

Philosophy 1100H: Honors Introduction to Philosophy
Spring 2015 • M/W/F, 10:20–11:15 AM • Kuhn Honors House 201

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Course Description

Philosophy tackles some of the most exciting and most foundational of human questions. This course will explore several of those questions, including: what is the nature of the mind? What are the limits of our knowledge of the world? Does God exist? Is morality objective, or is it in some sense subjective or relative? We will also select a few more specific moral topics to examine in depth; possibilities here might include the justification of punishment, the nature of free will and moral responsibility, the ethics of biomedical research, or the morality of abortion.

This broad range of topics will provide an introduction to the subject matter of philosophy, while also introducing students to the way that philosophers discuss, think, and write about such difficult questions.

Course Goals

This is a philosophy course. As such, it has two primary goals: to introduce you to an exciting ongoing discussion about some topics of immense human significance, and to develop your skill at participating in that ongoing discussion. You will be asked both to show understanding of the material and to undertake some philosophical argument yourself.

Don't worry, that's not as hard as it sounds.¹ In fact, it's a lot of fun. It can also be very useful: many of the courses that you take in the remainder of your university career will require that you produce the sort of clear, direct, argumentative writing that is emphasized in a philosophy class. And both during and beyond your college career, you'll be better off if you're able to formulate clear arguments for your views and critically analyze the way that other people argue for their views.

Some advice about the readings: many of these readings are difficult and complex. Don't be daunted! In philosophy we compensate for this difficulty by assigning fewer pages of reading than you will find assigned in many other courses. And, of course, *come to class*. In class I will identify and expand upon the most important threads in each reading.

¹ For one, it doesn't require that you write in anything like the style of the philosophers we will read. When the time comes, I will give you some specific guidance for writing philosophy papers.

Texts

Please use only the editions and translations listed below. If acquiring any of these is difficult or unreasonably expensive, please contact me.

Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, revised edition, edited and translated by John Cottingham (Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy, 1996)

Anselm, *Proslogion*, translated by Thomas Williams (Hackett, 2001)

All other readings will be posted on the class website.

Grading

10% Attendance and participation

10% Discussion board postings: on Carmen there is a forum set up for each week of class. To help you start thinking about the reading, each week you should post TWO questions or comments about the upcoming week's reading. One, but not both, of these may be a reply to another student's post.

All posts must be made by 11:59 PM on Sundays. These posts only need to be a few sentences in length; they will be graded credit/no credit. There are 12 weekend forums; you may take two weekends off. (You only get credit for a weekend on which you post TWO questions/comments.) Grades for these posts will be assigned as follows: if you post questions/comments on 10 weekends, you will receive an A for this portion of your grade; for 9, A-; for 8, B+; and so on.

This requirement may also be satisfied by posting a track for the course soundtrack. See below.

10% First paper peer review: see next item

15% First paper: the first paper will include a draft and peer review requirement. Paper topics will be handed out Weds 1/28. A draft of your paper is due on Weds 2/11. You will be assigned another student's (anonymized) paper to give feedback. (I will distribute materials to aid you in giving this feedback.) Peer reviews will be due 2/20. Final drafts of the papers, revised in light of the peer feedback received, will be due on 2/27.

The first draft will not be graded for content, but you will not receive credit for this paper if you do not turn in a complete draft. The revised paper will be graded. The peer review will also be graded on the basis of criteria described in class.

25% Second paper: second paper topics will be handed out 3/25; papers will be due 4/10.

30% Final exam (Thurs 4/30, 10–11:45 AM)
Review topics handed out 4/22.

Papers should be turned via Carmen's dropbox (preferably in word/pages/rtf format, rather than as a PDF) by 11:59 PM on the dates they are due. **Be sure to put your name in the body of the paper. I do run turnitin "originality" scans on papers to identify potentially plagiarized content.**

Late papers not excused with documentation will be penalized at a rate of one-third of a letter grade (e.g., from a B+ to a B) per day late.

Course Soundtrack

We'll be compiling a soundtrack as the semester goes on. There is a forum on the course website where you can post suggested tracks (popular music, from the past ~50 years) along with an explanation of their relevance to the class. A single post in this forum satisfies the discussion board posting requirement for the week in which you post it.

Schedule

Week 1

- 1/12 Introduction: course mechanics, course overview.
no readings
- 1/14 Descartes's First Meditation: ambition and doubt
reading: First Meditation
- 1/16 The First Meditation continued
reading: First Meditation

Week 2

- 1/19 Martin Luther King Day: no school
- 1/21 The Second Meditation: the Cogito
reading: Second Meditation
- 1/23 The Second Meditation: what is this thing that thinks?
reading: Second Meditation

Week 3

- 1/26 The Third Meditation: the need to prove that God exists
reading: Third Meditation
- 1/28 Skill session: philosophical arguments and philosophical paper-writing
First paper topics handed out

1/30 The Third Meditation: formal and objective reality and the proof itself
reading: Third Meditation

Week 4

2/2 Descartes's dualism
Reading: Sixth Meditation, pp. 50–54

2/4 Descartes's dualism examined: Elisabeth's criticisms
reading: Elisabeth/Descartes correspondence (on Carmen)

2/6 Elisabeth's criticisms cont'd
reading: Elisabeth/Descartes correspondence (on Carmen)

Week 5

2/9 Hume on causation
reading: Hume, *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* §IV (on Carmen)

2/11 Hume on causation, continued
reading: Hume, *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* §IV (on Carmen)
First paper drafts due

2/13 Skill session: peer review standards and guidelines
Anonymized papers distributed for peer review

Week 6

2/16 Philosophy of Religion: the ontological argument
reading: Anselm, *Proslogion* chs. 2–4

2/18 The ontological argument, continued
reading: Anselm, *Proslogion* chs. 2–4; begin Guanilo, *Reply on Behalf of the Fool*

2/20 Guanilo's criticism and Anselm's reply
reading: Guanilo, *Reply on Behalf of the Fool*; Anselm, *Reply to Guanilo*
Peer reviews due

Week 7

2/23 Anselm's reply to Guanilo, examined
reading: Anselm, *Reply to Guanilo*

2/25 Diagnosing the ontological argument
no reading

2/27 Modern ontological arguments

no reading

Revised first papers due

Week 8

- 3/2 Philosophy of Religion: the problem of evil
reading: J. L. Mackie, “Evil and Omnipotence” (on Carmen)
- 3/4 Philosophy of Religion: the problem of evil
reading: J. L. Mackie, “Evil and Omnipotence” (on Carmen)
- 3/6 Closely examining the free will solution
reading: J. L. Mackie, “Evil and Omnipotence” (on Carmen) (focus on the discussion of the free will solution, pp. 208–210)

Week 9

- 3/9 Ethics: Plato’s *Republic*: What is justice? Why is it good?
reading: *Republic* Book II 357a1–367e5 (marginal Stephanus numbers) (on Carmen)
- 3/11 Glaucon’s challenge
reading: *Republic* II.357a1– 367e5
- 3/13 Glaucon’s challenge continued
reading: *Republic* II.357a1– 367e5

SPRING BREAK

Week 10

- 3/23 Ethics: Hume’s challenge to the rationality of morality
reading: Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* II.3.3, III.1.1 ¶¶1–10, 27 (Carmen)
- 3/25 Hume’s challenge continued
reading: Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* II.3.3, III.1.1 ¶¶1–10, 27 (Carmen)
Second paper topics handed out
- 3/27 Hume’s challenge continued
reading: Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* II.3.3, III.1.1 ¶¶1–10, 27 (Carmen)

Week 11

- 3/30 A modern Aristotelian reply: Philippa Foot
reading: Philippa Foot, excerpt from “Moral Arguments” (Carmen)
- 4/1 The Aristotelian reply: the function argument
reading: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* Book I chs. 1–5, 7, 8, and 13 (Carmen)

4/3 The Aristotelian reply, cont'd
reading: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* Book I chs. 1–5, 7, 8, and 13 (Carmen)

Week 12

4/6 Aristotle on the good life
reading: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* Book X.6–8 (Carmen)

4/8 Aristotle on the good life, cont'd
reading: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* Book X.6–8 (Carmen)

4/10 The good life of Books I and X compared
reading: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* Book X.6–8 (Carmen)

Second papers due

Weeks 13

4/13 Topics and applications: bioethics
reading: Don Marquis, “Why Abortion is Immoral” (Carmen)

4/15 Don Marquis, “Why Abortion is Immoral” cont'd (Carmen)

4/17 Judith Jarvis Thomson, “A Defense of Abortion” pp. 47–56 (Carmen)

Week 14

4/20 Judith Jarvis Thomson, “A Defense of Abortion” pp. 56–66 (Carmen)

4/22 Judith Jarvis Thomson, “A Defense of Abortion” pp. 56–66 (Carmen)
Final exam review questions handed out

4/24 Catch-up/review

Week 15

4/27 Review

*******This syllabus is subject to revision.*******