

PHIL 1000: Introduction to Philosophy
Spring 2009
THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

INSTRUCTOR: Christian Cotton
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HOURS: MW 8-9; 10-11am; by appt.

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HOURS: TR 2:30-3:30; by appt.

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.*

Philosophy is a multi-vocal discipline, and it can be seen in the foundations of most other disciplines (such as biology, physics, political science, sociology, anthropology, and psychology). It has therefore been called the “science of all sciences”, where ‘science’ refers to any systematic body of knowledge. Beneath this multi-vocal application, however, lies a unified method of inquiry – after all, we cannot come to know things without first inquiring after them.

This is an introductory course in philosophy. As such, there are a number of ways we can approach the discipline. We will look at philosophy first as a **practical method** of inquiry. This will enable us to get a better sense of what philosophical material is like and how it differs from other disciplines, such as science and religion. We will then look at philosophy **historically**. This will give us a better sense of what philosophy grows out of and how it has developed as a “great conversation” about fundamental ideas involving man, the gods, and the world. This will carry us to the midpoint of the semester. In the second half, we will look at philosophy **topically**. No longer concerned with general form and content, we will engage in some depth several topics surrounding a single period in world history: The European Enlightenment. In particular we will focus on the political and economic theories so characteristic of our modern, global world whose origins lie in that moment in human history. Finally, we will be *doing philosophy*, which is to say engaging in critical examination and reflection upon these various topics. We will be especially interested in the way in which man, the gods, and the world are thought of.

COURSE TEXTS:

A Preface to Philosophy, Mark B Woodhouse, Wadsworth, 8th edition.
A Passion for Wisdom, Robert C Solomon, Oxford, 2007.
Ishmael: An Adventure of the Mind and Spirit, Daniel Quinn, HarperCollins, 1992.
PHIL 1000 – Cotton, Course Packet, TBA, only available at Bel-Jean Copy/Print.

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 for everyone.

Charity: when reading the material we encounter, give each author **the benefit of the doubt** when grappling with his position; 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 positions, do not retreat into the feeling or attitude that says, "Well, that's just **my** opinion"; stand up for what you think, and defend it with **good reasons**.

Acceptance: when one's position is found untenable, do not withdraw into the thought or sentiment that says, "Well, that's just **your** opinion"; reconsider your view **in light of the evidence**.

Lastly, there are **no laptops are allowed in either classroom lectures or breakout sessions** – for whatever reason(s), 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**. But take heart: note-taking by hand is a much more effective way to learn, and computers are a temptation.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Exercises	20%
Exams	40%
Essays	40%

Attendance & Participation. 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. In addition, **philosophy is quite impossible 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.** You are expected to contribute to classroom discussion and to avail yourselves of course-appropriate involvement outside of class (e.g., office hours and/or WebCT). Much of our class time will be spent involved in directed discussion. Participation is required in order to succeed in this class. While there is no specific grade for attendance & participation, there are **two incentives** to be a regular attendee and participant: first, grades (esp. borderline) will benefit; second, persistent and/or excessive absences will cost (esp. borderline) grades. For example, suppose you finish the term with an 89 average – if you have done well in attendance and participation, then your grade will be boosted to an A-. On the other hand, suppose you finish the term with an 80 average – if your attendance and participation are poor, your grade will be reduced to a C+. And because you do not know precisely where your grade falls until close to the end of the term, you are left to make the rational choice on your own. (Hint: It is in your best interest to be a regular attendee and participant!).

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 will be of two kinds: chapter exercises in the first part of the course, and "questions to consider" (QTCs) in the remainder. 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 WITH THEM TO CLASS A COPY OF THE EXERCISES TO GO OVER.** These 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. You can think of your grade here as the *percentage* of **SUCCESSFUL** assignments turned in. These

exercises will also constitute an ongoing study guide, especially the QTCs.

Exams. There will be **TWO EXAMS** given during the course. The first will come after we have completed the first section of the course. It will be an exam covering the basics of argumentation and assorted topics from the first text. The second exam will come after we have completed the third section of the course. It will be an exam covering the material in the Course Packet. Both exams will be short answer, will be administered in discussion sections, and will count equally toward your final average (20% each). You will need “blue book” examination booklets for both exams. **YOU MAY NOT TAKE THE EXAM WITHOUT A BLUE BOOK!**

Essays. There will be **TWO ESSAYS** assigned during the course. The first will come after we have completed the second section of the course. It will be an **historical** essay written by the student on a topic selected from a pre-determined list. The second essay will come after we have completed the final text for the course. It will be a **critical** essay written by the student on a topic selected from a pre-determined list. Both essays will be typed, 3-5 pages, and will count equally toward your final average (20% each).

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. The following table gives the numerical equivalents.

A+	100	B+	88	C+	78	D+	68
A	96	B	85	C	75	D	65
A-	93	B-	82	C-	72	D-	62
A-/B+	90	B-/C+	80	C-/D+	70	F	<60

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

SCHEDULE:

Breakout:	
1/12	<i>A Preface to Philosophy, I</i>
1/14	<i>Preface, II</i>
Breakout:	
1/19	HOLIDAY – NO CLASS
1/21	<i>Preface, III</i>
Breakout:	
1/26	<i>Preface, IV</i>
1/28	<i>Preface, V</i>
Breakout:	First Exam
2/2	<i>A Passion for Wisdom, I</i>
2/4	<i>Passion, I</i>
Breakout:	
2/9	<i>Passion, II</i>
2/11	<i>Passion, II</i>
Breakout:	
2/16	<i>Passion, III</i>
2/18	<i>Passion, III</i>
Breakout:	
2/23	<i>Course Packet, TBA</i>
2/25	<i>Course Packet, TBA</i>
Breakout:	
3/2	<i>Course Packet, TBA</i>
3/4	<i>Course Packet, TBA</i>
Breakout:	First Paper Due
3/9	SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS
3/11	SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS
Breakout:	SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS
3/16	<i>Course Packet, TBA</i>
3/18	<i>Course Packet, TBA</i>
Breakout:	
3/23	<i>Course Packet, TBA</i>
3/25	<i>Course Packet, TBA</i>
Breakout:	
3/30	<i>Course Packet, TBA</i>
4/1	<i>Course Packet, TBA</i>
Breakout:	
4/6	<i>Course Packet, TBA</i>
4/8	<i>Course Packet, TBA</i>
Breakout:	Second Exam
4/13	<i>Ishmael, I-III</i>
4/15	<i>Ishmael, IV-VI</i>
Breakout:	
4/20	<i>Ishmael, VII-VIII</i>
4/22	<i>Ishmael, IX</i>
Breakout:	
4/27	<i>Ishmael, X-XI</i>
4/29	<i>Ishmael, XII-XIII</i>
4/30	MONDAY SCHEDULE – COME TO LECTURE – Conclusions, evaluations
5/6	Second Paper Due

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