

PHIL 2010-01 (50739): Introduction to Philosophy
University of West Georgia, Summer 2012 (Session IV)
M/T/W/R/F 12:30 – 2:45 PM, Pafford 306

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Course Summary:

“The reading of all good books,” Rene Descartes tells us, “is like a conversation with the most honorable people of past ages . . . in which they reveal to us only the best of their thoughts.” In philosophy, this is especially true, given its nature as the mother of all disciplines. Mathematics, the natural and social sciences, and the humanities are all firmly situated within the historical domain of its inquiry.

In this short four-week course will survey some of the most influential texts in the the history of the Western intellectual tradition. The texts which we will closely examine include Plato's *Republic*, St. Augustine's *Confessions*, Rene Descartes' *Discourse on Method*, David Hume's *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, Friedrich Nietzsche's *Twilight of the Idols* and Bertrand Russell's *Problems of Philosophy*. Overall, the texts are organized around a series of questions pertaining to the inquiry into the nature and methods for acquiring knowledge within several distinct spheres of belief—including divine revelation, rational inquiry, sensory experience, instinct, and scientific method. Among the types of knowledge we shall discuss include the moral, religious, artistic, political, mathematical and scientific fields. We will compare and contrast the benefits (and drawbacks) of each sphere of knowledge for human life. Required for philosophy majors. May count for credit in Core Area C2.

Learning Objectives:

Throughout this course, the student will learn to:

- define and distinguish among the philosophical terms and concepts used in the course;
- describe the views of at least three major philosophers from the Western tradition;
- contrast the competing views of major philosophers on some of the philosophical issues explored in the course;
- explain and critically assess the philosophical issues and theories explored in the course; and
- discuss in both oral and written discourse the philosophical theories and issues explored in the course.

These course-specific learning outcomes contribute to the departmental learning outcomes of the Philosophy Program by enabling students to better:

- discuss the general historical development of the discipline of philosophy;
- discuss three major historical figures of philosophy;
- ask philosophical questions and differentiate their types;
- incorporate a philosophical position in oral and written communications;
- critically outline and analyze philosophical issues; and
- exhibit critical thinking skills.

Required Texts*:

- Plato, *The Republic* (tr. Grube & ed. Reeve). Hackett, 1992. ISBN: 0-87220-136-8
- Augustine, *Confessions* (tr. Sheed), 2nd ed. Hackett 2006. ISBN 0-87220-816-8
- Rene Descartes, *Discourse On Method & Meditations On First Philosophy* (tr. Cress), 4th ed. ISBN 0-87220-420-0
- David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, 2nd ed. Hackett, 1992. ISBN 0-87220-402-2
- Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight Of The Idols* (tr. Polt), Hackett, 1997. ISBN 0-87220-354-9
- Bertrand Russell, *Problems Of Philosophy*, Oxford, 1998. ISBN: 0-19-511552-X

* = there are other acceptable editions, but translations can vary radically in accuracy and readability. Please consult your instructor for assistance if you plan to use a different edition of any text.

Tentative Reading Schedule:

All dates and content scheduled below are subject to change by the Instructor!

Week 1 (July 2-6): Plato's *Republic*

- July 2: Course introduction; What is Philosophy?; Historical background on Plato
- July 3: Plato, *Republic* 1-4
- July 4: No class
- July 5: Plato, *Republic* 5-7
- July 6: Plato, *Republic* 8-10; Exam #1

Week 2 (July 9-13)

- July 9: Augustine, *Confessions* 1-4
- July 10: Augustine, *Confessions* 5-8
- July 11: Augustine, *Confessions* 9-10
- July 12: Augustine, *Confessions* 11-13
- July 13: Descartes, *Discourse on Method*; Exam #2

Week 3 (July 16-20)

- July 16: Hume, *Dialogues* 1-4
- July 17: Hume, *Dialogues* 5-8
- July 18: Hume, *Dialogues* 9-12
- July 19: Nietzsche, *Twilight* (some)
- July 20: Nietzsche, *Twilight*; Exam #3

Week 4: (July 23-27)

July 23: Russell, *Problems* 1-5

July 24: Russell, *Problems* 6-9

July 25: Russell, *Problems* 10-15

July 26: Reading Day

July 27: Exam #4

Evaluation:

There will be four in-class exams throughout the course, one each Friday (7/6, 7/13, 7/20, 7/27). Each exam will cover that week's readings. The best three of four exams will count for your exam grade. Your attendance and participation will be required, and will count for the remainder of your grade.

The following weighting will be used to calculate your grade:

Exams (best 3 of 4)	60%
Attendance and Participation	40%

This class meets on an accelerated summer schedule. For this reason, you must prepare for extensive reading and work required outside of class, as well as active participation and engagement of the reading in class in order to do well in this course. If you do not attend class or keep up with the reading, do not expect to pass this course. Since we meet a little over fifteen times this summer, each class you miss will effectively reduce your attendance score about one half letter grade per day.

Note on Academic Dishonesty: Plagiarism is the ultimate mortal sin of academia. Please, cite properly and document accordingly anything that may appear in your written work for this class. If you are unclear about how to properly document a paper, simply ask me. But err on the side of caution: clear-cut cases of plagiarism (deemed so by myself) will result in the possibility of up to and including a "F" for this class, and possible disciplinary action taken. Don't try me, I will catch you. All submissions for this class will be cleared through electronic methods to detect plagiarism.

If you are unsure of what plagiarism constitutes, I highly recommend you view the tutorial at the following link: <http://www.cte.usf.edu/plagiarism/plagindex.html>. Ignorance of the law, as they say, is no excuse.

Students with Disabilities: I will be happy to provide reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities. Feel free to self-disclose to me privately any disability that may present challenges for you in the course. I request that you contact the Office of Disability Services (678-839-6428) before you request special accommodations.

Expectations, Suggestions and Mandates for an efficient class:

1. Please arrive to class on time and expect to stay the entire duration of the class. If this is an impossibility, please make every attempt to notify me in advance of tardiness or absence.
2. Especially true in philosophy more than most other areas of study, diligence is important. The difficulty of the subject is indirectly proportional to the amount of work put into the course. Expect to have up to fifteen hours a week of reading and thinking in order to get an "A" for the course. Additionally, for these reasons, attendance is of vital importance.
3. Please come to class prepared (i.e., any reading assigned read, any questions concerning exercises or lectures prepared, etc.)
4. Please be respectful of each other in the class. There will be times when students disagree about a topic discussed in class. This is a didactic process, not a combative one.
5. Due to the great excess of material and limited time in which we must cover ground, please do not create a disruption for those people who are attempting to learn. Disruptions include blurting out answers, name calling, chiding each other, snoring, etc. Laughing at the Instructor's jokes is obviously exempted from this policy. In addition, personal audio devices (except those in use to record lectures) and loud crunching snack foods are prohibited from the classroom. ***PLEASE TURN OFF your cellphones in class.***
6. Please feel free to make mistakes. We all will from time to time—even your omniscient instructor!!
7. Please feel free to make use of my office hours. Waiting until the last moment in the semester to catch up is not advisable. I am excellent at fixing small problems, but horrendous at fixing large ones. The only difference between small and large problems is time.
8. This is a discussion-based class, and your effective participation is a part of your final grade. "Effective" participation is a function of the quality, not the quantity, of one's overall participation in class. Thus, if you find yourself someone who is naturally reticent, please make an effort to participate and have your voice heard; likewise if you find yourself someone who is naturally garrulous, please allow others to be heard.
9. Have fun! The material is only as dry as you make it out to be. Sharpening one's mind can be an exhilarating process.