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Philosophy 1: Introduction to Philosophy

Section 0396, M W, 8:55-10:20, CSB 201

Course Description

Philosophy 1 provides an introduction to both the techniques of philosophical analysis and the traditional philosophical puzzles that these techniques were devised to illuminate (if not resolve). These puzzles include: the nature of the self; the relation of mind and body; the compatibility of free will and determinism; the sources and limits of knowledge; the reliability of moral reasoning; and the plausibility of religious belief.

Course Objectives

Students who successfully complete the course requirements will be able to: identify and fruitfully discuss some of the major controversies in the history of philosophy; critically evaluate historical and contemporary attempts to address those controversies; construct cogent philosophical arguments on a variety of topics; effectively analyze arguments presented in popular and academic discourse; apply techniques of philosophical analysis to problems that arise in their personal and professional lives.

Student Learning Outcomes for Philosophy 1

1. Demonstrate knowledge of the views of some historically significant philosophers.
2. Analyze, compare, and contrast the basic methods of philosophical reasoning.
3. Differentiate among major schools of philosophical thought.

Required Texts

Blackburn, Simon. Think: A Compelling Introduction to Philosophy
Camus, Albert. The Stranger.
Pursley, Mark. Philosophy 1 Handouts, LAMC Bookstore, Web Site
Tolstoy, Leo. The Death of Ivan Ilyich.

Course Requirements

- Attendance at and participation in lecture-discussion sections.
- Completion of assigned readings by the date assigned.
- Quizzes on assigned readings (late quizzes won't be accepted).
- Two exams (essay type).
- One individual critical essay (2-3 pages, APA format). Essay topics and guidelines are attached.
- Learning team presentation and paper on Tolstoy or Camus.

(**Note:** exams must be taken when scheduled unless *prior* arrangements are made with the instructor. Students absent for three sessions may be dropped from the course.)

Evaluation

Class Participation and Quizzes:	10%
Midterm Exam:	25%
Critical Essay:	15%
Team Presentation	10%
Team Essay	15%
Final Exam:	25%

SCHEDULE

8/26 What is *philosophy*? Issues in philosophy. Philosophical method. Philosophy and religion; philosophy and science.

8/28 Student presentations on the presocratics. *Think* pp.1-13.

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9/4 Read Plato's *Euthyphro* *http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/euthyfro.html*

9/9 Plato's *Euthyphro* continued.

9/11 Read Plato's *Apology* and *The Allegory of the Cave.*
http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/apology.html

http://www.historyguide.org/intellect/allegory.html

9/16 Read pp. 15- 48 Knowledge.

9/18 Read pp. 49- 80 Mind

9/23 Read pp. 81-119 Free will and Determinism

9/25 Read pp. 120-148 The Self

9/30 Read pp. 149- 192 Philosophy of Religion: Arguments for the Existence of God

10/2 The Problem of Evil

10/7 Pascal's Wager and James' Will to Believe

10/9 Religious Diversity **Essay 1 Due**.

10/14 Exam Review.

10/16 **Midterm Exam.**

10/21 Read pp. 233- 269 The World Locke, Berkeley

10/23 Hume, Kant

10/28 Read pp. 270-298 What to Do. Aristotle's Ethics

11/4 Kant and Mill (with AJ Ayer)

11/6 Collaboration on group presentations. Read *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* and *The Stranger*.

11/11 Collaboration continues. Each group must submit an outline of their presentation on the day of the presentation.

11/18 Group presentations on *The Death of Ivan Ilyich.*

11/20 Group presentations on *The Stranger*

11/25 Group presentations on alternate topics

11/27 Existentialism Kierkegaard, Nietzsche,

5/13 Sartre Read: *Existentialism is a Humanism*
http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/sartre/works/exist/sartre.htm

12/2 Wittgenstein and Analytic Philosophy **Learning Team Essay due!**

12/4 Exam review

12/9 Final exam, 10-12.

Cheating- unauthorized material used during an examination (including electronic devices), changing answers after work has been graded, taking an exam for another student, forging or altering attendance sheets or other documents in the course, looking at another student's paper/scantron/essay/computer or exam with or without their approval is considered cheating. Any student caught cheating will receive a zero for the assignment/exam and referred to the Department chair and/or Student Services for further disciplinary action.

Plagiarism- Plagiarism is defined as the act of using ideas, words, or work of another person or persons as if they were one's own, without giving proper credit to the original sources. This includes definitions found online on Wikipedia, materials from blogs, twitter, or other similar electronic resources. The following examples are intended to be representative, but not all inclusive:
- failing to give credit by proper citations for others ideas and concepts, data and information, statements and phrases, and/or interpretations and conclusions.
- failing to use quotation marks when quoting directly from another, whether it be a paragraph, a sentence, or a part thereof
- Paraphrasing the expressions or thought by others without appropriate quotation marks or attribution
- Representing another's artistic/scholarly works such as essays, computer programs, photographs, paintings, drawings, sculptures or similar works as one's own.
First offense, you will receive a zero for the assignment in question. Any further offenses may result in expulsion from the class, as determined by the disciplinary action from the Office of Student Services.

Recording devices in the classroom- Section 78907 of the California Education Code prohibits the use of any electronic audio or video recording devices, without prior consent of the instructor. (including cell phones, laptops, MP3 players, and more)

Reasonable Accommodations: If you are a student with a disability and require accommodations, please send me a private email. The sooner I am aware of your eligibility for accommodations, the quicker I will be able to assist the DSP&S Office in providing them. For students requiring accommodations, the DSP&S Office at Mission College provides special assistance in areas like: registering for courses, specialized tutoring, note-taking, mobility assistance, special instruction, testing assistance, special equipment, special materials, instructor liaisons, community referrals and job placement. If you have not done so already, you may also wish to contact the DSP&S Office in Instructional Building 1018 (phone 818/364-7732 TTD 818/364-7861) and bring a letter stating the accommodations that are needed.

Writing Philosophy Papers*

1. The point of a paper is to state and defend some thesis. The thesis may be critical (Hume's argument for... fails because ...), interpretive (when Kant *says knowledge begins with experience but does not arise out of experience* what he means is ...), or substantive (Morality is independent of religion). This is a special kind of expository writing. One kind of expository writing (text books, newspapers) is designed to convey information,
and another is designed to prove a point. Philosophy papers of the first sort are generally not acceptable.

2. The thesis of the paper should be stated somewhere in the first paragraph of the essay. Your reader needs to know what you are arguing for.

3. Some attempt should be made, either at the beginning or the end of the paper, to say why the thesis is interesting or important.

4. It is often helpful to include a strategy paragraph before the actual argumentation begins, explaining how you plan to defend your thesis.

5. By making reference to the strategy paragraph, or to an outline, you should be able to point to any paragraph in the essay and say just what it is supposed to contribute to the defense of the thesis.

6. If you cannot defend your thesis adequately, perhaps a weaker version of your thesis can be defended. Then you can say what would need to be done in addition to what you have done to defend the stronger version.

7. A large part of the point of philosophical writing is to bring precision and clarity to abstract, vague, and slippery issues. If you sense your discussion becoming overly general or vague, you're on the wrong track. Start over. It is better to oil one small wheel than to utter incantations over the whole machine.

Grading Criteria (in order of importance.)

1. **Relevance.** If you write something down, the assumption is that you think it is relevant. Papers containing material irrelevant to the thesis defended have poor prospects.
2. **Coherence.** This takes practice. A well defended false thesis is better than an ill defended true thesis
3. **Accuracy.** Be careful not to misrepresent or grossly misinterpret the text (if there is one).
4. **Originality.** Originality is not essential. More important is how you put the ideas to use. If you use material (ideas, strategies, whatever) that is not your own, identify that source properly

Essay Topics For Philosophy 1

Select topics from the list below. Consult with the instructor first if you wish to write on a different topic. Refer to the handout *Writing Philosophy Papers* for more specific instructions. Please be sure to document any sources that your discussion relies on or refers to.

1. Using Plato's Euthyphro as a starting point, discuss the relationship between morality and religion. Is morality created by divine command or do such commands conform to moral principles that are independent of God?
2. Explain the "religious epistemology problem" that Plato raises in the Euthyphro. How do contemporary religious believers defend their claims to know God's moral will?
3. Discuss the Socratic Mission as described in Plato's Apology. What are the main elements of Socrates' ethical teachings? What role does religious belief and inspiration play in Socrates' mission? What contemporary moralists remind you of Socrates?
4. Critically evaluate the arguments Socrates offers in the Apology to support the claim that it is irrational to fear death.
5. Select one or more traditional arguments for the existence of God (i.e., the cosmological or teleological argument) for critical evaluation.
6. Evaluate Blackburn's critique of dualism in ch. 2 of Think.
7. What is the problem of evil? Evaluate one or more attempts to resolve this problem.
8. Explicate and evaluate William James' defense of theism in *The Will to Believe.*
9. Pascal held that religious belief should be based on "inspiration" (i.e. religious experience) rather than logical arument. Explain and analyze his position.
10. Discuss the problem of free will and determinism. Which response to the problem seems most promising and why?
11. Analyze the skeptical arguments that Descartes presents in Meditation 1. What does Descartes think he has shown? What do you think Descartes has shown?
12. Evaluate Locke's empiricist theory of the acquisition of knowledge.
13. Explain and evaluate Aristotle's views on the acquisition of virtue and the nature of virtue as a mean between extremes.
14. Evaluate Kant's categorical imperative by applying his theory to contemporary moral controversies.
15. Discuss the relative merits of Kantian ethics and utilitarianism by applying each theory to a contemporary moral controversy.
16. Evaluate Sartre's argument for the claim that morality is subjective in *Existentialism and Humanism.*
17. Explain how Tolstoy's character Ivan Ilyich exemplifies what later existentialists describe as the inauthentic life. How, according to Tolstoy, does Ilyich overcome his inauthenticity?
18. Explain how Camus' character, Meursault, exemplifies Camus' atheistic existentialist outlook. Critically evaluate Camus' contention that "nothing matters."