

PHIL 1050-08: Introduction to Philosophy: Self and Reality

Lecture Hours: TR, 12:45 – 2:00, Ritter Hall 249

Office Hours: By Appointment

Instructor: Mr. Jeremy Skrzypek

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Course Description:

This course will serve as a rigorous introduction to the methods of philosophical inquiry and the main issues within the discipline of philosophy. In this course we will address questions such as:

What is an argument? What makes an argument valid or sound?

How ought we to live? In what does the good life consist? Why be moral?

What is the fundamental nature of reality? What sorts of things exist and what are they like?

What is our fundamental nature? Do we have souls? Are we souls?

What can we know, and by what means can we come to know it?

Is there a God? Is His knowledge of the future compatible with our own free will?

What is the relationship between philosophy and religion?

What is the relationship between philosophy and science?

Our approach in investigating these issues will be to read from the texts of some of the most famous philosophers in history: the Ancient Greek philosophers *Plato* and *Aristotle*, as well as selections from later-ancient, medieval, and early modern philosophers *Augustine*, *Boethius*, *Anselm*, *Aquinas* and *Descartes*. Although we will be concentrating on how these questions have been addressed historically, the answers we will consider will be shown to be relevant for both contemporary philosophy and our own lives today. This will become apparent from various written assignments and class discussions throughout the course.

Course Objectives:

Over the course of the semester we will attempt to achieve three main objectives:

(1) Students will be introduced to, and have at least a basic understanding of, the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle as well as a familiarity with some of the issues addressed by later-ancient, medieval, and early modern philosophers.

(2) Students will be able to identify arguments in philosophical texts and give written evaluations of those arguments based on the strength of the premises, the relations between those premises, and the arguments' susceptibility or immunity to objections.

(3) Students will learn how to think clearly and creatively when addressing philosophical issues and begin to develop the ability to form and defend their own arguments.

Required Texts:

1. Anthony Weston, *A Rulebook for Arguments*, Fourth edition (Hackett Publishing)
2. Plato, *Five Dialogues*, Second edition, translated by John M. Cooper (Hackett)
3. Plato, *Republic*, Third edition, translated by C.D.C. Reeve (Hackett)

4. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Second edition, translated by Terence Irwin (Hackett)

5. Various articles available on course website (as indicated below with *)

Note on texts: Students are expected to bring their own copies of the assigned readings to each class. This includes the articles posted on the course website. It is the responsibility of each student to print out these documents ahead of time and bring physical, hard copies to the appropriate classes, as the use of laptops, smartphones, or other electronic devices will not be permitted during class time. If any student has any problems obtaining any of the texts or printing any of the assigned readings, he or she is urged to contact the instructor as soon as possible.

Assignments:

20% (10% Each) = *Two Out-of-Class Assignments.*

For each out of class assignment students are to write a short essay (roughly two double-spaced pages) on a particular idea discussed in class and its application to a “real-life” issue. More details will be given on the day each is assigned (see dates below).

30% (15% Each) = *Two Essays.*

For each longer essay (roughly 4-5 double-spaced pages) students are to explain and analyze a particular argument discussed in one of the readings and in class. This will involve giving proper attention to the sub-arguments that the original authors use in support of their premises, offering possible objections, and ultimately providing a defense or critique of the argument in question. Like the out of class assignments, more details will be given on the day the essay is assigned.

20% = *Midterm.*

The midterm exam will cover all of the readings and topics discussed in class up to that point. It will include multiple-choice questions, short-answer questions, and an essay question. All students must take the exam on the day it is held unless prior permission is given by me.

20% = *Final Exam.*

The final exam will cover all of the readings and topics discussed in class after the midterm. It will also include multiple-choice questions, short-answer questions, and an essay question. All students must take the exam on the day it is held unless prior permission is given by me.

10% = *Three-Minute Throwdowns.*

Periodically throughout the course, certain classes will begin with what I will call a “Three-Minute Throw-down”. At the start of these classes, students will be asked to write down on a sheet of paper their answers to five quick questions that I will ask related to the readings assigned for that date. This should only take about three minutes. There will be a total of thirteen throw-downs over the course of the semester. The scores from each student’s three lowest scoring throw-downs will be dropped. This includes throw-downs that the student has missed due to being absent on the day the throw-down was held, as all missed throw-downs will be given a score of 0/5. There will be no opportunities for making up missed throw-downs. Moreover, students will not be told ahead of time which classes will feature these “Throw-downs”, so attending class regularly, arriving on time, and consistently having the assigned readings read for the dates that they are due will be essential to one’s success in this aspect of the course.

Grading:

Although Out-of-Class assignments, essays, exams, and “Throwdowns” will be weighted differently (based on figures above), each particular assignment will be graded on a one-hundred point scale as follows:

A = 100 – 93	C+ = 79 – 77
A- = 92 – 90	C = 76 – 73
B+ = 89 – 87	C- = 72 – 70
B = 86 – 83	D = 69 – 60
B- = 82 – 80	F = <60

Note on late assignments: Unless specified otherwise, all essays and assignments are due *in hard copy* at the end of class on the dates listed below, barring any adjustments in the schedule by me. Any papers not received by the end of class on the date they are due will receive a **TEN POINT deduction** (based on the assignment’s 100-point scale) **PER DAY**. No assignments will be accepted more than five days after they are due.

University Policies:

Disability Services Academic Accommodations:

Students with a documented disability who wish to request academic accommodations must contact Disability Services to discuss accommodation requests and eligibility requirements. Once successfully registered, the student also must notify the course instructor that they wish to access accommodations in the course.

Please contact Disability Services, located within the Student Success Center, at Disability_services@slu.edu or 314.977.3484 to schedule an appointment. Confidentiality will be observed in all inquiries. Once approved, information about the student’s eligibility for academic accommodations will be shared with course instructors via email from Disability Services and viewed within Banner via the instructor’s course roster.

Note: Students who do not have a documented disability but who think they may have one are encouraged to contact Disability Services.

Academic Integrity:

Academic integrity is honest, truthful and responsible conduct in all academic endeavors. The mission of Saint Louis University is "the pursuit of truth for the greater glory of God and for the service of humanity." Accordingly, all acts of falsehood demean and compromise the corporate endeavors of teaching, research, health care, and community service via which SLU embodies its mission. The University strives to prepare students for lives of personal and professional integrity, and therefore regards all breaches of academic integrity as matters of serious concern.

The governing University-level Academic Integrity Policy was adopted in Spring 2015, and can be accessed on the Provost's Office website at: http://www.slu.edu/Documents/provost/academic_affairs/University-wide%20Academic%20Integrity%20Policy%20FINAL%20%206-26-15.pdf.

Additionally, each SLU College, School, and Center has adopted its own academic integrity policies, available on their respective websites. All SLU students are expected to know and abide by these policies, which detail definitions of violations, processes for reporting violations, sanctions, and appeals. Please direct questions about any facet of academic integrity to your

faculty, the chair of the department of your academic program, or the Dean/Director of the College, School or Center in which your program is housed.

[Tentative] Schedule for Readings and Assignments:

Tuesday, August 23: Class Introductions, Syllabus Overview, What is Philosophy?

Thursday, August 25: Rules for Formulating Good Arguments [Weston, *A Rulebook for Arguments*: Introduction, Chs. 1-5 (pp. xi-xiv, 1-22, 31-36)]

Tues., August 30: How to Recognize and Avoid Bad Arguments [Weston, *A Rulebook for Arguments*: Chs. 6-7, Appendix I (pp. 37-58, 73-80)]

Thurs., September 1: Same topic continued, Introduction to Socrates and Plato; First OCA Assigned

Tues., September 6: The Trial of Socrates [Plato, "Apology" (pp. 21-45)]

Thurs., September 8: Socrates' Argument for Staying [Plato, "Crito" (pp. 45-57)]

Tues., September 13: Same topic continued; First Essay Assigned

Thurs., September 15: Same topic continued; Socrates on the Soul, The Death of Socrates [Plato, "Phaedo" (pp. 93-154)]

Tues., September 20: Plato's Republic: What is Justice? [Plato, *Republic*: Book 1 (pp. 1-35)]

Thurs., September 22: Plato's Republic: Why Be Moral? [Plato, *Republic*: Book 2: 357a-369b (pp. 36-65)]

Tues., September 27: Plato's Republic: Structure of the City, Parts of the Soul [Plato, *Republic*: Book 4: 427d-445e (pp. 103-135)]

Thurs., September 29: Plato's Republic: The Divided Line and The Allegory of the Cave [Plato, *Republic*: Book 6: 507b-511e; Book 7: 514a-521d (pp. 180-193)]

Tues., October 4: Plato's Republic: Political and Psychological Constitutions [Plato, *Republic*: Book 8, Book 9 (pp. 238-296)]; **FIRST ESSAY DUE**

Thurs., October 6: Same topic continued, Summary and Conclusion of Plato's Republic;

Tues., October 11: Second Half Summary, Review for Midterm Exam; FIRST OCA DUE

Thurs., October 13: MIDTERM EXAM

Tues., October 18: NO CLASS (Fall Break)

Thurs., October 20: Introduction to Aristotle: Aristotle's Epistemology, Aristotle on the Soul [Aristotle, *Metaphysics* (Selections); Aristotle, *De anima* (Selections)]*

Tues., October 25: Aristotle's Function Argument [Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*: Book 1 (pp. 1-18)]

Thurs., October 27: Same topic continued; Second Essay Assigned

Tues., November 1: **Aristotle on Virtue and Character** [Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*: Book 2 (pp. 18-30)]; Second OCA Assigned

Thurs., November 3: **Aristotle on Friendship** [Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*: Book VIII (pp. 119-130)]

Tues., November 8: **Aristotle on Pleasure and Contemplation** [Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book X (pp. 153-167)]

Thurs., November 10: *Same topic continued*, **Summary of Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics**

Tues., November 15: **Medieval Philosophy: Free Will, Determinism, and God** [Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will*, Book 3, Ch 1-4 (pp. 70-78); Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, Book 5 (pp. 97-114)]*

Thurs., November 17: **Medieval Philosophy: Arguments for the Existence of God** [Anselm, *Proslogion*, Ch. 2-5, "On Behalf of the Fool" (Gaunilo), "Reply to Gaunilo" (pp. 87-88, 105-122); Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I, q.2, a.1-3]*

Tues., November 22: *Same topic continued*; **SECOND ESSAY DUE**

Thurs., November 24: **NO CLASS** (Thanksgiving Break)

Tues., November 29: **Descartes and the Rise of Modern Science** [Descartes, *Discourse on Method*]; **SECOND OCA DUE**

Thurs., December 1: **Second Half Summary, Review for Final Exam, Student Evaluations**

December 13 (12:00-1:50): **FINAL EXAM**