

Phil 103: Introduction to Philosophy

Spring 2010

Course Number: 730:103 Section 04

Time: Tues/Fri, 10:55am-12:15pm

Location: Hickman Hall 126

Course Instructor: Jennifer Nado

Email: jennifernado@gmail.com

Office: 3 Seminary Place, room 001

Office Hours: Thursday, 2:30-4:00 or by appointment

Course Description:

The aim of this course is to give you a broad overview of some central debates within the Western philosophical tradition. We'll focus on five primary topics:

- 1) **Religion:** Is there a God? What reasons do we have for believing/doubting the existence of God? If there is a God, why does he/she/it allow suffering?
- 2) **Knowledge:** What is knowledge? How can we be sure that we know anything? What justifies us in assuming that the future will generally resemble the past – that the sun will come up tomorrow, that a rock will fall if I drop it?
- 3) **The Mind and the Body:** Is the mind nothing more than the brain? Could there be computers that think, and that have minds just like we do? What is the nature of consciousness?
- 4) **Free Will and Personal Identity:** Do humans have free will? If not, can we still hold them responsible for their actions? What makes someone the same person that they were as a child, even when almost everything about them, physically and mentally, has changed?
- 5) **Ethics:** What makes an action right or wrong? Does it depend on the action's consequences, or on whether the action conformed to some set of moral principles? Can an action be morally wrong for one person or culture, but permissible for another?

Required Readings:

No textbook is required for this class. Readings will be available in the "Resources" section of the course Sakai website.

Grade breakdown:

40 points - Four 1-2 page summary papers

30 points - One 5-7 page final paper

30 points - Attendance and participation

90-100 points – A
87-89 points – B+
80-86 points – B
77-79 points – C+
70-76 points – C
60-69 points – D
<60 points – F

Summary papers:

We will cover five main topics over the course of this class. For four of these (your choice which four), you will write a 1-2 page paper (12 pt font, double spaced) on one of the papers we cover, summarizing its main arguments. You can choose any of the assigned readings for that section. The paper may be turned in at any time up until the first day of the next section; for example, the last day to turn in a paper on religion is Friday, February 12. A summary paper on the final topic, ethics, can be turned in up until the last day of class. NO late papers will be accepted. Please submit your paper via the “assignments” tool on the course Sakai site.

Each summary paper will receive a score out of 10 possible points. If you don’t like your score on a particular paper, you can write a new one on a *different* paper from the *same* section – I’ll use the higher grade out of the two. Here’s the catch – your new paper still needs to be in before the first day of the next section. So it’s worth your while to write these papers before the last minute. For my part, I promise to have your paper graded and returned within three days of when I receive it, so that you have time to do a rewrite if you so desire.

I will post examples of 10-point and 5-point summary papers on Plato’s “Euthyphro” in the resources section of the course Sakai site. You may NOT write a summary paper on the “Euthyphro”.

Final Paper:

The final paper for this class will be a 5-7 page critical discussion of one of the problems we cover during class. I will distribute possible paper topics later in the semester. This paper will be due by Friday, May 7 – one week after the last day of class. Turn in your paper via the “assignments” tool on Sakai. Again, no late papers will be accepted.

If you turn in a rough draft of your paper by Friday, April 30, I will send you suggestions and a grade within 5 days. If you like your grade, you can keep it; if not, you can correct your paper and hand in a final draft.

Plagiarism:

Your written work for this class will be automatically run through the plagiarism detection service Turnitin. This is handled by the “assignments” tool in Sakai. You will

receive an email from Turnitin suggesting that you create an account, but you do not need to do this.

If I discover that you have plagiarized any portion of a paper, you will automatically fail the course. You will also be reported to the appropriate university authorities. The way to avoid this: if you're quoting from *anywhere*, make sure you're citing the source (author, text, *and* page number) and setting off the quoted material with quotation marks.

Attendance/Participation:

Philosophy is a discussion-heavy discipline. The readings for this course provide a starting-point for understanding the topics we will cover during class; most of what you learn in the course, however, will come from discussion. For that reason, a substantial portion of your grade will be based on attendance and participation.

Attendance and participation are worth 30 points total. These points can be earned by attending class, by contributing to in-class discussion, or by posting on the course message board on Sakai. 20 of the 30 possible points **MUST** come from attendance – meaning, if you attend fewer than 20 class sessions, you will not be able to receive full points for attendance/participation. Absences can be excused with a note from the Dean.

You will receive 1 point for each class you attend – for a possible 27 points if you never miss class. In addition, I will give you ½ point for each class where you make a substantial contribution to the discussion. Finally, you will receive ½ point for each time you make a substantive post on the course message board (this includes replies).

Schedule:

1. Tues Jan 19 – Introduction I
No readings
2. Fri Jan 22 – Introduction II
Plato, Euthyphro

Section 1: Religion

3. Tues Jan 26 – The Cosmological Argument
Aquinas, excerpt from Summa Theologica
Rowe, “The cosmological argument”
4. Fri Jan 29 – The Teleological Argument
Paley, excerpt from Natural Theology
Gould, excerpt from The Panda's Thumb
5. Tues Feb 2 – The Ontological Argument

Anselm, excerpt from Proslogion (plus replies)

6. Fri Feb 5 – The Problem of Evil
Mackie, “Evil and omnipotence”
7. Tues Feb 9 – Pascal’s wager
Pascal, excerpt from Pensées
James, excerpt from “The will to believe”

Section 2: Knowledge

8. Fri Feb 12 – Skepticism I
Descartes, Meditation I
Stroud, “The problem of the external world”
9. Tues Feb 16 – Skepticism II
Moore, “Proof of an external world”
Moore, excerpt from “Four forms of skepticism”
10. Fri Feb 19 – Skepticism III
Putnam, “Brains in a vat”
11. Tues Feb 23 – Induction I
Hume, excerpt from An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding
12. Fri Feb 26 - Induction II
Goodman, excerpt from Fact, Fiction and Forecast

Section 3: Mind and Body

13. Tues Mar 2 – What is Consciousness?
Nagel, “What is it like to be a bat?”
Descartes, Meditation VI
14. Fri Mar 5 – The Mind-body Problem I
Jackson, “What Mary didn’t know”
15. Tues Mar 9 – The Mind-body Problem II
Smart, “Sensations and brain processes”
- Fri Mar 12 – NO CLASS
- Tues Mar 16 – SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS
- Fri Mar 19 – SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS
16. Tues Mar 23 – The Mind-body Problem III

Armstrong, "The nature of mind"
Lewis, "Mad pain and Martian pain"

17. Fri Mar 26 – Artificial Intelligence
Searle, "Minds, brains, and programs"

Section 4: Free Will and Personal Identity

18. Tues Mar 30 – Personal Identity I
Williams, "The self and the future"
19. Fri Apr 2 – Personal Identity II
Locke, excerpt from Essay Concerning Human Understanding
Reid, excerpt from Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man
20. Tues Apr 6 – Personal Identity III
Dennett, "Where am I?"
21. Fri Apr 9 – Free Will I
Holbach, excerpt from The System of Nature
22. Tues Apr 13 – Free Will II
Ayer, "Freedom and necessity"

Section 5: Ethics

23. Fri Apr 16 – Utilitarianism
Mill, excerpt from Utilitarianism
24. Tues Apr 20 – Deontological Views
Kant, excerpt from Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals
25. Fri Apr 23 – Cultural Relativism
Rachels, "The challenge of cultural relativism"
26. Tues Apr 27 – Applied Ethics I
Thomson, "A defense of abortion"
27. Fri Apr 30 – Applied Ethics II
Singer, "Famine, affluence, and morality"