

Dept. of Philosophy
Indiana State University
Spring 2008

P101: INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

Classes Meets: Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, 11-11:50AM in Science 018

Class Instructor: Dr. Brian P. R. Morton, Assistant Professor of Philosophy

Office Hours: MWF 10-11, 12-1, and 2-3(right after my classes) and by appointment, (I'm often available on Tuesdays and Thursdays) in my office in Root Hall A138D, or walking from class to my office. My email is bmorton3@isugw.indstate.edu. My office phone is X3098 (but don't leave messages, I never check them)

Required Course Texts:

The Story of Philosophy, Bryan Magee, published by DK, - Cheap, but costs, available at bookstore

The Apology, Socrates – any e-copy on the web is fine, several are listed in the useful web-page section

You can check it out from the library, photo-copy it or buy it if you prefer

Meditations on First Philosophy, by Descartes – any copy, including free e-copies

“Excerpts on Love” ed. by me – I hope it will be available on the course Blackboard website soon

Course Description: The goal of this course is to give students a broad overview to the questions, and methods of investigation of the field of philosophy. Philosophy literally means the love of wisdom. It is the most basic field of inquiry, the discipline that looks at the big picture. Once, long ago science was considered a sub-branch of philosophy (it was called natural philosophy). One way of thinking about philosophy, is that it is the meeting ground where other disciplines examine their foundations and interrelations. How does science relate to religion? How does art relate to politics? How should popular culture influence our day to day decisions? In this course we will spend about the first third of the course studying the nature of knowledge and opinion and controversy – what philosophers call logic and epistemology. What do we know for certain? How is knowledge different from opinion? How do we know things? How are different kinds of knowledge different? We will spend about the middle third of the class investigating metaphysics - that is questions about what is and isn't real and how reality works. What is the relation between the mind and the body? What are humans like? What makes a person a person? Could computers count? Corporations? Embryos? Could there be life after death? Is there a God? How do time and space work? What makes an apple an apple? Is “apple” just a word we use? Or is it really an

apple whether we call it that or not? What role do minds or wills or choices play in making the world the way it is? Do we have free-will, or do we just act the way the laws of physics or the laws of psychology force us to act? Finally we will spend the last third of the class studying ethics and value theory. Which things are beautiful, good or valuable? What makes something good? How do we know or decide if an action is good or bad, right or wrong? What can we say about moral behavior? How should we act? What kind of society should we have? What does ethics mean for politics or economics?

Methods of Investigation

Western philosophy has five basic methods for trying to investigate these sorts of very basic and typically controversial questions, and the methods have a natural order. First, we try to learn what smart, thoughtful people in the past have had to say about these topics, (often called education). Second, we try to think about the questions (often called reflection or contemplation). Third, we try to talk with other smart thoughtful people about our opinions, and thoughts (often called dialog, discussion, dialectics, or argumentation). Often this involves arguing about the reasons to believe or not believe some specific part of our picture. If the arguing is done in a respectful manner, it often helps both sides to refine their pictures and see where their picture of reality is strongest and where it is weakest. Fourth, we try to write our opinions into a careful, nuanced statements about what we think on a specific topic and why. Writing tends to polish and focus our thoughts. Finally, we apply the results of our investigation to our lives and world. Some questions can be answered through empirical observation of the things we decide to do, but others cannot. Some questions can only be answered by living a certain kind of life.

Course Goals

- 1) For every student to think seriously and in a sustained manner on the questions of philosophy.
- 2) For every student to understand the broad outlines of the philosophical thought of the past.
- 3) For each student to gain practice in the key skills of philosophy, such as thoughtful reading of texts, paper writing, discussion of philosophical ideas, and simply thinking carefully about philosophic issues.

Evaluation and Grades

- 1) **Two Tests: a midterm and a final.** They will be a mix of multiple choice and more essay questions. They will focus on testing comprehension of the primary sources, secondary and lectures, as well as

objective information. The final will be cumulative. 1 sheet of notes produced by the student will be allowed for each test. Each is worth is 25% of the overall grade.

2) 1 Polished Term Paper on Philosophy - You are required to write a single term paper on any philosophical topic (anything we touch on and more) that is 7-10 pages double spaced. Your term paper must take a position on an issue with a clear thesis statement, and then present arguments for you position. I want here, clear, polished, persuasive argumentation. This is not shooting the breeze, or telling me you opinions. It is telling me one specific clear opinion, and then providing me with careful arguments for why your opinion is a good one. Be sure to cite appropriately. I will give a handout with more details, but you can start working on it before you get the handout. Any topic related to philosophy is fine, pick something that interests you or relates to your own field if you want.

3) Class Participation. I expect you to come to class regularly. I expect you to keep up with the reading. I expect you to participate in the in class discussions. These are high goals but I really do think these three steps are the key to doing well in any college class. I may also give other kinds of homework exercises and quizzes as part of class participation. Class participation, all together, is worth 25% of your grade.

Our course will have 3 kinds of classes “lectures” “discussions” and “close reading days.” On lecture days I will mostly lecture about material from the textbook. Your class participation involves attending, having read the relevant section of the book and being able to answer basic questions on it, taking notes, paying attention, and being willing to ask questions or briefly discuss the issues. On the discussion days, we will all talk about a topic in small groups and together. On these days you are expected to attend, to have thought a little about the topic already, to have prepared one thoughtful question or comment on the topic, and to contribute to the discussion in a polite and respectful manner. Silence is not adequate participation on discussion days. On close reading days we will talk about a primary text together as a class, and may have elements of lecture and discussion. On these days you are expected to attend, to have read the relevant text (although not necessarily to have understood it), and to be willing to participate in collective discussion of what is going on in the text.

Make-up and Extra-Credit

I am pretty generous about making up tests if you miss them, but only if you contact me as soon as possible after missing the test. There is no opportunity to make-up the paper. Making up class

participation is more complex. There will be a course “on-line discussion forum.” I will occasionally post questions or comments to it. Anyone else may also post questions or comments on it. My hope is that discussion on philosophical topics will develop on line. Participation on the on-line forum is not required, but it does count towards class participation, so if your class participation is weak in other ways you can post to the forum. I encourage you to post anytime you have to miss class, and if you attend regularly but rarely speak, you may wish to post occasionally too.

There are 3 standard offers for extra credit in this class, and each is worth 2% on the overall grade. You may only count each once. Offer #1 (easy): attend an academic lecture on a topic related to the philosophy by some other person, and write a few paragraphs about it. I will try to announce opportunities when I find them. Offer #2: (medium) post regular thoughtful comments to the on-line discussion board. Occasional thoughtful discussion on-line makes up for occasional lapses in attendance or preparation or participation. Regular (almost weekly or more) thoughtful (a solid paragraph or more) on-line participation is worth extra-credit. Offer #3: (hard) read closely a philosophy text of at least 100 pages that is famous enough to be mentioned in our book (or other text with permission), but is not required for class and write a 2 page discussion of it that displays that you have thought about it, and didn't just copy a cliff's notes or something. Offer #4: Come up with something creative and get approval for it by me before attempting it.

Other Course Policies

The paper has a harsh lateness penalty: one grade increment per day late on it. If you think you might miss a test please arrange something with me before hand, or contact me as soon afterwards as possible. I can usually give tests early, but I get less charitable about giving make-up tests the longer things go. All research shows that Academic integrity is a growing problem across the nation and here at ISU. ISU changed its policy on Academic Integrity last summer. Sometimes people make academic integrity violations because they do not understand what is expected of them, and sometimes they understand but wish to cut corners. When you make an academic integrity violation you are cheating yourself out of your own education. When anyone does it, they are cheapening the credibility of an ISU degree, and thus hurting every person in the class. I do not catch all cheaters, but I do catch some, and the penalties are pretty bad. If you are tempted, think about how you will feel and explain things to others if I do catch you. I urge you all, do not tolerate your fellow students cheating, get them to stop or warn someone. If you are

unclear on what is expected of you, ask questions so that you do not wind up making an integrity violation accidentally. I allow and encourage working together on homework, and on studying for a test. But your work on the test must all be your own, and without any unpermitted study aids (including electronic translation devices). On the paper, the work will be a mixture of yours and your researched sources, but you must credit and cite them appropriately. It is very easy to download someone else's work off the internet and call it your own, and also fairly easy for me to catch this, don't risk it.

Attendance Policy!!! A seating chart will be developed by the end of the second week of the semester and attendance will be taken at some time during every class period. (If you cannot attend, please make certain that someone shows up who looks a heck of a lot like you!). If you miss an exam/assignment due to illness or other acceptable reason, you must obtain written verification (excused absence) of the illness or other bona fide absence (funeral, accident, job interview, etc) from a proper figure of authority (doctor, dentist, funeral director, minister, etc), and give it to me shortly after the absence, in order to be able to make up that exam/assignment. Written excuses are only necessary for making up exams or assignments! If you miss a regular class day you will lose a few class participation points regardless of the cause of the absences, and whether it is excused or not, so don't bother bringing in excuses. You can (and should) make up absences whether they are excused or not however. There are 44 classes in a course, so you pay about 20\$ for each class period (or more like 40-50\$, if you are out of state). This means that **missing a class is the moral equivalent of flushing a 20 dollar bill down the toilet**, you pay the money but fail to get the benefit. You would pay 20 bucks, if you had to, to go to a funeral, or a doctor's appointment you couldn't reschedule. But you wouldn't pay 20\$ much less 50\$ to sleep in a little extra. **Don't waste your money, and my time, by enrolling in the course and then not at least honestly trying to learn the material and attend whenever you can.** Under six absences for the course is fine, six to 15 is an increasing problem, over 15 means you are likely to flunk the class participation portion of the grade (and people with heavy absence loads, typically do badly on the tests too). **Lots of absences is the most common way to flunk this course.**

Tentative Schedule of Topics and Readings

(readings should be DONE by the date listed)

Week 1:	Introduction to Philosophy	Syllabus, 6-23
Jan 7, 9, 11	Lecture 1 "The Caveman and the College Student,"	Discussion 1 "Why go to college?"
	Lecture 2 "What is Philosophy & Philosophy in early Greece"	

- Week 2: The Apology Socrates "Apology" use your favorite text
Jan 14, 16, 18 Reading 1 "Apology," Reading 2 "Finish Apology", Lecture 3 "Plato"
- Week 3: Greece p. 24-39
[No MLK day] Jan 23, 25 Discussion 2 "What is Real?" Lecture 4 "Aristotle"
- Week 4: Greece, Christianity & the Middle Ages p. 40-61
Jan 28, 30, Feb 1 Lecture 5 "Hellenistic Philosophy" Lecture 6 "Christianity and the Middle Ages"
Discussion 3 "What is the Good Life like?"
- Week 5: God and Love P. 54-61,
Feb 4, 6, 8 Lecture 7 "God and Religion" Discussion 4 "What about God and Religion?" Lecture 8
"On Love"
- Week 6: Love and Fear Excerpts on Love, p. 72-73 p. 78-81
Feb 11, 13, 15 Reading 3 "Excerpts on Love", Discussion 5 "Love, Sex, and Marriage", Lecture 9
"Machiavelli and Hobbes"
- Week 7: Science p. 64-83
Feb 18, 20, 22 Lecture 10 "Scientific Revolution," Discussion 6 "What is Science?", Review Day!
- Week 8: Mid-term and Starting Descartes Start Descartes' Meditations use your favorite text
Feb 25, 27, 29 **Mid-term Exam!** Lecture 11 "Starting Descartes", Reading 4 "Descartes 1-2"
- Week 9: Descartes Meditations Work through Descartes
Mar 3, 5, 7 Reading 5 "Descartes 2-3" Reading 6 "More Descartes" Reading 7 "Finishing
Descartes"
- Spring Break!
- Week 10: Rationalists and Empiricists Finish Descartes, & p. 84-117
Mar 17, 19, 21 Discussion 7 "Descartes, Minds and Bodies", Lecture 12 "Rationalists" Lecture 12
"Empiricists" (except Burke)
- Week 11: Knowledge, Germany & the East p. 132-9, 146-153 (Schopenhauer, Fichte, &
Schelling optional)
Mar 24, 26, 28 Discussion 8 "What is Knowledge?" Lecture 13 "Kant & 19th German Philosophy"
Lecture 14 "East and West"
- Week 12: Politics p. 118-131, 158-181
Mar 31, April 2, 4 Lecture 15 "Burke & the Revolutions," Lecture 16 "Hegel & Marx" Discussion 9
"What should Politics be like?"
- Week 13: Ethics p. 172-193
April 7, 9, 11 Lecture 17 "Pragmatism and Utilitarianism" Discussion 10 "How does Ethics work?"
Lecture 18 "Nietzsche"
- Week 14: 20th century p. 194-227
April 14, 16, 18 Lecture 19 "Existentialism" Lecture 20 "the 20th century" Discussion 11 "The 20th & 21st"
- Week 15: Wrap Up catch-up, review guide, philosophy checklist
April 21, 23, 25 Catch-up or lecture 21, Review, Last Lecture
Term paper Due April 23rd (even though that is Study Week!)
- Final Exam: Friday May 2 10-12 in our regular class room. (Note slightly earlier than normal)**

Quote for the Class

Bill: Socrates, hey we know that name, look it up under SO-Crates.

Ted (reading the textbook): Socrates – The only wisdom consists in knowing that you know nothing. Hey that's us dude!

-From Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure.

USEFUL WEB RESOURCES

<http://en.wikipedia.org>

-- The Open Source Encyclopedia. The best thing on the Web. Its philosophy material is a little weak, but better than any other free source.

<http://www.galilean-library.org/philosophy.html>

-- The best Introduction to Philosophy on the web.

http://www.prometheustrust.co.uk/TTS_Catalogue/Socrates_Apology/socrates_apology.html

-- A fine free copy of the Apology

<http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Apology>

-- Another fine free copy of the Apology

<http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/1656>

-- Some more free copies of the Apology – Project Gutenberg at

http://www.gutenberg.org/wiki/Main_Page is a collection of over 20,000 free books on the Web!

<http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/phl302/texts/descartes/meditations/meditations.html>

-- A fine free copy of Descartes' Meditations

<http://www.filepedia.org/node/3>

-- Fine free downloadable versions of Descartes' Meditations

<http://www.indstate.edu/phil/>

-- Our departmental homepage

<https://sapphire.indstate.edu/~bmorton3/index.html>

-- my personal website

<http://www-personal.monash.edu.au/~dey/phil/>

--Philosophy in Cyberspace -- A nice, well organized index to all sorts of cool philosophy sites, including a nice index of student resources on-line, a bit old

<http://www.philosophypages.com/dy/>

--Philosophical Dictionary -- look up any jargon you're having troubles with (philosophers use a lot)

<http://www.utm.edu/research/iep/> or <http://plato.stanford.edu/>

--The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, and the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, both have fewer articles than wikipedia, but far more in-depth ones.

<http://www-personal.monash.edu.au/~dey/phil/humour.htm>

-- Philosophical humor index, the Jean-Paul Sartre Cookbook, etc.

<http://www.philfilms.utm.edu/>

-- An index of various philosophical films