

Syllabus
Philosophy 1000
Introduction to Philosophy
Fall 2009
MW 12:20-1:10 p.m.
Peabody 115

Instructor:

Dr. Ashley Sherman
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Office Hours: MWF 11:15 a.m.-12:15 p.m.
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Teaching Assistant:

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Text:

Louis P. Pojman, *Philosophy: The Quest for Truth*, seventh edition, Oxford University Press, 2009.

Purpose:

One purpose of this course is to introduce you to some central topics in philosophy. We will begin the course with a brief look at the question “What is Philosophy?” and an overview of some fallacies of reasoning. We will then delve into the following areas: philosophy of religion, epistemology, metaphysics, political philosophy, and the meaning of life. During this survey of philosophy, we will address questions such as the following: Can God’s existence be proved?; What is the extent and source of knowledge?; Can we have knowledge at all?; What are the ends of government?; What is the good or happy life?; and, finally, What is the meaning of life?

Another purpose of this course is to help you develop philosophical skills. Philosophy involves the examination and critique of arguments as well as the construction and development of one’s own arguments. Thus, in this course, we shall not simply learn about what philosophers have written in the past; we will also be engaged in philosophical activities ourselves. This means that you will be expected to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the various arguments we read as well as develop your own arguments in response to the readings.

Class Structure:

Lecture:

The structure of this course is such that the entire class shall attend lectures on Mondays and Wednesdays with Dr. Sherman in Peabody 115. Your attendance is required. A seating chart will be passed around during the first week of class; sign up for a seat and make sure to sit in that seat for the remainder of the semester. If you are not sitting in the correct seat, you will be marked absent. If you arrive late for class, please enter by the side doors so as to lessen your disturbance to class. If you do not arrive to class before roll is taken, you will be marked absent.

While the majority of time on these days will be involved with lecture, Dr. Sherman does frequently ask questions about the readings or ask students for their reactions to the readings. Thus, you are expected to have read before class and be willing to discuss the material.

Discussion Groups:

Once a week, class will split off into groups of about twenty-five for discussion groups with the teaching assistant. The time, day and location of your discussion group may be found through Oasis. The point of discussion groups is to give you the opportunity to participate actively in philosophical dialogue. Discussion groups provide you the chance to ask questions about the readings, discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the arguments, and develop your own arguments based upon the issues found in the texts. Attendance is also required in discussion groups.

Attendance:

Attendance is required. Any student whose total number of absences exceeds five, after the conclusion of drop/add, may be administratively withdrawn from the class without notice. Any student who is administratively withdrawn from the class- at *any* time during the semester- will receive a WF for the course. This policy holds for each and every student taking this class.

Punctuality:

You must arrive to class on time. Excessive tardiness will not be tolerated and may result in an administrative withdrawal (WF) for non-attendance.

Classroom Environment:

Please remember that this is a classroom environment, and you are to behave accordingly. This means that you must refrain from private conversation and any other disruptive behavior. Turn your cellphone off before coming to class. If you fail to respect the academic environment, you will be asked to leave the classroom and will be marked absent for that day.

Reading Assignments:

The schedule of reading assignments and exams is given below. A reading should always be completed prior to the class meeting for which it is assigned. Participation is expected, so come to class prepared to ask questions and discuss the material.

Grading:

Dr. Sherman grades according to the standard interpretation of the grading scale: excellent work will merit an A; good work will earn a B; average work will receive a C; below average work will earn a D; and unacceptable work will merit an F.

Your final grade will be averaged according to the following 12-point scale:

A+	12
A	11
A-	10
B+	9
B	8
B-	7
C+	6
C	5
C-	4
D+	3
D	2
D-	1
F	0

Quizzes:

Quizzes may be given periodically during the course of the semester. Excellent class participation and quiz scores may be used as a factor in determining final grades.

Exams:

There will be four exams which will each count 25% of your final grade. All four exams will be essay-style, so please come to class on exam days with an unused blue-book.

There will be two essential components for each essay you are required to write. You will be asked to write specifically about the material we have covered for each exam. You must discuss the relevant arguments and counter-arguments from the material you have read. Furthermore, you will be required to give your own arguments. This means that you must state your position and adequately support your claims. You must go beyond the readings, then, in order to give your own independent philosophical analysis of the readings. If you do not understand what is expected of you, then please speak to either Dr. Sherman or your teaching assistant before the exam.

Keep in mind that an opinion is an unsupported claim whereas an argument is a claim that is supported by reasonable and compelling evidence. You are expected to give arguments in this class.

Make-up Exams:

Make-up exams are given only under the most pressing reasons such as serious illness (which requires a hospital visit) or a death in your immediate family. You must notify the instructor of your intended absence on an exam day no later than the day of the exam. Failure to do so will result in a zero for the missed exam. Furthermore, you will be expected to show appropriate notification validating your excuse. An unexcused absence on an exam day will result in a zero on the missed exam. There will be no exceptions to this policy.

This syllabus provides a general plan for the course; deviations may be necessary.

Schedule:

8/17 Introduction

8/19 'What is Philosophy?' (2-5); Russell (24-30); 'A Little Bit of Logic' (30-42)

Discussion Groups. Topic: What do you think the value of philosophy is?

8/24 Aquinas (52-56)

8/26 No new Reading

Discussion Groups. Topic: Are Aquinas' 5 Ways successful in proving God's existence?
Why or why not?

8/31 Edwards (74-84)

9/2 Paley (84-88)

Discussion Groups. Topic: Is Edwards successful in defeating Aquinas' arguments?
Why or why not?

9/7 Holiday

9/9 Hume (88-95)

Discussion Groups. Topics: To what extent is Paley's argument successful in proving God's existence? Which of Hume's arguments is most successful in challenging Paley's argument? Why?

9/14 Anselm and Gaunilo(95-99)

9/16 No new reading

Discussion Groups. Topics: How is Anselm's argument intended to work to prove God's existence? To what extent is Gaunilo's critique successful in challenging Anselm's argument? Which of the arguments for God's existence do you find most convincing? Why?

9/21 Review

9/23 **First Exam**

Discussion Groups. Topic: Can you prove, beyond a shadow of doubt, that you are awake and not dreaming right now?

9/28 Descartes (182-189)

9/30 Locke (189-201)

Discussion Groups. Topic: Can you prove that the external, physical world exists? How so? How did Locke attempt to offer such a proof? Was he successful? Why or why not?

10/5 No new reading

10/7 Berkeley (201-210)

Discussion Groups. Topics: If a tree falls in the woods, does it make a sound? How would you answer this question? How would Berkeley answer this question? How does Berkeley challenge Locke's arguments? Who offers the stronger arguments regarding the existence (or non-existence) of the physical world? Why?

10/12 No new reading

10/14 Hume (210-219)

Discussion Groups. Topics: Can we empirically justify the relationship between cause and effect? Why or why not? What does this mean for knowledge, in general? In what ways does Hume challenge the arguments of Descartes, Locke and Berkeley? Who has the strongest arguments, and why?

10/19 Review

10/21 **Second Exam**

Discussion Groups. Are people essentially egoists (always looking to satisfy self-interest)? What would you do if you were stranded on a deserted island with the other members of your discussion group--- and there were only enough resources to keep one person alive?

10/26 Hobbes (534-544)

10/28 No new reading

No discussion groups

11/2 Locke (544-550)

11/4 No new reading

Discussion Groups. Topics: What does Hobbes say about the state of nature? What does Locke say about the state of nature? How do these different attitudes affect the rest of their political philosophies? Who makes the stronger case?

11/9 Mill (550-557)

11/11 Review

Discussion Groups. Topics: What does Mill say about tyranny of the majority? To what extent should we be concerned? Of the three philosophers we have read in this section (Hobbes, Locke and Mill), who do you think offers the best arguments? Why?

11/16 **Third Exam**

11/18 Epicurus (5701-577))

Discussion Groups. Topics: What do you think the meaning of life is? How would you define a happy life? How does Epicurus define the happy life? What background assumptions lead him to define happiness in this way? What do you think of Epicurus' view?

11/23 Thanksgiving Break

11/25 Thanksgiving Break

No discussion groups

11/30 Epictetus (577-586)

12/2 Camus (586-591) and Nagel (595-603)

Discussion Groups. Topics: How does Epictetus define the good life? What do you think of his view? What do Camus and Nagel say about the absurdity of life? How compelling are their views?

12/7 Review

No Discussion groups

Final Exam: Time, date, and location to be announced.

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.

Any suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be reported. If a student is suspected of academic dishonesty, the suggested penalty shall be an **F** as the **final grade** for the course.