

PHILOSOPHY 1

MWF 3-3:50, Center 222

This course is designed to introduce you to some of the subject matter and methodology of philosophy as it is practiced in the academies of the Western world. Philosophy as a discipline is ancient and diverse; because of this, a course that promises to cover its breadth cannot possibly explore its depths. Accordingly, our visits to the corners of the discipline will each of them be brief. We will spend a week on each of ten topics, chosen both for their importance in the Western philosophical tradition and for their accessibility to new students. Nothing in the course presupposes any prior acquaintance with philosophy.

Examinations:

Your course grade will be determined by your performance on three in-class exams:

First: 20%

Second: 30%

Final: 50%

I will release the exam questions a week in advance. I do this for two reasons: (1) closed-book, in-class exams make it impossible simply to transpose text from the course readings to your exam, and so better test your internalization of the material; (2) knowing the exam questions ahead of time will encourage you to study. The exams will be given on Monday, October 21 (week 4), Wednesday, November 13 (week 7), and Friday, December 13 (finals week). The final exam will be roughly twice as long as each of the first two and will be given from 3-6p (location TBD).

Classroom participation and electronics:

This is a lecture-style course without separate recitation or discussion sections, and because of this, I'd prefer that the 'lecture' be as open and conversational as possible while respecting the course agenda. Participation will not figure in your course grade directly, although students active in the classroom are likely to do better, all else being equal. In the spirit of creating an atmosphere of rapt attention and participation, **I am outlawing all electronic devices from class, including laptops.** I realize that most students can type faster than they can write, and perhaps you've grown accustomed to taking notes in this way, but laptops tempt students away from the discussion and

distract others. It is anyway better to adopt a ‘listen and understand in real-time’ strategy than a ‘copy down and figure out later’ strategy.

Similarly, I will not be using Powerpoint or anything like it. Powerpoint can be useful for presentations that require diagrams, pictures, or other media—it is indispensable these days in many science fields, e.g.—but Powerpoint slides with scores of bulleted facts, on the other hand, kill classroom interaction because they create in students the urge to get everything copied before the next slide appears, and they create in teachers the urge to turn from the audience and read from the slides. I’m aware that some instructors get around one aspect of this problem by releasing the lecture slides. But this discourages class attendance, and I want you to be there. I’d rather you listen and participate, and if I need to illustrate a point, or word something carefully for your notes, I’ll use the chalkboard.

Accordingly with this effort to get you ‘in the moment’, I ask that you not record the lectures to be transcribed later. My lectures do not read like sacred texts and certainly do not deserve the careful application of a monk. I will often repeat the same point in several different ways, to help you understand. If you don’t understand, raise your hand and ask. The crutch of a recording device will discourage you from asking questions in class, and a played-back recording cannot answer your questions.

Course readings:

All readings will be emailed to you in .pdf format during Week 0 (provided you are on the roster). If you have any troubles, send me an email and I’ll get you the readings. There is nothing to purchase and nothing to find on TED or the library website. There is also no official course website, but the syllabus will be available at www.damoncrockett.com.

The reading assignments are not now indexed to particular days of the week, because I can’t know in advance exactly how far we’ll get in a given day, but I’ll always let you know what I plan to cover next. It will help you *a great deal* to have read the assignment before I lecture on it. If you’ve read, my lecture will clarify for you an already familiar subject matter. If you haven’t, my lecture will sound like an inside joke you wish you were in on.

The readings are typically short. Most weeks, you are reading 40 pages or less, and often significantly less (only 19 pages in week 2, e.g.). However, philosophy readings are dense, and unlike my lectures, *should* be treated like sacred texts. Philosophers choose their words very carefully, and often use ordinary words as technical language. Logical connectives like ‘and’, ‘or’, ‘if...then’, ‘unless’, and ‘if and only if’ have technical meanings for a philosopher. I will help you identify and understand the logical structure in the readings, both in class and in office hours (come to office hours!), but you have to do your part by reading and re-reading carefully. Philosophy papers are *arguments*, and as you read, you should ask yourself, ‘*What is being argued for, and how is the argument supposed to work?*’

Cheating:

Don't cheat.

<http://students.ucsd.edu/academics/academic-integrity/index.html>

Course agenda:

Week 0 (Sep 27)

Introduction

Week 1 (Sep 30 – Oct 4)

Skepticism

Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, 1-2

Hume, *Treatise*, 1.4.1-2

Week 2 (Oct 7 – 11)

Knowledge

Gettier, 'Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?'

Goldman, 'A Causal Theory of Knowing'

Week 3 (Oct 14 – 18)

Mind and Body

Nagel, 'What is it Like to be a Bat?'

Churchland, P.S., 'The Hornswoggle Problem'

Week 4 (Oct 21 – 25) FIRST EXAM MONDAY

Personal Identity

Parfit, 'Personal Identity'

Week 5 (Oct 28 – Nov 1)

Free Will and Determinism

Hobart, 'Free Will as Involving Determination and Inconceivable Without It'

Van Inwagen, 'Incompatibility of Free Will and Determinism'

Week 6 (Nov 4 – 8)

God

Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, Parts II-VIII, XII

Week 7 (Nov 11 – 15) Veteran’s Day 11, SECOND EXAM WEDNESDAY

Death

Nagel, ‘Death’

Kagan, ‘Immortality’

Week 8 (Nov 18 – 22)

Metaethics

Brink, ‘The Autonomy of Ethics’

Mackie, ‘The Subjectivity of Values’

Week 9 (Nov 25 – 29) Thanksgiving Holiday 29

Normative Ethics

Williams, ‘Consequentialism and Integrity’

Week 10 (Dec 2 – 6)

Applied Ethics

Singer, ‘Famine, Affluence and Morality’

Murphy, ‘The Demands of Beneficence’