Introduction to Philosophy
PHIL 2003C – Spring 2009
MW 11:30 am–12:20 pm; KIMP 102

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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. We will read some contemporary works, but we will concentrate on historically important texts and thinkers.

Primary Aim: To offer the student the opportunity to critically examine his or her own beliefs, in a guided, disciplined manner.

Secondary Aims: (1) 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, (2) to expose the student to some of the various positions and arguments that philosophers have espoused, and (3) to foster in the student an awareness of and appreciation for a reasoned, critical, philosophical approach to these topics.


Requirements: There will be two in-class exams, each worth 20% of the final grade, a paper worth 20%, and a two-hour final exam, worth 25%. The exams will be mostly essay, with short answer sections. The two midterm exams will be administered in your discussion sections; the final will be in the normal lecture room. Because engaging in philosophical discussion is an essential element in learning philosophy, the remaining 15% of your grades will be based on participation in discussion/drill sections. This consists of (a) thoughtful and pertinent contribution to class discussions as well as (b) performance on any unannounced quizzes and exercises assigned in discussion sections (half of the 15% for each of (a) and (b)).

Policies:

A. Lecture: Attendance at lectures should be considered mandatory, though no such requirement will be enforced. Please do not be disruptive in lecture. 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. Lectures will frequently introduce material that is not in the readings, and you
are responsible for finding out what transpired in any lecture that you have missed; try to get notes from a fellow student. Powerpoint slides will not be distributed to students.

**B. Drill/discussion sections:** Attendance and participation in discussion sections are required. Quizzes can be made up only in cases of excused absence. Electronic device policy from lecture applies here too. Discussion sections are a forum for exploring respectful disagreement; it is extremely important here to speak your mind without dissuading your fellow students from speaking theirs. The assignment and topics for the paper will be announced in your discussion sections. If you can’t make it to your regular discussion section, try to go to another one that week with your normal TA. Midterm exams will be taken in the discussion section in which you are enrolled.

**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. Make-ups and extensions will be granted only under dire, documented circumstances and only when requests are made ahead of time. Make arrangements with your TA.

**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, 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 their TA as soon as possible. Standard University inclement weather policy applies.

**Schedule of Events:** The readings listed should be read before the dates given below. The following is subject to change. Any changes will be announced in lecture.

**Jan. 12**
Introduction – No readings

**Metaphysics and Epistemology:**
14–28 Descartes, *Meditations*
Feb. 2–4 Berkeley, *Principles*
9 Plato, “The Myth of the Cave” on reserve
11–18 Hume, *Inquiry*
19–20 Exam 1

**Philosophy of Mind:**
23 Gertler, “In Defense of Mind-Body Dualism”
25 Carruthers, “The Mind is the Brain”

**Personal Identity:**

**Philosophy of Religion:**
11 Rowe, “The Ontological Argument,” “The Cosmological Argument”
16–20 Spring Break
23 Hume, *Dialogues*, parts II, V–VII; Dawkins on reserve
25 James, “The Will to Believe”; Clifford, “The Ethics of Belief”
26–27 Exam 2

Free Will:

16–17  Paper due

Moral and Political Philosophy:
20  Aristotle, “The Nature of Virtue”
22  Hobbes, *Leviathan*
27  Nietzsche: “Master and Slave Morality”
29  Singer, “All Animals are Equal”

Important Dates:
Feb. 19–20  Exam 1
Mar. 26–27  Exam 2
Apr. 16–17  Paper
Tue., May 5  Final exam: Kimpel 102, 7:30am