Study guide for first exam

Your first exam will be held during your normal discussion section. Make arrangements with your TA ahead of time if you need special accommodations of any sort. Some of the questions listed below will appear (word for word) on the test; you will have to answer either two or three of them (use that as a guide to how much detail we will want). Bring blue books.

Answers should be clear, cogent, accurate, and insightful. Get the basic facts about who defends what views right. You should show a sensitivity to the logic of the arguments; know what it important and what is not important. Know the nuances of the positions; you should be able to distinguish the position you are discussing from other similar views. It will be hard to demonstrate your mastery of the material if you use poor English, so write carefully.

Each question asks you to evaluate some argument or position. That is, you should give reasons for accepting or rejecting it. Show us that you’ve put some thought into these issues. Finally, if you can demonstrate in the course of your answer that you know (relevant!) material from the readings that was not covered in class, this will boost your grade.

1. What is ethical relativism? What is the main problem for ethical relativism? Can ethical relativism be defended against this charge? Explain

2. Lay out and explain the argument from (to) design. Make sure that you show that you understand the key features of the argument. What is Hume’s criticism of this argument? How might one respond to this? In light of all this, should we endorse the argument from design or not? Explain.

3. What exactly is Hume’s and Blackburn’s position concerning miracles? What is the argument for this view? How compelling is the argument? Defend your position.

4. Lay out and explain Anslem’s ontological argument for the existence of God. Make sure that you show that you understand the key features of the argument. Explain either Gaunilo's, Kant's or Blackburn's critique. Do you think that the critique you selected is right or does Anslem’s argument still hold against that objection. Explain.

5. Describe the Euthyphro dilemma. State the implications of the dilemma. Do you think this dilemma is actually a dilemma? Why or why not?

6. Describe fully the distinction between cognitivism and non-cognitivism; make sure to discuss cognitivism and non-cognitivism in terms of the rightness/goodness of actions and in terms of motives to do actions. What makes cognivist moral views plausible? What seem to be some problems of cognitivist moral views? What makes non-cognitivist moral views plausible? What seem to be some problems of non-cognitivist moral views?

7. Present fully why Socrates thinks “a good man cannot be harmed either in life or in death”. Do you agree with Socrates here? Why or why not?

8. Why does Socrates think that his fleeing would injure Athens? (A full answer here would include some discussion of social contract theory.) Is he right or wrong? Defend your answer.