

## **Philosophy 101: Introduction to Philosophy**

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### **Course Description**

This course is an introduction to philosophy, and centers around discussion of several perennial philosophical questions: What is the relation between our minds and our bodies? What can we know about the world, and how can we know it? Is it reasonable to believe that God exists? What is it to be a person like us? Are any of our actions within our control? Are we responsible for our actions? When are our actions right or wrong?

### **Course Aims**

This course will:

- introduce the student to the major areas of philosophy: epistemology, metaphysics, philosophy of mind, philosophy of religion, ethics and social philosophy.
- introduce the student to the art of philosophical inquiry
- introduce the student to some of the major historical figures and movements in philosophy
- enhance the student's abilities for critical, intellectually respectable thinking and self-reflection

### **Course Materials**

- *Fifty Readings Plus: An Introduction to Philosophy*, ed. Donald C. Abel (McGraw-Hill)
- A copy is available on Closed Reserve in the Main Library

## Reading and Assessment Schedule

### Unit I: Philosophy of Mind

Syllabus and Background

Descartes, 233-234

Armstrong, 248-250; Peirce, 202-209

Nagel, 260-269

### Unit II: Epistemology

Plato, 124-132

Descartes 135-138 and 142-145; **Quiz #1 (Unit I)**

Locke, 148-152; Hume 177-184

**Philosophy Jeopardy; Term Paper Option #1 Due**

### Examination #1 (Units I & II)

### Unit III: Philosophy of Religion

Anselm 32-34

Aquinas, 41-43

Dawkins, 64-74; **Term Paper Option #2 Due**

Hick, 89-100

**Debate: Topic TBA**

### Unit IV: Metaphysics

d'Holbach, 323-325; **Quiz #2 (Unit III)**

Hospers, 332-338; Taylor, 356-361; **Term Paper Option #3 Due**

**Movie Day: Waking Life**

### Unit V: Normative Ethics

Rachels, 463-474; **Term Paper Option #4 Due**

Aquinas, 404-407; **Quiz #3 (Unit IV)**

Nietzsche, 432-437; **Movie Paper Due**

**Philosophy Jeopardy**

### Final Examination (Units III - V)

## Student Expectations

- Students are expected to abide by the OSU Code of Student Conduct
- Students are expected to carefully read the selections assigned for each lecture.
- Each student bears *sole* responsibility for keeping up with assignments.
- Students are expected to attend class regularly.
- Students are expected to arrive at class in a timely fashion: lateness disrupts the class.
- Students are expected, and encouraged, to ask questions and share thoughts during lecture, especially if something is not understood or the instructor says something obviously false. There will be frequent opportunities for class discussion.
- Students are expected to participate courteously in class discussions, but a lack of participation will generally not harm one's grade.
- Any student who feels that accommodations based on the impact of a disability are required should contact the instructor privately to discuss specific needs. Please contact the Office of Disability Services at 614.292-3307 in Pomerene Hall 150 as well; they will coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

## Assessment

- The instructor reserves the right to augment the final grades of students who consistently demonstrate superior class performance, or to lower the grades of students who consistently demonstrate a dereliction of their work.
- There are three in-class multiple choice **quizzes**, each worth 5% of the final grade.
  - Make-up quizzes are available if the student *must* miss class due to illness or an act of God or alien abduction. Students should make an effort to inform the instructor that a make-up exam will be required *before* the exam is given.
- There are two examinations, a **midterm** and a **semi-comprehensive final**.
  - The midterm is worth 20% of the final grade.
  - The semi-comprehensive final is worth 35% of the final grade.
- There are two term papers, an **intellectual engagement paper** and a **movie paper**.
  - The intellectual engagement paper is worth 15% of the final grade.
  - The movie paper is worth 5% of the final grade.
  - Students with writing difficulties should consult the OSU Writing Center.
  - Multiple pages should be bound together with staples, paper clips, or duct tape.
  - The instructor is not responsible for "lost" material.
  - *Retain a copy of all finished work*, in order to resolve grade disputes.
  - Late assignments are accepted at the instructor's discretion, and subject to penalty.
  - Plagiarism and other academic misconduct will be promptly reported to OSU's Committee on Academic Misconduct. Plagiarism is defined as "the act of appropriating the literary composition of another, or parts or passages of his writings, or the ideas or language of the same, and passing them off as the product's of one's own mind" --Black's Law Dictionary, 5th edition.
- There are two in-class **contests** (Philosophy Jeopardy), together worth 10% of the final grade.
- **Extra credit** is available in certain situations. See the instructor for details. Only work pre-approved by the instructor will be accepted.

## Intellectual Engagement Paper

The student must complete *one* of the following assignments, submitting it in accordance with its respective deadline. One revision is permitted, for students unsatisfied with their initial grade. Revisions are due one week after the instructor returns the initial draft or the day after the final exam, whichever is sooner.

### Option 1:

Present the mind-body problem. What are the main reasons in favor of being a dualist? What are the main reasons in favor of being a materialist? Select a position to defend: materialism, interaction dualism, or one of the non-interaction dualisms. Present your reasons for preferring this position. Also present the main objections to your position; then respond to these objections, showing how each objection involves a false assumption of some sort (as opposed to merely disagreeing with the conclusion of the objection).

### Option 2

Present the reason for the debate between rationalists and empiricists. What are the main reasons in favor of being a rationalist? What are the main reasons in favor of being an empiricist? Select a position to defend: Platonic rationalism, Cartesian rationalism, Lockean empiricism, or Humean empiricism. Present your reasons for preferring this position. Also present the main objections to your position; then respond to these objections, showing how each objection involves a false assumption of some sort (as opposed to merely disagreeing with the conclusion of the objection).

### Option 3

Present two of the following arguments: Anselm's ontological argument, Aquinas's third way, or Paley's design argument. Present the main objections to each of the arguments. Also present your verdicts on whether or not the arguments are successful. If you think an argument is unsuccessful, provide further reasons for thinking that the objections to the argument are persuasive. If you think an argument is successful, show how each objection to the argument involves a false assumption of some sort (as opposed to merely disagreeing with the conclusion of the objection).

### Option 4

Present the main arguments for thinking that determinism is incompatible with free will. (Be sure to explain what determinism and free will are.) What are the main reasons in favor of determinism? What are the main reasons for thinking that we have free wills? Select a position to defend: determinism or libertarianism. Present your reasons for preferring this position. Also present the main objections to your position; then respond to these objections, showing how each objection involves a false assumption of some sort (as opposed to merely disagreeing with the conclusion of the objection).

## Movie Paper

The student must complete one paper that relates the philosophical issues explored throughout the course to a theme from a movie (or novel). The student is to provide a brief summary of the movie, and then describe a philosophical theme that occurs in the movie. This theme should be related to the topics covered in class. The paper should answer the following question: How does the movie illustrate one of the philosophical issues that have been discussed? No revisions.

The following movies are *pre-approved*: Waking Life (to be watched during class); Vanilla Sky; The Butterfly Effect; Donnie Darko; Existenz; Dark City; Contact; The Devil's Advocate; Matrix I; Matrix II; Minority Report; Groundhog Day; Boondock Saints; Saving Private Ryan.

## Philosophy Jeopardy

Twice during the course, students will play Philosophy Jeopardy during class. Students play in teams; the instructor is the "host". The game is modeled after Jeopardy, but the answers are philosophical (they cover content from the course). There are three rounds for each game, Jeopardy, Double Jeopardy, and Final Jeopardy. The first round offers a total of 10,000 points; the second round offers a total of 20,000 points. Students receive 2 grade-points for their participation in a game. Students who place "Rank 1" in a game receive 4 grade-points; those who place "Rank 2" receive 3 grade-points; "Rank 3" receives 2 grade-points; and "Rank 4" receives 1 grade-point. (Each grade-point is 1% of the final grade.)

Students who miss these games and have an acceptable excuse (doctor's note, athletic note, family emergency) should contact the instructor to arrange a substitute assessment.

## Miscellany

Philosophy is not easy. You must make a serious effort to understand and articulate the material. It helps to take detailed notes, and let your mind wander over what you find interesting outside of the classroom.

If at any time you would like to discuss the issues covered in class or philosophy in general, feel free to visit during office hours or arrange a meeting.

If at any time you are having problems with the subject matter or the manner of its presentation, *do not hesitate* to bring this to my attention (in person, via email or anonymous note, etc). It is your responsibility to bring any course-related concerns to my attention.

I encourage a free and tolerant atmosphere in class. I encourage and expect questions and challenges at appropriate times during class. I welcome visits to my office. *I am here to help you learn.*

*I expressly reserve the right to alter any or all portions of this syllabus, at my sole discretion, at any time, and in any manner.* Also, this sentence (the one you are reading right now) is false.

Introduction to Philosophy  
Study Questions #1: Philosophy of Mind

What are the marks of a material thing? of a mental thing?  
What is the mind-body problem? What makes something a solution to the mind-body problem?

**Descartes, Meditations**

What is dualism?

What is Descartes's argument in favor of dualism?

What is interaction dualism, and how does it solve the mind-body problem? Name two famous philosophers who are interaction dualists.

What are some objections to interaction dualism?

What is parallelism, which famous philosopher held this position, and how does it solve the mind-body problem?

What is pre-established harmony?

What is occasionalism, how does it differ from parallelism, and how does it solve the mind-body problem? Name two famous philosophers who are occasionalists.

What is epiphenomenalism, and how does it solve the mind-body problem?

What are the main objections to non-interaction dualism?

**Armstrong, The Nature of Mind**

What is idealism, and how does it solve the mind-body problem?

How does materialism solve the mind-body problem?

What does modern science have to say about the nature of man? What is the physicochemical hypothesis?

According to Armstrong, why does science have a special authority to decide questions about the nature of the human mind (rather than, say, religion or art)?

**Peirce, Fixation of Belief**

What is a fixed belief?

Discuss Peirce's four methods of fixing belief. What are they? What are their faults? What are the advantages of each? Which does Peirce think is the best, and why?

What is Peirce's fundamental methodological hypothesis?

How does Peirce's argument support Armstrong's position?

**Nagel, What Is It Like to Be a Bat?**

Why does Nagel think that physical science cannot explain conscious experience?

What is a zombie (in the philosophical sense)? Why are zombies significant?

What are some other objections to materialism?

Introduction to Philosophy  
Study Questions #2: Epistemology

What is epistemology?  
What is the difference between an analytic claim and a synthetic one? Give examples.  
What is the difference between a priori knowledge and a posteriori knowledge? Give examples.  
What is an example of a priori knowledge that is also analytic?  
What is an example of a posteriori knowledge that is also synthetic?  
What is the difference between rationalism and empiricism?

**Plato, Republic**

What is a Form?  
What is Plato's argument in favor of rationalism?  
What is the significance of the divided line analogy?  
What is the significance of the cave analogy?  
What is Platonic rationalism?

**Descartes, Meditations**

What is Cartesian rationalism? How does it differ from Platonic rationalism?  
What is the Crucible of Methodic Doubt designed to do?  
What are the three stages of the Crucible? What does each stage show? How?  
What is the *cogito*? Why is it important?  
What makes an idea innate? What are some innate ideas (according to rationalists)?

**Locke, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding**

What is Locke's arguments against the theory of innate ideas?  
What is a *tabula rasa*?  
What is Locke's theory of knowledge? (What is Lockean empiricism?) How does it differ from rationalism?

**Hume, An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding**

What is Humean empiricism? How is it similar to Lockean empiricism? How is it different from Lockean empiricism? How does it differ from rationalism? How is it similar to Cartesian rationalism?  
What is skepticism?  
What is Hume's argument in favor of skepticism about synthetic a posteriori knowledge?

Introduction to Philosophy  
Study Questions #3: Philosophy of Religion

What is the traditional Western conception of God?  
What is deism, and how does it differ from the traditional Western conception of God?  
What is fideism?

**Anselm, Proslogion**

What are the three classes of existence?  
What does Anselm understand by 'God'?  
What is Anselm's argument that God exists?  
What is Anselm's argument that God's existence is necessary?

What is Guanilo's objection to Anselm's argument? How does Anselm respond?

**Aquinas, Summa Theologiae**

What is the difference between a contingent being and a necessary being, according to Aquinas?  
What is Aquinas's Third Way, the Argument from Contingency?  
How does the Third Way show that God exists?  
What does the Third Way show about the properties of God?  
What are some objections the Third Way?

What is the key difference between Aquinas's arguments for the existence of God and Anselm's arguments?

**Dawkins**

What is Paley's design argument?  
What does the design argument show about the properties of God? Does it show that the God of traditional Western theology exists?  
What is a sieving mechanism? How does it work?  
What is the difference between single-step selection and cumulative selection?  
How is evolutionary theory an alternative explanation of natural complexity? Why is it a better explanation than the theory of design?  
In what sense is natural selection random? In what sense is it not random?  
Does the success of evolutionary theory provide evidence for the existence of God?

**Hick, The Problem of Evil**

What is the problem of evil?  
What is a theodicy?  
What is the free will defense?

What is the Augustinian theodicy? What is Schleiermacher's criticism of it?  
What is the Iranian theodicy? What is an objection to it?  
What is the process theodicy? What is an objection to it?

What is the problem of omnipotence?

Introduction to Philosophy  
Study Questions #4: Metaphysics

What is theological determinism?  
What is the Paradox of Omniscience?  
What is Boethius's solution to this paradox?  
What is Hartshorne's solution?

**d'Holbach, Of the System of Man's Free Agency**

What is determinism? What is behaviorism?  
What is a will? What is a free will? What is libertarianism?  
What is LaPlace's Demon, and what is it meant to illustrate?  
What is d'Holbach's argument that our wills are not free?

What is James's dilemma of determinism?

**Hospers, The Range of Human Freedom**

What is the difference between moral responsibility and legal responsibility?

Why might determinism be thought to exempt us from moral responsibility for our actions?  
Why, according to Hospers, are all of our actions ultimately a matter of luck?

What, according to Hospers, are the two levels of moral discourse?  
What is the significance of the difference between these two levels?

**Taylor, Freedom and Determinism**

What is simple indeterminism? Why, according to Taylor, does simple indeterminism fail to make the existence of freedom of the will plausible?

Why, according to Taylor, is it impossible to reconcile determinism with the datum that some of our behavior is a result of deliberation?

Why, according to Taylor, is it impossible to reconcile determinism with the datum that sometimes our actions are up to us?

Why, according to Taylor, is it impossible to reconcile simple indeterminism with these data?

What is Taylor's theory of agency?  
How does his theory of agency account for the data mentioned above?  
What evidence does Taylor provide in favor of his theory of agency?  
How would d'Holbach respond to Taylor's data and his theory of agency?

## Metaphysical Predicaments

1. We think that the best method of inquiry is the scientific method.
  - Think about how much we trust technology.
2. It is difficult, if not impossible, to reconcile our scientific picture of the world with our common sense picture of ourselves.
  - There does not seem to be room for consciousness in a material world? It is still mysterious how matter could be conscious.
  - There does not seem to be room for freedom, or moral responsibility, in a deterministic world. It is still mysterious how we could make a free choice.
3. When it comes to ourselves, we seem unable to abandon the common sense picture in favor of the scientific one.

Quotation from Comte:

The study of the external world and of man is the eternal business of philosophy, and there are two methods of proceeding: by passing from the study of man to that of external nature, or from the study of external nature to that of man. Whenever philosophy shall be perfect, the two methods will be reconciled: meantime, the contrast of the two distinguishes the opposite philosophies -- the theological and the positive [scientific]. We shall see hereafter that all theological and metaphysical philosophy proceeds to explain the phenomena of the external world from the starting point of our consciousness of human phenomena, whereas the positive [scientific] philosophy subordinates the conception of man to that of the external world. All the multitude of incompatibilities proceed from this radical opposition.

**CLASS DISCUSSION:** How can we reconcile these two pictures? Is there any hope? Or do we just have to treat ourselves as exempt from the pronouncements of science and be intellectually dishonest? Do the problems go away if we stop thinking about them?

Introduction to Philosophy  
Study Questions #5: Normative Ethics

**Rachels, The Challenge of Cultural Relativism**

What is cultural relativism?

What are some examples of different moral codes in different societies?

What are some consequences of cultural relativism?

What is Rachels's alternative to cultural relativism?

Why does Rachels think that his theory is superior to cultural relativism?

What are some moral principles that do not vary across cultures, according to Rachels?

According to Rachels, when is it appropriate to criticize the practices of other cultures?

According to Rachels, what are the two lessons to be learned from cultural relativism?

What is the difference between a moral theory that is absolutist and one that is relativist?

Give an example of each kind of theory.

**Aquinas, Treatise on Law**

What is natural law theory?

According to natural law theory, what is the primary goal of life?

What are the four basic human goods?

According to natural law theory, what are some moral principles? Why?

What is a moral dilemma?

According to Aquinas, how are moral dilemmas to be resolved?

What is Kant's alternative for resolving moral dilemmas?

**Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil**

According to Nietzsche, why is moral absolutism mistaken?

What is the difference between a master morality and a slave morality?

Why is vanity the hallmark of slave morality?

According to Nietzsche, what is the role of religion in the struggle between master morality and slave morality?

According to Nietzsche, how does religion accomplish this role?

Which kind of morality does Nietzsche advocate, and why?

How does he advocate this morality?

What is the theory of the Eternal Recurrence? What is this theory supposed to do?