

Met PH 101 B1—Basic Problems of Philosophy—Spring 2017

Tuesdays, 6:00pm-8:45pm, CGS 115

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Office Hours: By appointment (don't hesitate to get in touch with me if you want to meet; I'm often around BU)

Course Description

We will examine three issues through the reading of classic philosophical texts. We will first examine the nature of philosophy itself. Does it have a unique task or goal? Is it distinguishable from science? Second, we will examine the relationship between philosophy and religion. Is it philosophy's job to examine, and potentially challenge, religious belief? Or do philosophy and religion constitute mutually distinct spheres? Third, we will see what philosophy has to say about why we should be moral.

Required Texts

Fear and Trembling by Soren Kirkegaard. Translated by Alastair Hannay. Penguin. ISBN: 0140444491.

Gorgias by Plato. Translated by Donald J. Zeyl. Hackett. ISBN: 0872200167.

Plato: Five Dialogues: Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Meno, Phaedo. Hackett. ISBN: 0872206335.

All books available at the BU bookstore. You may get them elsewhere—for example, Amazon—but make sure you have the listed editions.

Additional readings will be made available electronically. The course Blackboard Learn site is available at: <https://learn.bu.edu>

Assignments and Grading

- Weekly reading responses (**60% of grade total, each reading response is 6% of grade**). Written responses to prompts on the day's reading, **due in hardcopy at the beginning of each class**. Reading responses should not exceed one page and should be either double or one-and-a-half spaced. Prompts will be assigned through e-mail. Students are permitted to miss **two** reading response without penalty (i.e., 10 are required). Students who complete more than the required number of reading responses will have their lowest grade(s) dropped.
- Final (**20% of grade**). A cumulative take home final.
- Participation (**20% of grade**). Includes attendance and in-class discussion participation. Discussion with me outside of class—for example, at office hours—can also contribute towards the participation grade, but it is not required for an excellent score. The idea is that if you tend to be quiet in class, you can still earn an excellent participation grade by meeting with me regularly for office hours. Beginning with the third absence, each absence will **lower the participation grade by a full grade** (e.g. A to B). Full attendance without extra participation is a B grade.

Policies

- Students should attend all classes. Make-up reading responses will be permitted if a student can provide documentation for an excused absence (e.g. doctor's letter or documentation for other kinds of absences allowed under University policy). Students who miss class should come to office hours or schedule a time with me to review missed material. **If you must miss a class due to external circumstances, then your reading response is due via e-mail by the start of that class.**
- Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated in any Metropolitan College course. They will result in no credit for the assignment or examination and may lead to disciplinary actions. Please take the time to review the Student Academic Conduct Code:
http://www.bu.edu/met/metropolitan_college_people/student/resources/conduct/code.html
- Cell phone or laptop/tablet use is not permitted in class. **Please bring paper and a pen or pencil for note-taking as well as a physical copy of the day's reading.**

Schedule (subject to change with due notice)

What is Philosophy?

Tuesday, January 24: Introduction / Aristotle, *Metaphysics* Book 1, chapters 1-2 (pgs. 1-6).

Tuesday, January 31: Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, Preface (first three paragraphs); Aphorisms (small numbered sections) 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10 (first paragraph), 19 (first paragraph), 20, 24.

Tuesday, February 7: Russell, "The Value of Philosophy"

Tuesday, February 14: Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics?"

Tuesday, February 21: Monday schedule, no class

Tuesday February 28: Section Review

Tuesday, March 7: Spring Break

Philosophy and Religion

Tuesday, March 14: Plato, *Euthyphro*

Tuesday, March 21: Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Question 1, articles 1-8 (pgs. 1-14).

Tuesday, March 28: Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, Preamble from the Heart (pgs. 57-82).

Tuesday, April 4: Section Review

Why Should we be Moral?

Tuesday April 11: Plato, *Gorgias*, 468e-479e (pgs. 31-49).

Tuesday, April 18: Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Preface and Section I,
Transition from common rational to philosophic moral cognition

Tuesday, April 25: Williams, "The Archimedean Point"

Tuesday, May 2: Section Review