

Introduction to Philosophy

Phil 2010D, Fall Semester, 2017 (CRN 87519)

Department of Literature and Philosophy
College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences
Georgia Southern University

Location: Education Building 1130

Credit Hours: 3

Last Day to Add/Drop: August 17

Last Day to Withdraw without Academic Penalty: October 9

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Office Phone: 478-8537

Office Location: Newton Building, 3308E

Class Meets: T/TH, 2:00-3:15

Office Hours: T/TH, 3:30-5:30; F, 2:30-3:30

Note: I will have to miss one Friday office hours per a month for faculty meetings. I will notify you in advance and will be free to meet later that afternoon by appointment.

Course Description

(Catalogue)

This is an introductory course which surveys the ideas of some of the great philosophers of the Western world, focusing on issues about religion, ethics, reality, and ways of knowing.

(Instructor)

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? If so, what is it? Is it distinguishable from science? If so, how? Second, we will examine the relationship between philosophy and religion. Is it philosophy's job to assess 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 other readings are available through folio. Electronic readings should be printed out and brought to class.

Assignments

- **3 Review Exams (28% each)**. There are three units for the class. Each exam covers one unit. A list of study-questions will be passed out at the beginning of each unit. These are not necessarily the questions that will appear on the exam, but they will give you an indication of what you should know for the each exam and how you should study for it.
- As part of the participation grade (**10%**), students must complete **5 out of 11** reading response assignments. Students will write one double-spaced, 12 point times, page responding to the prompt for an upcoming reading. If students need more space, they can use 11 point times with 1.5 spacing and widen the margins. All reading responses are due in hard-copy at the start of the class they are marked due. Reading response assignments are graded for completion. That being said, I will have these at my side when I do final grades. If your grade is near a cutoff, doing a great job on these could boost you into the next grade bracket.

As long as you complete the required reading response assignments, your participation grade will not hurt your over-all grade (it will at least match your grade average from your other assignments). However, if you do a stellar job at the reading response assignments and participating in class, then, as I mentioned above, it could boost your final grade. On the other hand, your participation grade will be lowered by **10%** for each required reading response you do not do. If, for whatever reason, you have difficulty speaking during class, discussing material with me during office hours also contributes toward participation.

- **Final reflection assignment (6%)**. For one of the several questions we have explored this semester, students must select a philosopher(s) answer that they find to be the most persuasive. Students must (a) explain the answer in detail—what exactly is the philosopher’s position—and (b) present a reason why it is strong answer and better than the alternative(s). This can include a weakness or difficulty that you spy in the alternative answer we studied. The final reflection should be one double-spaced page with 12 point times font. If students need more space, they can use 11 point font, 1.5 spacing, and wide margins. The final reflection assignment will be submitted electronically through folio during finals week.

Reading

Students are expected to have done an initial reading of the weekly assigned reading by the start of the first class of that week. They are then expected to do a second, more careful reading of the particular section we will be discussing in the next class. I will let you know what that is at the end of the previous class.

Attendance

Attendance and punctuality are required and will be reflected in your final grade. Class begins promptly at 2:00. If you are not present when the roll is called, you will be counted as late. Two late arrivals will be counted as one absence. After 3 unexcused absences, every additional absence will result in a 5% deduction in your final course grade.

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to uphold the Academic Honesty Code as published in the *Georgia Southern University Student Conduct Code*. If you do not know the school definitions of cheating and plagiarism, familiarize yourself: <http://academics.georgiasouthern.edu/fye/students/first-year/academic-honesty/>

All instances of plagiarism and/or cheating will be reported to the appropriate university officials. At a bare minimum, the assignment in question will receive a failing grade. Additional penalties will vary with the circumstances.

Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Present and explain the thought of a philosopher—or a philosophical position—accurately and clearly.
- Compare alternative philosophical positions, identifying their strengths and weaknesses as well as the central arguments for them and their support. Demonstrate an ability to think through complex issues with Clarity.

Disability Accommodation Statement

This class complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Students with disabilities needing academic accommodations must:

- (1) Register with and provide documentation to the Student Disability Resource Center (SDRC), and,
- (2) Provide a letter to the instructor from the SDRC indicating what you need may be for academic accommodation.

This should be done within the first week of class. Students with these particular needs should contact the Student Disability Resource Center, Hampton Hall, 912.871.1566.

Technology

Unless you have received permission from me or from the Student Disability Resource Center, please do not make use of earphones, computers, tablets, cell phones, or other electronic devices during class; use of these during class time will result in an absence for that day.

Note: All information contained in this syllabus, including the course schedule and assignments, is subject to revision as the professor deems necessary.

Schedule

Section 1: What is Philosophy?

Week 1 (Aug. 14-18). Introduction; Selections from the Pre-Socratics

Week 2 (Aug. 21-5). Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Book 1, Chapters 1-2

*Tuesday, Aug. 22: 1st Reading Response Due

Week 3 (Aug. 28-Sept. 1). Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, Book 1, Chapter 1, paragraphs 11-16; Plato, *Apology*

*Tuesday Aug. 29: 2nd Reading Response Due

Week 4 (Sept. 4-8). Bertrand Russell, "The Value of Philosophy;" Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics?," pgs. 93-6, 101-3, 109-11.

*Tuesday Sept. 5: 3rd Reading Response Due

Week 5 (Sept. 11-15). Hurricane Break. No class.

Section 2: Is it Philosophy's Job to Pass Judgment on Religious Belief?

Week 6 (Sept. 18-22). First Exam; begin Plato, *Euthyphro*

*Tuesday Sept. 19: **First Exam**

*Thursday Sept. 21: 1st Section Overview; begin Plato, *Euthyphro*; first opportunity to turn in 4th Reading Response

Week 7 (Sept. 25-9). Finish Plato, *Euthyphro*; begin Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Question 1, articles 1-2, 5-6, 8

*Tuesday Sept. 26: Finish Plato, *Euthyphro*; second opportunity to turn in 4th Reading Response Due

*Thursday Sept. 28: Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Question 1, articles 1-2, 5-6, 8. 5th Reading Response Due

Week 8 (Oct. 2-6). Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*; Introduction and Parts 10-11.

*Thursday Oct. 5: First opportunity to do 6th Reading Response

Week 9 (Oct. 9-13). Finish Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*; Introduction and Parts 10-11; Genesis 17: 1-22; 21: 1-7; 22: 1-19 (Abraham, Sarah, and Isaac); Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, Preamble from the Heart (pgs. 57-82).

*Tuesday Oct. 10: Second opportunity to do 6th Reading Response. Finish Hume.

*Thursday Oct. 12: First Opportunity to do 7th Reading Response. Genesis 17: 1-22; 21: 1-7; 22: 1-19 (Abraham, Sarah, and Isaac); Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, Preamble from the Heart (pgs. 57-82).

Week 10 (Oct. 16-19). Second Exam

*Tuesday Oct. 17: Finish Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, Preamble from the Heart (pgs. 57-82).

*Thursday Oct. 19: **Second Exam**

Section 3: Why Should We be Moral?

Week 11 (Oct. 23-7). Epicurus, *Letter to Menoeceus*; *The Principle Doctrines*, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 13, 14, 15, 17, 21, 27-40

*Tuesday Oct. 24: 2nd Section Overview; 8th Reading Response Due

Week 12 (Oct. 30-Nov. 3). Plato, *Gorgias*, pgs. 31-50

*Tuesday Oct. 31: 9th Reading Response Due

Week 13 (Nov. 6-10). Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, pgs. 7-18.

*Tuesday Nov. 7: 10th Reading Response Due

Week 14 (Nov. 13-17). Bernard Gert, "Why should I be moral?," pgs. 338-361; Bernard Gert's Moral Rules

*Tuesday Nov. 14: 11th Reading Response Due

Week 15 (Nov. 20-4). Thanksgiving Break

Week 16 (Nov. 27-30). Third Exam and Section Overview

*Tuesday Nov. 28: **Third Exam**

*Thursday Nov. 30: 3rd Section Overview

Week 17 (Dec. 4-8). No Reading. In-Class Nietzsche Handout.

*Tuesday Dec. 5: Final Reflection Assignment Due

*Thursday Dec. 7: Final Class