

Dr. Tom Javoroski

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Course Materials

Echoes from the Cave
1st Edition

Gannett, ed.
Oxford, 2014

Other Materials on Moodle

Class Schedule

- Introduction
- Civil Disobedience
- Personal Identity
- Free Will
- Knowledge of the External World
- Knowledge of the Mind
- A Beautiful Life

Specific dates and readings will be announced throughout the block.

Late Work Policy

Late assignments will **not** be accepted and make-up test opportunities will **not** be provided in the case of **unexcused** absences. Typical reasons for excused absences include illness (confirmed with the College), accident, and weather-related issues.

Attendance in the OCAAT program is critically important—you have to be here for class discussion. For exams, you will be responsible for all material covered in both the readings and class meetings. Furthermore, **every unexcused absence after the 1st will drop your final letter grade by one third of a letter. E.G. after two absences, your A drops to an A-. Another absence, to a B+. To a B with a fourth absence, then to a B-, etc.**

Key Dates

Regular Meetings

- Mon and Wed, 1-3(ish)pm
- Tues and Thurs, 9-12(ish)
- Fridays: group meetings

Exam 1

- Thurs, Dec 6th

Exam 2

- Wed, Dec 19th

Paper Due Dates

- Phase 1: Tues, Dec 4th
- Final Draft: Thurs, Dec 13th

Evaluation

- Midterm: 20%
- Final Exam: 25%
- Paper, Phase 1: 15%*
- Paper, Phase 2: 25%
- Friday Group Questions and Other Writing Assignments: 10%
- Participation: 5%
- Attendance: *

Course Description

This course is an introduction to the perennial philosophical problems and the manner in which they have been addressed by major figures in the history of philosophy. Problems considered include the nature of reality and persons, the objectivity and certitude of knowledge, and the basis of morality and political authority. Readings include selections from philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Hume, and others.

As in the rest of philosophy, the consideration of **questions, rational thinking, and self-reflection** will be more important for our purposes than 'correct views', or 'facts', and to some extent even our answers to those questions. The asking of questions implies continued thought- the believing of facts implies an end to some of that process.

We will attempt to develop not only our ability to think critically about these issues (and any other issues), but also our abilities to communicate that thought effectively with others. We will all come to class from the first day armed with opinions on most moral issues--our goal is to develop considered and consistent **arguments** from those opinions. Regardless of how strongly one feels about an issue, simply feeling strongly is not itself evidence of a reasonable view, nor reason for anyone else to pause to consider that view.

In the process, we will also develop our ability to read critically as we seek to understand the views of thinkers both past and present. To read what someone has written is not enough—we must read *critically*.

- You'll be introduced to patterns and methods of effective rational thought—the tools by which philosophers do their jobs, and by which most other human tasks can be improved. Thinking is a skill, and skills can be developed.
- You'll be introduced to the concepts of argument, evidence, and justification, and you'll learn how to use them to your benefit.
- We will explore why these issues have been considered to be important issues, and what makes a question a philosophical question (as opposed to a question of science, linguistics, sociology, etc.)

Course Goals

In this course, we will attempt to investigate the fundamental principles and major theories surrounding some of the most enduring questions of human existence.

Many people have found what they take to be satisfactory answers to these questions over the centuries. But the assumption for this course is that these answers, even if accepted, are *not uncontroversial*. In a significant sense, *questioning the answers* is more important than *answering the questions*.

To this end, we will be exploring some of the major themes in philosophy, as presented by some of the most important figures in philosophy. We will also be attempting to determine how these issues are relevant to our own lives as more than just 'curiosities'.

Friday Small Groups

Instead of regular class meetings, Fridays will feature small group meetings. You will be randomly assigned to a group, and your group will determine its own meeting time on Fridays. **Attendance will be mandatory** for these meetings—your group will turn in an attendance report each Friday.

The purpose of these meetings will be to give you an opportunity to explore the reading materials and class discussion in a smaller setting—to ask questions of your fellow students, and to assist each other in comprehending and challenging the course material.

After each Friday, your group will submit a set of outstanding questions regarding the reading, discussion, or other relevant issues.

Couse Requirements

- Be in class, on time.
- **Have the text in front of you in class**--this will include the textbook as well as any additional readings
- Participate--pay attention to this class while you are here.
- **Be Prepared For Class.** Come to class having done the reading, and be prepared to discuss. Discussion leads to less lecturing, and no one likes lecturing, me included. (The more people there are who come to class with no evidence of having done the reading, the more likely the phenomenon of regular quizzes over the readings becomes.)
- **NO VISIBLE PHONES.** Other parts of your life can take a 50 minute break. You won't die. If you die as a result of missing a text during class, I will give you an automatic A for the course.
- **NO LAPTOPS.** Visible screens distract our attention and keep us from existing in the moment with our fellow students. I recommend paper and a pen for notetaking.

Argumentative Paper: We will be working on one major paper for this course, split into distinct assignments. The goal is for you to develop your paper from start to finish—to choose your topic, to research the topic *beyond the readings and discussion for class*, and to develop a clear and suitable *thesis statement* that you will argue for.

The final draft of the paper will be worth 25% of your grade. The initial stages of the paper may be split up into multiple assignments (developing a thesis statement, finding outside sources, etc.), which are all considered to be part of 'Phase 1', which is worth 15% of your grade in total.

Midterm and Final Exam: In-class, essay exams.

Other Short Writing Assignments: Your Friday Group will be required to meet and submit questions. A number of short writing assignments, sometimes to be completed spontaneously in class, will also be assigned throughout the semester. These will combine for 10% of your final grade, and each will be graded individually on an A/F scale, indicating that you turned in a paper *with effort behind it*.

Participation: Your in-class participation will be graded based on the Participation Rubric on Moodle. A score of 1-2 will result in 0 credit, a score of 3-4 will result in full credit, and a score of 5-6 *may* result in a 'benefit of the doubt' rounding up of your final grade.

Attendance: You are expected to be here for class discussion and for Friday Groups. Every unexcused absence after the first will result in your **final grade** for the course being **lowered** by a third of a letter grade (i.e. A to A- to B+ to B to B- to C+ etc.)

Accommodation

Cornell College is committed to providing equal educational opportunities to all students. If you have a documented learning disability and will need any accommodation in this course, you must request the accommodation(s) from me as early as possible and no later than the third day of the term. Additional information about the policies and procedures for accommodation of learning disabilities is available on the Cornell web site at [/academic-affairs/disabilities/](http://academic-affairs/disabilities/).

Plagiarism Policy

Plagiarism is the use of someone else's words or ideas without acknowledgement and, when intentional, is a form of academic dishonesty.

The unacknowledged use of words or ideas from any published or unpublished sources, including Internet resources or other student papers, constitutes plagiarism.

Plagiarism may occur intentionally or unintentionally through the omission of appropriate citations. Any ideas or information the student adopts from a source, whether or not directly quoted, must be acknowledged by specific reference in notes or the text. Any words or phrases that are taken from a source must be quoted and cited. Any paraphrase—the restatement of an idea in your own words—must be cited.

My Take - Don't do it. I'll catch you and have to fail you, we'll both be upset. It's no good. Using outside sources is great. Just cite them.

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