

PHILOSOPHY 100/ FALL 2007
Introduction to Philosophy
MWF 1:30 - 2:20 Robinson B218
Prof. Ted Kinnaman

Office: Robinson B465A

Office hours: Tues., 1:00 - 2:00

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COURSE DESCRIPTION: The course plan falls into two sections. In the first few weeks of the course, we will be looking primarily at the philosophy of the ancient Greek philosophers Socrates and Plato. We will also read John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty*, written just 150 years ago. Here we will be concentrating on questions of knowledge and of the nature of political justice. In the second part of the course, we will be looking at the views of the modern philosophers Descartes, Hume, and Nietzsche a variety of questions, including on the foundations of knowledge, the fundamental character of reality, and God's existence.

GRADES AND GOALS: At the end of each unit, you will write a five to six page take-home essay exam on a question of my choosing. This question will involve explanation of the major issues from that part of the course and criticism of each philosopher's views on those issues. Each of these exams will count for 40% of your grade for the semester. The other 20% will be determined by your short essays. The topics for the short essays will be assigned (and explained more fully) in a separate handout. In general, to do well in this course, you need to understand the books we read— the issues the authors address, the claims they make on these issues, and their arguments for these claims. But— and this is very important— you also need to think about how *you* would answer these questions, and what the strengths and weaknesses are of the philosophers' arguments. You will also need to present your thoughts in clearly written essays, in which you explain the philosophers' views (making specific reference to the texts), and offer arguments for your considered judgments on the questions we discuss. For a statement of the standards of good writing in philosophy, and some connections to helpful resources for writing, go to http://www.gmu.edu/departments/philosophy/standards_of_good_writing.htm.

CLASSROOM PROCEDURE: The lectures are intended to help you better understand some of the most important passages in the assigned texts. On the syllabus below, you will see that for every day of lecture, there is an assigned text to read. The lecture will be devoted to explaining that text: What question the author is addressing; what key terms mean; what the author's argument is; and (usually) what problems there are with the author's argument. Because philosophy reading is often rather difficult, I suggest that you read the text once before lecture (or at least try it), and again after lecture. Our classroom meetings will consist mostly of lecture, but I will also ask you questions for discussion, and answer any questions you have. You are not required to participate in class discussion, nor even to attend class. But you will probably find it difficult to do well in the class without attending lecture regularly, and you should make it your goal to at-

tend every lecture. In lecture, you should be prepared at least to listen politely to what I and other students have to say. This means not distracting others by talking to your neighbor or leaving class unnecessarily. If you know that you will need to leave class early, please let me know this and sit near the door so that your exit causes as little distraction as possible.

REQUIRED BOOKS:

1. Plato, *Theaetetus* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1992).
2. Plato, *Republic* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1992).
3. John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1978).
4. René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1993).
5. David Hume, *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1980).

Week One (Aug. 27 - 31): Introduction to course; Plato, *Theaetetus*, pp. 1 - 26.

Week Two (Sep. 5 - 7): Plato, *Theaetetus*, pp. 26 - 60.

Week Three (Sep. 10 - 14): Mill, *On Liberty*, Chapters One, Two and Three. **[Friday: First short essay due]**

Week Four (Sep. 17 - 21): Mill, *On Liberty*, Chapters Four and Five. **[Friday: Second short essay due]**

Week Five (Sep. 24 - 28): Plato, *Republic*, Book One; Book Two [357b - 368e]; Book Three [412b - 417b] and Book Four.

Week Six (Oct. 1 - 5): Plato, *Republic*, Book Eight; Book Five [471c-480], Book Six and Book Seven [514-521b]. **[Friday: Third short essay due]**

Week Seven (Oct. 9 - 12): Plato, *Republic*, Book Ten [595b - 607b]. **[Friday: Hand out questions for midterm exam #1]**

(Note that we meet on *Tuesday*, *Wednesday*, and *Friday* this week.)

Week Eight (Oct. 15 - 19): Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, pp. 1 - 24 (Letter of Dedication, Meditations 1 and 2). **[Friday: Hand in midterm #1]**

Week Nine (Oct. 22 - 26): Descartes, *Meditations*, pp. 17 - 42 (Med. 2 cont'd., 3, and 4). **[Friday: Fourth short essay due]**

Week Ten (Oct. 29 - Nov. 2): Descartes, *Meditations*, pp. 47 - 59 (Med. 6).

Week Eleven (Nov. 5 - 9): Descartes, Med. 6 cont'd.; Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Sections 1, 2, 3, and 12.

Week Twelve (Nov. 12 - 16): Hume, *Enquiry*, Secs. 4, 5, 6, and 7. [**Friday: Fifth short essay due**]

Week Thirteen (Nov. 19; NO CLASS on Weds. and Fri.): Hume, *Enquiry*, Secs. 5, 6, and 7 (cont'd.).

Week Fourteen (Nov. 26 - 30): Hume, *Enquiry*, Secs. 8 and 9.

Week Fifteen (Dec. 3 - 7): Hume, *Enquiry*, Secs. 10 and 11 [**Friday: Sixth short essay due; Hand out questions for midterm #2**]

FINAL (SECOND) MIDTERM due in my mailbox in the Philosophy Department office (Robinson B465) on Wednesday, Dec. 12 at 1:30 p.m.

LATE SUBMISSIONS: I am usually generous about accepting assignments a bit after the due date *if* the student has cleared this with me before hand. If however you hand in an assignment late without talking to me first, you should count on being penalized in some way. If the paper is only slightly late, I may mark it down a grade; if it is very late, I will not accept it at all.

A NOTE ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: The lack of academic integrity is what is commonly referred to as 'cheating'. I take cheating to consist in presenting work as your own which was actually written by someone else whether another student or a professional philosopher. A general rule of thumb is, if you say something in a paper that you would not have said if you had not read Smith, even if you do not quote Smith word for word, then you need to footnote Smith. Anyone who cites or otherwise refers to the work of someone else *without acknowledging this fact in a footnote* will be referred to the Honor Committee.