

Philosophy 101: Reason and Reality

Section 002, Montana State University
T TH 12:15-1:30, 304 Lewis Hall
Spring, 2013

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I. LET'S DO SOME PHILOSOPHY

You probably have practiced some philosophy already, whether you knew it or not. If you have ever wondered who you are, why things exist as they do, what is real or illusory, whether our lives have any meaning whatsoever, what is the right or wrong thing to do, whether all of this is just a dream, whether God exists, why (if God does exist) He would allow you to suffer, whether death is the end of you, whether your dog thinks the way you do, whether computers will ever have feelings, whether life came to be by natural forces or God's will, whether you have a soul, or whether fate or freedom governs your life – if you have wondered about any of these things, you are already a philosopher. Such questions arise naturally in our lives, and they are the beginning of philosophy.

If you are not content with the surface meaning of things and want to dig deeper; if you question what your parents, society, the media, or any other authority figure has told you; even if you question why you question; then you are a philosopher.

Our task in the philosophy classroom is to refine these questions and to search for their answers. We may not get far, but at least we will have taken the question seriously; and that may be the most important thing: "Physicists have microscopes. Astronomers have telescopes. Philosophers have questions: *necessary* questions." (Kolak, p. 394)

II. REQUIRED TEXTS

Rachels, *Problems from Philosophy*

Kolak and Martin, *The Experience of Philosophy*, abbreviated *ExPhil* in Class Schedule

Warburton, *Philosophy: The Essential Study Guide*

Readings on electronic reserve, abbreviated ER in Class Schedule

III. REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING SCHEME

Two Quizzes: 80 pts each (40 pts each)

Paper One: 70 pts

Paper Two: 125 pts

Midterm: 85 pts

Final Exam: 140 pts

Points and Grades:

465-500: A; 450-464: A-; 435-449: B+; 415-434: B; 400-415: B-; 385-499: C+; 365-384: C
350-364: C-; 335-349: D+; 315-334: D; 300-314: D-

IV. PAPERS, QUIZZES, and ATTENDANCE

Paper One: A page and a half, due **Feb 12** in class. Prompt to be distributed.

Paper Two: Three to four pages, due **April 2** in class. Prompt to be distributed.

No emailed papers! Please see last page of this syllabus for **paper evaluation criteria**.

Quiz Dates: **Jan 31, April 9**

Late Papers: All late papers will be marked down 25% during the first week after the paper is due; and 50% after more than one week.

Attendance: I will not take attendance formally. However, much of the material on which you'll be tested will come from our lectures. You'd be wise to attend class if you want a passing grade.

MidTerm Exam: Feb 28

Final Exam: April 29, 12:00-1:50

V. CLASS SCHEDULE

SHADOWS IN THE CAVE

Jan 10 **Introduction: The Cave, Appearance, and Reality**

Jan 15 **Socratic Wisdom and the Gadfly**

Readings: Plato, "The Cave" (ER)

Plato, "The Apology" *ExPhil* pp. 9-22

KNOWLEDGE, REALITY, AND THE EXTERNAL WORLD

Jan 17 **Epistemology: What is Knowledge?**

Readings: Armstrong, *ExPhi*, pp. 254-260

Rachels, pp. 135-136

Bryson, "How to Build a Universe" (ER)

Wittgenstein, *ExPhil*, pp. 365-368

Jan 22 **Skepticism: Opening the Experience/EW Gap**

Readings: Locke, *ExPhil*, 232-235

Rachels, pp. 134-138, and 146-148

Descartes, *ExPhil*, pp. 224-227

Nagel, "How Do We Know Anything?" (ER)

Russell, "Perception, Knowledge, and Induction" *ExPhil* pp. 240-253

Jan 24 **Idealism and Phenomenalism: It's All in Our Heads**

Readings: Descartes, *ExPhil* pp.227-231

Berkeley, *ExPhil*, pp. 236-239

Whiteley, "Phenomenalism: Its Grounds and Difficulties" (ER)

Kolak, *ExPhil*, pp. 383-384

Rachels, pp. 141-144

Nozick, *ExPhil*, pp. 369-371

Jan 29 **C'mon, Let's Get Real: Realism and the External World**

Readings: Descartes, *ExPhil*, pp. 98-100

Rachels, pp. 138-152

Russell, pp. 246-247 (ER)

INTERLUDE: LOGIC

Jan 31 **Deductive Logic**

Readings: Johnson, "Deductive Arguments" (ER)

Rachels, pp. 197-205

QUIZ 1

Feb 5 Inductive Logic

Readings: Johnson, "Inductive Arguments" (ER)

SCIENCE, CAUSATION, AND TIME

Feb 7 The Problem of Induction: Is Causation Real?

Readings: Hume, "Causation, Reality, and Fiction" *ExPhil* pp. 356-360
Russell, *ExPhil*, pp. 250-253
Rachels, p. 120
Whiteley, pp. 104-105 (ER)

Feb 12 Science, Realism, Idealism, and Einstein's Dilemma

Readings: Einstein, "On the Idea of Time in Physics" *ExPhil*, pp. 71-74
Kolak, pp. 384-387
Russell, *ExPhil*, pp. 246-250
Bryson, "The Mighty Atom" (ER)
Kant, *ExPhil*, pp. 430-433

First paper due

PHILOSOPHY OF MIND

Feb 14 Dualism: Descartes' Distinction Between Mind and Body

Readings: Descartes, "Of Self and Substance" *ExPhil* pp. 98-105
Thomson and Turetzky, "A Guide to Contemporary Philosophy of Mind" *ExPhil* pp.444-457
Rachels, Ch. 6

Feb 19 Materialism, Functionalism and Machines

Readings: Rachels, Chapter 7
Thomson and Turetzky, again
Lycan, "Robots and Minds" (ER)
Dennett, "A Perfect and Beautiful Machine" (ER)

Feb 21 Subjectivity and Consciousness: Bats, People, and Qualia

Readings: Rachels, chapter. 6
Nagel, "What Is It Like To Be a Bat?" *ExPhil* pp. 477-483
Jackson, "Epiphenomenal Qualia" *ExPhil* pp. 484-486

FREEDOM AND DETERMINISM

Feb 26 Free Will: My Favorite Illusion

Readings: Holbach, "The Illusion of Free Will" *ExPhil* pp. 152-157
Dawkins, "The Selfish Gene" *ExPhil* pp. 466-470
Rachels, chapters 8-9

Feb 28 MidTerm Exam

March 5 Trying to Resurrect Freedom

Readings: Taylor, "Freedom and Determinism" *ExPhil* pp 183-193
Rachels, chapters 8-9

FUN WITH PARADOXES

March 7 This Sentence is False. Ha!!!

Readings: Sainsbury, "Paradoxes" (ER)
Kolak, *ExPhil*, "The Incredible Shrinking Zeno"

PERSONAL IDENTITY

March 19 **The Problem of Personal Identity: Can You Kiss the Same Person Twice?**

Readings: Rachels, Chapter 5
Buddha, "On Having No Self" *ExPhil* pp. 94-97
Hume, "Personal Identity" *ExPhil* pp.114-116
Martin, "Personal Identity from Plato to Parfit" *ExPhil* pp. 124-138

March 21 **Identity, cont.**

Readings: Same as March 19
Nozick, "Fiction" *ExPhil* pp. 368-371

THE GOD HYPOTHESIS

March 26 **The Design Argument**

Readings: Rachels, pp. 10-22, and 29-40
Dawkins, "Natural Selection" (ER)
Paley, "The Teleological Argument" (ER)

March 28 **The Ontological Argument**

Readings: Anselm, "The Ontological Argument" *ExPhil* pp. 262-265
Descartes, "The Ontological Argument Revisited" (ER)
Everist, "The Modal Ontological Argument" (ER)
Rachels, pp. 24-28

COSMOGONY: WHY IS THERE IS SOMETHING RATHER THAN NOTHING?

April 2 **Fine-Tuning: Is God Necessary To Explain Why Any Universe Exists, or Why This Universe Exists?**

Readings: Rachels, chapter 2
Kolak, "Quantum Cosmology and the Anthropic Principle, or Why Is There Something Rather than Nothing?" *ExPhil* , pp. 372-394
Drange, "The Fine-Tuning Argument" (ER)
Parfit, "The Puzzle of Reality" *ExPhil* pp. 396-403

Second Paper due

April 4 **Nothing Makes Sense.....Maybe**

Readings: Holt, "The Arithmetic of Nothingness" (ER)

April 9 **Cosmogony, cont.**

Readings: Parfit and Kolak, again

QUIZ 2

DEATH AND MEANINGFULNESS/MEANINGLESSNESS

April 11 **Death is.....What?**

Readings: Rachels, chapter 4
Clark, "Death, Nothingness, and Subjectivity" *ExPhil* pp. 526-534
Nagel, "Death" (ER)

April 16 **Fleetingness, Speckness, Futility, and Meaninglessness**

Readings: Tolstoy, "My Confession" *ExPhil* pp. 540-545
Rachels, ch, 13
Camus, "The Myth of Sisyphus," *ExPhil* 446-549
Taylor, "Is Life Meaningful" *ExPhil* pp. 550-55

April 18 **Absurdity, Angst, and Irony**

Readings: Heidegger, "The Quest for Being" (ER)
Nagel, "The Absurd" (ER)
Camus, "The Myth of Sisyphus" again

April 23 **Gravity, Levity, and *Carpe Diem***

Readings: Kundera, "Lightness and weight" (ER)
Baggini, "Carpe Diem" (ER)
Nietzsche, "Eternal Recurrence" (ER)

April 25 Review

April 29 Final Exam

PAPER EVALUATION CRITERIA

(No Emailed Papers; No Late Papers)

A philosophy paper is essentially an argumentative paper. You are exploring the paper question by reasoning/arguing for and against one or more claims that attempt to answer the question. You do not have to arrive at a definite answer. Rather, you are attempting to *explore* the issue thoroughly, interestingly, honestly, and persuasively.

Also, I expect you read and follow pp. 47-79 in Warburton, for tips on writing a philosophy paper!

Clarity

Be clear! Keep asking yourself whether what you are saying is clear to someone else (it may be clear to you, but that does not mean it will be clear to someone else.)

Economy

Your sentences should be free of unnecessary words/phrases. Each of your paragraphs should count in the overall argument of your paper.

Firm Grasp of the Issues from Class/Reading

You should utilize relevant material from our class in order to address the question. Also, you should at least state the positions (e.g. utilitarianism) correctly.

Originality

Can you go beyond the ideas presented in the readings and in class? Strive to be *original* in your arguments.

Good Use of Available Space

If the paper assignment allows 3 to 5 pages, then that means that if your particular argument -- to be complete and convincing -- requires more than 3 pages, then you should use more than 3 pages. But, at the same time, it is not good to try to get more pages with irrelevant "filler."

Evidence of Editing and Proofreading

Try to eliminate typographical and grammatical errors. Watch for run-on sentences, spelling, punctuation, and sentence fragments.

Serious Entertaining of the Opposing View(s)

Your paper should entertain the strengths and weaknesses of your particular claim or thesis. Remember that your reader will trust you much more if you entertain doubts/objections that she might have, and then respond to them persuasively. An entirely one-sided paper is never convincing.

Strong Opening, and Stick the Landing

Think of your paper as a gymnastics routine. Judges look for that strong first move that catches their attention; and then for "sticking the landing," to close the routine convincingly and leave a lasting impression. Your paper should do the same.

Length, font, spacing, and margins

A three page minimum does not mean two and three quarters pages! It means at least three pages, with font no larger than 12, and left-justified margins.

No Plagiarism!

Using someone else's words without citing them as the author is an academic crime. It is called plagiarism.

