

PHIL 1000: Introduction to Philosophy

Fall 2009

THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

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HOURS: MW 10-11am; by appt.

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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

(Catalog): *A critical exploration of such topics as knowledge and belief, God and the problem of evil, freedom and determinism, the right and the good, language and meaning, mind and body, appearance and reality, and man and the world.*

A beginning course in philosophy is a challenging intellectual experience. In many ways it is very different from other courses. Perhaps more than ever, you will be asked to think for yourself. Some of the issues you study may seem unrelated to anything important. Memorizing material won't be nearly as effective as it may be in a course in history, for example. At times, you may appear to be going round in circles.

Philosophy, it is said, begins in *wonder*. In some respects, philosophy is simply a systematic, sustained pursuit of questions perennially asked by children, teenagers, and adults, not to mention other philosophers. So, in reality, you are being *re-introduced* in a deeper and more organized fashion to questions about which you've probably already wondered: *What is real? How do I know? What should I do?*

One task, therefore, for this course is to establish some identifying characteristics broad enough to encompass the diversity of philosophical subject matter, yet specific enough to enable us to recognize a philosophical problem when we come across it: *What is the difference between science and philosophy and between philosophy and religion? How does one go about thinking for oneself? Does philosophy have any practical consequences? Is philosophy basically a matter of personal opinion?*

First, it is impossible to distinguish rigidly and conclusively between what counts as a philosophical problem and what does not. There will always be borderline cases. This is not a defect of philosophy; nearly every academic discipline at some point begins to shade off into other areas, hence *interdisciplinary* subjects.

Second, the characteristics of philosophical problems are *not unique* to philosophy; each one may be found in other disciplines. But, when applied collectively, they describe reasonably adequately a broad range of philosophical issues. Indeed, any discipline that claims to bear knowledge about the world has at its foundations a list of philosophical issues or problems.

Third, the desire to know more than just platitudes dictated by authorities, to question what may seem obvious to others, and to respect the process of inquiry that may lead to unusual and uncomfortable places, are all enduring and universal components of the spirit of philosophy. The word "philosophy" literally means "love of wisdom" or "passion for wisdom."

For our purposes, we can define *philosophy* as "that discipline involving questions about the meaning, truth and logical connections of fundamental ideas that resist solution by the empirical sciences or by religious authority." It is with such problems that we will spend the next several weeks.

COURSE TEXTS:

Worldly Wisdom: A Multicultural Introduction to Philosophy. Daniel Bonevac.

COURSE POLICIES:

Honesty: by accepting admission to UGA, you make a commitment to understand, support, and abide by the Academic Honesty Policy without compromise or exception. All academic work must meet the standards contained in “A Culture of Honesty.” All students are responsible to inform themselves about those standards before performing any academic work. The pamphlet “A Culture of Honesty” is available at http://www.uga.edu/ovpi/honesty/culture_honesty.htm.

Respect: turn off cell phones; keep private conversations to a minimum; don’t come into class late – these are distracting and disruptive.

Charity: when reading the material we encounter, give each position **the benefit of the doubt** when grappling with it; don’t make hasty judgments.

Effort: in engaging the material, much of the reading will seem difficult, strange, and even frustrating; make an effort to understand what is being said; make comments in your text; ask questions.

Conviction: in defending your position, do not say, “Well, that’s just **my** opinion”; stand up for what you think, and defend it with **good reasons**.

Acceptance: when your position is criticized, do not say, “Well, that’s just **your** opinion”; reconsider your view **in light of the criticism**; it may help make your position stronger.

Lastly, **no laptops are allowed during either classroom lectures or breakout sessions** – there has been a growing and persistent use of computers during class time for purposes *other* than taking notes. Because I cannot monitor everyone, I am forced to enact a blanket policy: no computers will be allowed during class, **unless you have University approved documentation from Disability Services.**

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Attendance. It is important to your success in the course that you attend class regularly. Be **on time!** **LATE ARRIVALS MAY BE TURNED AWAY.** Absences are excused **at the instructor’s discretion.** Excessive absences may result in administrative withdrawal with a grade of “WF.” Each student is responsible for any material missed due to absence. Attendance is calculated as a percentage of classes attended and will count **10%** of your grade.

Participation. Philosophy is quite difficult without active engagement with texts, ideas, and thinkers. You are expected to have read **all** assignments by the class meeting for which they are assigned and to **bring your book or reading assignment to every class.** It is essential in a course like this to have the text with you for reference – **THOSE WHO DO NOT MAY BE ASKED TO LEAVE CLASS.** This course is approximately 50% lecture, 50% discussion. You are expected to contribute to classroom discussion and to avail yourselves of office hours and WebCT. Participation is calculated by consultation between the instructor and the TA and will count **10%** of your grade.

Exercises. Part of the success of philosophical inquiry comes from a sustained practice of critical thinking. To help facilitate this activity, you will be assigned regular exercises to complete as homework. These are called “questions to consider” (QTCs). QTCs are specific central questions about the assigned readings designed to be answered in a good solid paragraph (5-10 sentences). **ALL EXERCISES WILL BE SUBMITTED ELECTRONICALLY VIA WEBCT PRIOR TO THE CLASS FOR WHICH THEY ARE ASSIGNED, AND STUDENTS WILL BRING A HARD COPY WITH THEM TO CLASS.** Exercises will be graded **only** with respect to *completion* – **if you complete the assignment, AS ASSIGNED, then you will receive credit.** Credit **WILL NOT** be given for assignments that do not follow the **format requirements** (5-10 sentences per question). These exercises will also constitute an ongoing study guide. Some may even be modified for use on exams. Exercises are calculated as the *percentage* of **SUCCESSFUL** assignments turned in and will cumulatively count for **20%** of your grade.

Exams. There will be **THREE EXAMS** given during the course, one after each of three Units. The format of each exam will be three short answer essay questions covering the major issues and themes of the Unit. Dates for exams are on the schedule at the end of this syllabus. All exams will be administered in discussion sections, and will require “blue book” examination booklets: **PLEASE NOTE: YOU MAY NOT TAKE THE EXAM WITHOUT A BLUE BOOK!** Each exam will count for **20%** of your grade, for a total of **60%** of your grade in the course.

GRADING CRITERIA:

- A** B The assignment exhibits an **exceptional** understanding of the material and presents the argumentation in a clear, precise, and concise manner: you have engaged in **proper** philosophical analysis and/or critique of the material.
- B** B The assignment demonstrates a **good** understanding of the material and presents the argumentation accurately and intelligibly: you have exhibited genuine **progress** in grappling with the material by means of philosophical analysis and/or critique.
- C** B The assignment exhibits an **adequate** understanding of the material but shows some problems presenting the argumentation fully and accurately: you have evidenced signs of struggling to grasp the material, but show a real **effort** to engage with the material philosophically.
- D** B The assignment demonstrates **limited** understanding of the material, but you are able to present some portions of the argumentation: you display an inadequate effort to engage the material, but nonetheless show **some** attempt to engage the material philosophically.
- F** B The assignment exhibits **minimal** understanding of the material and does not present the argumentation accurately: you **fail** to demonstrate any effort to engage the material in any critically meaningful way.

Sometimes students want to know what a letter grade with (+, -) means for their average. These are used when an assignment or exam is considered “borderline.” This happens because the nature of philosophical material written in essay format makes it impossible to assign a straightforward numerical grade. The above descriptions characterize the letter grade assigned, and (+,-) signifies proximity to the next letter grade (higher or lower). This plays a role in assessing your final grade based on your attendance & participation in the course. High attendance and participation grades will help the student; low grades in attendance and participation will have no effect.

MAKE-UPS & LATE ASSIGNMENTS: Make-ups will be administered, and late assignments accepted, strictly at the discretion of the instructor.

SCHEDULE:

8/17	Philosophy & Truth; Arguments
8/19	Arguments
8/20-21	Breakout 1: Argument Workshop
8/24	Correspondence & Coherence
8/26	Pragmatism & Relativism
8/27-28	Breakout 2: Can Relativism Stand?
8/31	Internalism & Externalism
9/2	Skepticisms & Responses to Skepticism
9/3-4	Breakout 3: Can Skepticism be Avoided?
9/7	Labour Day Holiday
9/9	Some Distinctions & Rationalism

9/10-11	Breakout 4: Is Rationalism Sufficient?
9/14	Empiricism
9/16	Kant's Copernican Revolution
9/17-18	Breakout 5: Understanding Kant's Copernican Revolution
9/21	Dogmatic Empiricism
9/23	Review
9/24-25	Breakout 6: EXAM 1
9/28	Divided, Absent, & Unified Self
9/30	Mind & Zen; Two Images of Self
10/1-2	Breakout 7: Personal Identity: Who, or What, Am I?
10/5	Particulars & Universals
10/7	Substance & Essence; Primary & Secondary Qualities
10/8-9	Breakout 8: What Kinds of Things are There?
10/12	Idealism
10/14	Realism
10/15-16	Breakout 9: Mind over Matter: Is Idealism More Adequate?
10/19	What is Religion?; Concepts of God
10/21	A Priori Arguments & A Posteriori Arguments
10/22-23	Breakout 10: Intelligent Design: A Plausible Argument?
10/26	Practical Arguments & The Problem of Evil
10/28	Review
10/29-30	Breakout 11: EXAM 2
11/2	Plato & Aristotle
11/4	Confucius; Laozi; Buddhist Virtues; Modern Variants
11/5-6	Breakout 12: Character as a Moral End & the Determination of the Virtues
11/9	Reason
11/11	Happiness
11/12-13	Breakout 13: Action as a Moral End: Deontology & Teleology
11/16	Conscience & Religion
11/18	Political Virtue; Natural Law; Aggression & Political Authority
11/19-20	Breakout 14: Conscience & Religion in Politics
11/23	Thanksgiving Holidays
11/25	Thanksgiving Holidays
11/26-27	Thanksgiving Holidays
11/30	Negative Liberty
12/2	Positive Liberty
12/3-4	Breakout 15: Are There Social Obligations to Others?
12/8	Review; Conclusions; Evaluations

The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.

Fall Semester 2009*

Based on 50 minute classes (MWF), 75 minute classes (TTH), 15 weeks of classes, 75 days of classes

Orientation	Aug. 12	Wednesday
Advisement	Aug. 13	Thursday
Registration	Aug. 14	Friday
Classes Begin	Aug. 17	Monday
Drop for undergraduate level courses (1000 – 5999)	Aug. 17 – Aug. 20	Monday - Thursday
Add for undergraduate level courses (1000 – 5999)	Aug. 17 – Aug. 21	Monday - Friday
Drop for graduate level courses (6000 – 9999)	Aug. 17 – Aug. 24	Monday – Following Monday
Add for graduate level courses (6000 – 9999)	Aug. 17 – Aug. 25	Monday – Following Tuesday
Holiday: Labor Day – No Classes	Sept. 7	Monday
Midterm	Oct. 8	Thursday
Withdrawal Deadline	Oct. 22	Thursday
Fall Break	Oct. 30	Friday
Last Day of Classes Prior to Thanksgiving Break	Nov. 20	Friday
Holidays: Thanksgiving	Nov. 23 – 27	Monday - Friday
Classes Resume	Nov. 30	Monday
Friday Class Schedule In Effect*	Dec. 8	Tuesday
Classes End	Dec. 8	Tuesday
Reading Day	Dec. 9	Wednesday
Final Exams	Dec. 10, 11, 14, 15, 16	Thurs. – Fri., Mon. – Wed.
Commencement	Dec. 18	Friday
Grades Due	Dec. 18, 7 PM	Friday, 7 PM

***Note: For the Fall Semester 2009, the University will operate a Friday class schedule on Tuesday, Dec. 8. This is done to equalize the class minutes between MWF and TTH classes and to provide an equal number of class meetings for courses which may meet only once per week.**

Fall 2009 Final Exam Schedule

Find your class meeting time in the first table below to see when your exam is scheduled. Be aware that some classes are scheduled for mass exams (see second table below).

Monday/Wednesday/Friday Classes	Tuesday/Thursday Classes
8:00 am Exam: Thurs., Dec. 10 8:00 - 11:00 am	8:00 am Exam: Fri., Dec. 11 8:00 - 11:00 am
9:05 am Exam: Mon., Dec. 14 8:00 - 11:00 am	9:30 am Exam: Tues., Dec. 15 8:00 - 11:00 am
10:10 am Exam: Wed., Dec. 16 8:00 - 11:00 am	11:00 am Exam: Fri., Dec. 11 12:00 - 3:00 pm
11:15 am Exam: Thurs., Dec. 10 12:00 - 3:00 pm	12:30 pm Exam: Tues., Dec. 15 12:00 - 3:00 pm
12:20 pm Exam: Mon., Dec. 14 12:00 - 3:00 pm	2:00 pm Exam: Fri., Dec. 11 3:30 - 6:30 pm
1:25 pm Exam: Wed., Dec. 16 12:00 - 3:00 pm	3:30 pm Exam: Tues., Dec. 15 3:30 - 6:30 pm
2:30 pm Exam: Thurs., Dec. 10 3:30 - 6:30 pm	5:00 pm Exam: Fri., Dec. 11 7:00 - 10:00 pm
3:35 pm Exam: Mon., Dec. 14 3:30 - 6:30 pm	6:30 pm Exam: Tues., Dec. 15 7:00 - 10:00 pm
4:40 pm Exam: Wed., Dec. 16 3:30 - 6:30 pm	8:00 pm Exam: Fri., Dec. 11 7:00 - 10:00 pm
5:45 pm Exam: Thurs., Dec. 10 7:00 - 10:00 pm	9:30 pm Exam: Tues., Dec. 15 7:00 - 10:00 pm
6:50 pm Exam: Mon., Dec. 14 7:00 - 10:00 pm	-
7:55 pm Exam: Mon., Dec. 14 7:00 - 10:00 pm	-
9:00 pm Exam: Wed., Dec. 16 7:00 - 10:00 pm	-