

INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY
HONORS

APPALACHIAN STATE UNIVERSITY
PHL 1000 — SPRING 2009
T.TH. 3:30 – 4:45
GREER HALL 222

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OFFICE HOURS: M.W.F. 10:30AM – 1PM

A. Course Description: The purpose of this course is to introduce to students the method by which philosophers discuss difficult issues. Through a close reading of four central texts in the history of philosophy spanning the fields of ethics, epistemology and metaphysics, we will examine some problems in the theories of justice, skepticism, empiricism, mind, feminism and aesthetics.

B. Core Texts:

- (1) Plato (2000). *The Republic*. Ed. Ferrari, Trans. Griffith. New York: Cambridge University Press. Also available online at: <http://etext.library.adelaide.edu.au/>.
- (2) Descartes, Rene. *Meditations on First Philosophy*. Available online at: <http://www.wright.edu/cola/descartes/>
- (3) Hume, David (1978). *Treatise on Human Nature*. Ed. Selby-Bigge. New York: Oxford University Press. Also available online at: <http://etext.library.adelaide.edu.au/>.
- (4) Mill, J. S. *The Subjection of Women*. Available online at: <http://oll.libertyfund.org/>.
- (5) G. E. Moore. “Proof of an External World”.
- (6) Hume, David. “On the Standard of Taste”.

C. Assessment: There are two components that you will be graded on for this course: seven quizzes and four essays. The total average grade for your seven quizzes will be worth 50% of your final grade, and the total average grade for your four essays will be worth the remaining 50%.

There will be seven **quizzes**, of which only the best five will be counted towards your grade. The total average of your best five quizzes will count as 50% of your final grade. Students will have sixty minutes to complete each quiz. These quizzes are designed to test your understanding of the material. Quizzes will be conducted online through the AsULearn website (<http://appstate.remote-learner.net>), and will be scheduled outside of class time over a period of five days (from 4:45 Thursday afternoon to 3:30 Tuesday afternoon). Students should regularly refer to this website to familiarize themselves with the quiz schedule. These quizzes will be a combination of:

- Definitions (4-10): Multiple choice format. Taken from readings or lecture notes. Students are expected to read the material and define the terms themselves. A list of terms will be provided in advance of each quiz.
- Multiple choice (8-10): Taken from readings or lecture notes.
- Short Essays (3-5): Questions may ask students to identify the faulty premise in an argument, construct an argument, or explain the significance of an argument or idea.

Essays will be scheduled roughly every four weeks. These essays will be based on focus questions that will be published on the AsULearn website by 4:45 on a Thursday coinciding with one of the scheduled quizzes. For each writing assignment, four questions will be proposed. The

student will be asked to choose *one* question and write a 1,000 word essay (+/- 10%) addressing their chosen question. The essay must be submitted through the AsULearn website by 3:30PM the following Tuesday.

D. Policies: Attendance and Class Participation. Neither class participation nor class attendance will affect the determination of your grade. However, if you regularly skip classes, then I would not expect you to do very well on the assignments; and if you do not participate in discussions, then I expect you will be very bored.

Late Quizzes and Essays. The schedule of quizzes and essays is set in advance, which students can review on the AsULearn website. Because only the top five quizzes and essays will be counted towards each students' grades, I will not accept late quizzes or essays—**no exceptions**. Any student's grade will not (necessarily) be detrimentally effected until the student has missed three or more quizzes or essays.

Beliefs. It is a good thing to have a belief. It is even better to be able to express and discuss one's beliefs freely and openly. However, merely having a belief is not the end-game. We express and discuss our beliefs *in order to* discover whether or not our beliefs are valid. We will do this by considering the logical foundations of these beliefs. Thus, (1) we recognize that we express our beliefs as part of an effort of discovering their validity, (2) we respect each individual's right to this discovery by allowing for the expression and consideration of reasonable and sincere beliefs, however (3) we need not thereby accept that all beliefs are valid.

Course Content and "Fair Game". The job of a philosopher is to examine beliefs and determine their validity. I will restrict the content of my lectures to the issues (both explicit and implicit) that arise from the readings assigned for this course. I will also regard a student's expression of a belief as an invitation to examine the validity of that belief—these become "fair game".

Cheating, Collusion and Plagiarism. Do not cheat, collude or plagiarize. The University does not tolerate this and I find it personally insulting. If I *suspect* you of cheating, collusion or plagiarism, I will request that you complete a new assignment. If I *discover* that you have been cheating, colluding or plagiarizing, you will automatically earn an *F* for the course, *and* you will be reported to the University for disciplinary action. **You are advised to avoid the mere suspicion of violating academic integrity.** All students are advised to familiarize themselves with the Academic Integrity Code, which can be found at the Office of Student Conduct's website (<http://studentconduct.appstate.edu/>).

Special Needs. Appalachian State University is committed to making reasonable accommodations for individuals with documented qualifying disabilities in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Those seeking accommodations based on a substantially limiting disability must contact and register with The Office of Disability Services (ODS) at www.ods.appstate.edu or 828-262-3056. Once registration is complete, individuals will meet with ODS staff to discuss eligibility and appropriate accommodations.

Syllabus and Course Content. I reserve the right to change any part of this syllabus (including course content and policies) for any reason without advance notice. You will be notified of any changes to the *policies* of this course via email. Any changes in *course content* will be listed on the AsULearn website—no further notification will be given.

Advice on Essay Writing: Every good philosophy essay has (at least) three parts: a *problem*, an *exegesis* and an *assessment*. As this course is presumably your first course in philosophy, I would suggest organizing the sections of your essays in this order.

The first section of your essay should simply spell out “*the problem*” that your essay is intended to address. You should formulate a philosophical question that you intend to answer and explain what is interesting or problematic about this question. For instance, if your essay is about Plato’s theory of the Forms, then in this section you would explain what is problematic about the Forms and why this problem is interesting. Additionally, the introductory paragraph should even include a short statement of your answer to this question, while the remainder of your essay is an explanation of your answer.

The next section of your essay should be an *exegesis*: you would explain how some philosopher that you have studied attempted to solve “the problem” previously. The purpose of this section is to demonstrate your knowledge of some past attempts at its solution and, if applicable, your understanding of the historical importance of this argument. You would explain a philosopher’s answer in detail and, if possible, examine any criticism that other philosophers (other than you) may have made of this argument. Again, if your essay is about Plato’s theory of the Forms, then in this section you would explain in detail what Plato’s theory is and, if necessary, some of the criticism that this theory has received from other philosophers.

In the final section of your paper you would be expected to give some *assessment* of the argument offered in the exegesis. This is your chance to give your opinion. Do you agree with Plato’s theory? Do you think it is flawed? Would you solve “the problem” differently? Or do you think that Plato’s solution is correct and stands up against criticism?

Generally speaking, more weight will be given to the first and second sections of your essay (the problem and the exegesis). As undergraduates, I don’t expect you to have strong opinions yet on whether a certain philosophical argument is a good one or not. At this point in your academic career, I would be interested in your opinion because it gives me a good indication of how you are thinking of these philosophical problems, but you needn’t make originality your top concern—in fact, within my grading scheme, originality is only worth 10 points. Thus, you’re not going to get an A on originality alone! You *would not* lose points on your essays for the opinion that you express, however you *would* gain points if you express your opinion well, making good use of the tools of philosophical argument and demonstrating an understanding of the importance of the philosophical issues. I do not care whether you agree with my opinion or not—I only care about your ability to offer good philosophical justification for your opinion.

Grading Scheme — an explanation of what a typical essay within a grade range would include:

90-100: Student shows excellence in knowledge, presentation and analytic skill of relevant material and some originality of thought, far outweighing any minor shortcomings or possibilities for improvement.

80-89: Student writes clearly, shows good broad knowledge, is aware of issues but lacks originality.

70-79: Student shows fair overall knowledge, is aware of most main issues and normally attempts to address them. Essays of this sort typically feel like reading lecture notes.

60-69: Student has enough knowledge to attempt to answer the question, but does so in a very poor way; student attempts an answer but this is deeply flawed, irrelevant or unacceptably brief, giving little evidence of any real knowledge of the relevant material. Essays of this sort typically feel like reading lecture notes but badly.

50-59: Student shows some engagement with the assigned reading materials or class discussion, however any content to the essay is completely irrelevant or unintelligible.

1-49: Student produces nothing that can be counted as an attempt to answer the question; the student offers no evidence of having read the assigned materials or any engagement with the subjects discussed in class; any content to the essay is completely irrelevant or unintelligible.

0: The student makes no attempt at answering the question.

Breakdown of Grading Criterion:

Originality (0-10) — The essay contains some evidence of the student's thinking about the issues in a unique or significant way. Examples would include the student's offering an extended discussion of an original example or making a critical observation that significantly effects the student's analysis.

Use of text (0-20) — Each successful essay will exhibit familiarity with the assigned reading through the effective use of quotes or extended discussion of the text. The use of quotes taken from the lecture notes will not suffice.

Organization (0-15) — The organization of each essay should aid in the effectiveness of the argument and clarity of the exposition. Essays will be awarded points on the basis of clarity of organization, as well as essay length.

Comprehension (0-20) — Each successful essay will exhibit evidence of the student's appreciation of the philosophical issues and an understanding of philosophical techniques. Essays will be awarded points based on both of these criteria.

Clarity (0-15) — A successful essay will present the exposition and analysis clearly requiring a minimum of interpretation on the part of the reader.

Analysis (0-20) — Any philosophical argument will ultimately will be judged by the validity of its logic.

Grading Scale:

A	94-100
A-	90-93.99
B+	87-89.99
B	83-86.99
B-	80-82.99
C+	77-79.99
C	73-76.99
C-	70-72.99
D+	67-69.99
D	63-66.99
D-	60-62.99
F	0-59.99

Notice: I do not round up, and an "A" is a 94, not a 93.

PHL 1000 SPRING 2008 LECTURE SCHEDULE

	Tuesday	Thursday
Jan. 13-15	Introduction and Historical Overview: What is Philosophy?	Introduction to the Methods of Philosophy, to Plato and to Ethics
Jan. 20-22	<u>Ethics</u> : Plato, Book 1: The Problems of Justice and Might Makes Right	Plato, Book 2: Glaucon's Challenge
Jan. 27-29	Plato: Books 3&4: Specialization, the Analogy and the Ideal City	Hume, Book III, Part 1: Moral Motivation in Plato and Hume
Feb. 3-5	<u>Feminism</u> : Plato, Book 5: Feminism in the Republic	Mill, Chapters 1 & 2: Utilitarian Feminism?
Feb. 10-12	Introduction to <u>Epistemology</u> : Plato, Book 5: Knowledge and Belief	Plato, Books 6&7: The Forms, Divided Line and Myth of the Cave
Feb. 17-19	Descartes, Meditation 1 & 2: Methodological Doubt and the <i>Cogito</i>	Descartes, Meditation 3: Cartesian Foundationalism
Feb. 24-26	Hume, I.1.i-iii: Impressions, Ideas and the Foundations of Empiricism.	Hume, I.1.iv-vii: Relations and Abstraction
Mar. 3-5	Hume, I.2.i-iii: Space and Time	The Puzzle Cases
Mar. 10-12	NO CLASS	NO CLASS
Mar. 17-19	<u>Metaphysics</u> : Descartes, Meditation 3: The Causal Argument and its Circularity	Descartes, Meditation 5: The Ontological Argument
Mar. 24-26	Hume, I.3.i-iii: Problems in the Theory of Causation	Hume, I.3.vi & xiv: The Problem of Induction and Necessary Connexion
Mar. 31-Apr. 2	<u>Mind</u> : Descartes, Meditation Six: The Mind/Body Problem	NO CLASS
Apr. 7-9	Descartes, Meditation Six: Perception and the External World	Hume, I.4.ii: Skepticism of the Senses
Apr. 14-16	NO CLASS	Hume, I.4.vi: Locke and Hume on Personal Identity
Apr. 21-23	<u>Aesthetics</u> : Plato, Book 10: Propaganda and Censorship in Plato's Ideal City	The Values of Art
Apr. 28-30	Hume, "On the Standard of Taste"	Aesthetic Experience and Judgments of Value