

PHIL 100: Introduction to Philosophy

Fall 2007, TT 2:30-3:45

A. Özgür Gürsoy

Office Hours: Thursdays 4-5 pm, or by appointment. (Location TBA)

Content: An epigram to Kierkegaard's Either/Or says: "Are passions, then, the pagans of the soul? Reason alone baptized?" Most philosophers never get tired of reminding us that human beings are rational animals. They also claim that there is a specific discipline, namely philosophy, that has something to say about both the rationality and the animality of this strange creature, over and above what other disciplines, for example sociology, psychology, or biology, have to say about it. What is at stake, it seems, is to offer accounts of how human beings interact with themselves, with each other, and with their environment in such a way as to decide on questions concerning the relation between knowledge, belief and truth, the mind and the body, moral obligations and desires ... Our conception of the rational animal has implications for how it comes to know what is and what it ought to do. There are many such conceptions: sometimes reason has the upper hand, sometimes the animal; sometimes there exists an irreducible conflict between the two, sometimes they coexist in blissful harmony. The aim of this course is to provide an introduction to philosophy through a reading of certain texts, taking as its guiding question the relation between reasons and passions, and paying particular attention to the relation between theory and practice, what it is to know and what one must do. Not incidentally, by the end of the course we will have attained some insight to evaluate whether there is such a thing as a rational animal and whether philosophy can say something significant about it.

Texts:

- Plato, *Republic*
- Descartes, *Meditations*
- Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*
- Thomas Nagel, *What Does It All Mean?*
- I will provide articles on e-reserve for the last six classes at the end of the semester. These will be more contemporary pieces that will serve as a basis for our discussions.

Requirements: Four 4-page papers (4x20% each), final exam (15%), participation (5%).

The numerical/letter grade conversion scheme is as follows: 93-100=A, 90-92=A-, 87-89=B+, 83-86=B, 80-82=B-, ..., 65 and below=F.

You will have seen that there are three classes devoted exclusively to discussion. For these sessions you, as a group, will pick a topic interesting enough to stimulate debate; you will then write a one-page (double-spaced) outline of your argument that will help orient you in class. I will not grade these outlines, but they will be one of the factors determining your participation grade. During these sessions I will act only as a facilitator, and you will be speaking to each other. Our goal will be to apply some of the abstract arguments we study in class, develop and sharpen reasoning and speaking skills, and get clearer about our differences even when we do not reach a consensus.

Note: The honor code will be effective in this class. If you are uncertain about its details, you may ask me or consult your student handbook. You are expected to attend every class on time. If, however, you will have to miss a class for a legitimate reason, please notify me no later than 5

pm on the day of that class. Failure to attend more than one class without a legitimate reason will result in a reduction of 5 percentage points from your overall grade.

Aug 30	Introduction
Sept 4	General introduction to Plato; Euthyphro
Sept 6	Euthyphro
Sept 11	Apology
Sept 13	Apology
Sept 18	Crito
Sept 20	Phaedo
Sept 25	Phaedo
Sept 27	Phaedo (1 st paper due.)
Oct 2	Discussion session.
Oct 4	Descartes, Letter of Dedication, Preface, Synopsis, Meds 1 and 2, TN Ch. 2
Oct 9	Mid-semester Break
Oct 11	Descartes, recap of Meds 1 and 2, and Meds 3 and 5, TN. Ch. 3
Oct 16	Meds 3 and 5, TN Chs. 9 & 10.
Oct 18	Meds 4 and 6 TN Ch. 4
Oct 23	(Discussion Session) (2 nd paper due.)
Oct 25	Kant, Section 1, TN Ch. 6
Oct 30	Kant, Section 2, TN Ch. 7
Nov 1	Kant, Section 2
Nov 6	Kant, Section 3
Nov 8	(Discussion Session) (3 rd paper due.)
Nov 13	

Nov 15

Nov 20

Nov 22 Thanksgiving

Nov 27 (4th paper due.)

Nov 29

Dec 4

Dec 6 Review.

Dec 11 Review, closing remarks.