: _____
<i>October 19</i>	PITW Day PITW: _____ PITW: _____ PITW: _____ PITW: _____
<i>October 22</i>	Dualism Ryle, "Descartes' Myth." Introduction: _____
<i>October 24</i>	Physicalism <i>Paper 2 draft deadline—email to partners.</i> Reading: Stoljar, "Physicalism"; Smart, "Sensations and Brain Processes"; Churchland, "Eliminative Materialism and the Propositional Attitudes." Introduction: _____ Introduction: _____
<i>October 26</i>	Anti-Physicalism Reading: Kripke, "The Modal Argument"; Jackson, "The Knowledge Argument."

	<p>Introduction: _____</p> <p>Introduction: _____</p>
October 29	<p>Paper Workshop</p> <p>Reading/Assignment: Partner paper comments.</p>
October 31	<p>Transition: Hume on Causation</p> <p>Reading: Hume, <i>Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding</i>, section 7 (Bb)</p> <p>Introduction: _____</p>
November 2	<p>PITW Day</p> <p>PITW: _____</p> <p>PITW: _____</p> <p>PITW: _____</p> <p>PITW: _____</p>
November 5	<p>Free Will</p> <p>Reading: Ayer, "Freedom and Necessity"; Chisolm, "Human Freedom and the Self."</p> <p>Introduction: _____</p> <p>Introduction: _____</p>
November 7	<p>Free Will</p> <p><i>Paper 2 due.</i></p> <p>Reading: Frankfurt, "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person."</p> <p>Introduction: _____</p>
November 9	<p>PITW Day</p> <p>PITW: _____</p> <p>PITW: _____</p> <p>PITW: _____</p> <p>PITW: _____</p>
November 12	<p>Transition to Ethics</p> <p>Reading: Epictetus, selections from the <i>Handbook</i> (Bb); Plato, "Glaucón's Challenge" and "On the Harmony of the Soul" from the <i>Republic</i>.</p>

	Introduction: _____
	Introduction: _____
November 14	Consequentialism Reading: Mill, selections from <i>Utilitarianism</i> ; Smart, "Extreme and Restricted Utilitarianism"; Williams, "Utilitarianism, Integrity, and Responsibility." Introduction: _____ Introduction: _____
November 16	PITW Day PITW: _____ PITW: _____ PITW: _____ PITW: _____
November 19	Deontology Reading: Kant, Selections from <i>Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals</i> ; O'Neill, "A Simplified Account of Kant's Ethics." Introduction: _____
November 21	THANKSGIVING
November 23	THANKSGIVING
November 26	Virtue Ethics <i>Paper 3 draft due (optional)—submit by dropbox to instructor.</i> Reading: Aristotle, Selections from the <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> ; Hursthouse, "Normative Virtue Ethics." Introduction: _____
November 28	Political Philosophy Reading: Hobbes, "Contract and Commonwealth" from <i>Leviathan</i> . Introduction: _____
November 30	PITW Day PITW: _____ PITW: _____ PITW: _____

<i>December 3</i>	Political Philosophy Reading: Rawls, "Justice as Fairness" from A Theory of Justice; Nozick, "Distributive Justice" from Anarchy, State and Utopia. Introduction: _____ Introduction: _____
<i>December 5</i>	PITW Day PITW: _____ PITW: _____ PITW: _____
<i>December 7</i>	PITW Day PITW: _____ PITW: _____ PITW: _____
<i>December 10</i>	Summary and Conclusion <i>Paper 3 due.</i>