

HONORS INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

PHIL 2003H – Fall 2007

MWF 10:30–11:20, Main 420

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Office hours: MF 11:20–12:20; W 9:30–10:30 or by appointment

INTRODUCTION: In this course, we will look at some of the perennial issues in Western philosophy, including the existence of God, the nature of the self, the scope of human knowledge, and the foundations of morality.

AIMS:

- To offer the student the opportunity to critically examine his or her own beliefs, in a guided, disciplined manner.
- To improve the student's skills in thinking abstractly and critically, in evaluating and constructing logical arguments, and in communicating thoughts in a clear manner
- To expose the student to some of the various positions and arguments that philosophers have endorsed, and
- To foster in the student an awareness of and appreciation for a reasoned, critical, philosophical approach to these topics.

REQUIRED READINGS: Simon Blackburn, *Think* (Oxford UP)

Plato, *Five Dialogues* (Hackett)

Rene Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy* (Hackett)

Bertrand Russell. *Problems of Philosophy*. (Oxford UP)

Reserve materials available through Mullins Library.

REQUIREMENTS: There will be two in-class exams (a mid-term and a final) and a 6–8 page paper. Each of these is worth 30% of the final grade. Engaging in philosophical discussion is an essential element in learning philosophy; attendance and thoughtful participation in classroom discussions and exercises are expected, and the remaining 10% of the grade will be assigned on this basis.

Exams will be mostly essay, though there may also be some short answer component; you will need to know the material and to show that you have thought about it. The paper is an exercise in developing a philosophical argument: the student will articulate and defend some philosophical position.

POLICIES:

A. Class sessions: Engaging in philosophical discussion is an essential element in learning philosophy, and class attendance should be considered mandatory, though no such requirement will be directly enforced. Minimize use of electronic devices. **CELL PHONES**

MUST BE SILENCED AND PUT AWAY. Laptops and the like are to be used for note-taking only and may not be used to take exams without special prior permission. Classes will frequently introduce material that is not in the readings, and you are responsible for finding out what transpired in any class that you have missed; try to get notes from a fellow student. The paper assignment and list of topics will be announced in class.

Class discussions are a forum for exploring *respectful* disagreement; it is extremely important here to avoid being dogmatic or rude to fellow students. It is hoped that we will have lively discussions of controversial issues that are important to us.

C. Assignments: All submitted work must be your own. Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty will be punished to the full extent of university policy. If you aren't sure what is allowed and what is not, go to <http://www.uark.edu/campus-resources/ree/honesty.html>. Papers must be on assigned topics; papers that do not satisfy the assignment will not be accepted. The paper is an exercise in developing a philosophical argument: you will articulate and defend some philosophical position; it is not a research paper, and no Internet sources are allowed, aside from the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <http://plato.stanford.edu/contents.html>. Make-ups and extensions will be granted only under dire, documented circumstances and only when requests are made ahead of time. Missed exams and papers will receive a 0. Quizzes may be made up only in cases of excused absence.

D. Grades: Grades will be assigned on the standard 90/80/70/60% scale, where A indicates excellent performance, B is good, etc. An excellent essay will be one that accurately and concisely portrays the argument or position in question, is sensitive to the nuances of the position, and offers a cogent, insightful, critical discussion. You are expected to know the arguments and views of the philosophers but also to demonstrate that you have thought critically about the issues.

E. Miscellaneous: Students requiring special accommodations should consult with me as soon as possible. Standard University inclement weather policy applies.

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS: The readings listed should be read before the dates given below. Be prepared to discuss the material on the day for which it is assigned. The following is subject to change.

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| Aug. 20 | Introduction—no readings |
| 22–27 | Plato: Euthyphro; Blackburn: What to Do? |
| 29–Sep. 5 | Plato: Apology, Crito [LABOR DAY SEP. 3—NO CLASS] |
| 7–19 | Blackburn: God; Anselm: “The Ontological Argument” (reserve); Aquinas: “The Five Ways” (reserve); van Inwagen: “The Magnitude, Duration, and Distribution of Evil” (reserve) |
| 21–24 | Plato: Meno |
| 26–Oct. 1 | Blackburn: Mind; Churchland, selections from <i>Matter and Consciousness</i> (reserve) |
| 3 | [FIRST EXAM] |
| 5–10 | Blackburn: The Self; Hume: “Of Personal Identity” (reserve); Blackburn: Free Will |
| 12–19 | Plato: Phaedo; selections from <i>Republic</i> (reserve) |
| 22 | Blackburn: Knowledge |
| 24–Nov. 2 | Descartes: <i>Meditations</i> ; “Comments on a Certain Broadsheet” (reserve) |
| 5–7 | Blackburn: The World, Reasoning |
| 12 | [PAPER DUE] |
| 12–30 | Russell: <i>The Problems of Philosophy</i> |
| Dec. 3 | Catch-up, review |
| Dec. 8 | [FINAL EXAM: 10AM] |