

Philosophy 101: Introduction to Philosophy

Spring 2009

Northern Illinois University

MWF 9 – 9:50

Graham Hall 342

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Office Hours: MW 12-1 and by appointment

Description

This course is an introduction to four central topics in Western philosophy: God, freedom, morality, and our knowledge of reality. In addition, it will teach you the basics of contemporary philosophical methodology as it's practiced throughout the English-speaking world.

Attendance

Diligent attendance is essential to your success in the class. The final exam will cover everything we discuss in class all semester. We'll spend a good deal of time discussing philosophy, which is the best way to learn philosophy. Plus, being a particularly good class citizen will boost your participation grade at the end of the semester. But if you cannot make it to class, I don't need you to send me an email explaining why you were absent.

Quizzes

I will administer a number of very brief quizzes throughout the semester. They will generally have two or three questions and should take no more than five minutes to complete. They are designed to ensure that you have acquired some level of competence with the terms and concepts required to understand the readings and lectures. If you are attending regularly and keeping up with the reading, you should find them quite easy. There are no make-up quizzes except in what I judge to be extreme circumstances.

Take-Home Tests

You will have two take-home tests. These will require you to answer a couple of questions directly concerning the reading assignments and associated lectures. I'll expect each to be approximately 2-3 double-spaced typed pages. More detailed instructions will be distributed closer to the due dates.

Grades

20% Participation and quizzes

40% Two take-home tests (First due Monday, February 16; second due Monday, April 10)

40% Cumulative final exam (Wednesday, May 6, 8am - 9:50am)

Schedule

The following schedule is subject to change, though the test due dates will not change:

February 16: First test due

March 23: Second test due

You should make a concerted effort to complete the readings for the week before Wednesday's class. You are 'responsible' for having completed them before Friday's class.

'GSC' = Gendler, Siegel, and Cahn, The Elements of Philosophy (available for purchase at the NIU bookstore in Holmes Student Center)

'Blackboard' = posted to the Course Documents section of our class's Blackboard page, accessible at <http://webcourses.niu.edu>

Week 1 (Jan. 12-16): Introduction and Arguments

No reading

God

Week 2 (Jan. 21-23): The Cosmological and Ontological Arguments

Reading: Taylor, 'The Cosmological Argument' (GSC)
Anselm, 'The Ontological Argument' (GSC)
Gaunilo, 'In Behalf of the Fool' (GSC)

Week 3 (Jan. 26-30): The Ontological Argument and the Argument From Design

Reading: Rowe, 'Why the Ontological Argument Fails' (GSC)
Paley, 'The Argument from Design' (GSC)

Week 4 (Feb. 2-6): The Problem of Evil and Pascal's Wager

Reading: Hick, 'The Problem of Evil' (GSC)
Pascal, 'The Wager' (GSC)

Freedom

Week 5 (Feb. 9-13): Freedom and Determinism

Reading: Van Inwagen, 'Free Will' (Blackboard)

Week 6 (Feb. 16 – 18): Compatibilism

FIRST TEST DUE MONDAY, FEB. 16

Reading: Ayer, 'Freedom and Necessity' (GSC)

*NOTE: No class on Friday, Feb. 20

Week 7 (Feb. 23-27): Incompatibilism

Reading: Chisholm, 'Human Freedom and the Self' (GSC)

Morality

Week 8 (March 2-6): Utilitarianism

Reading: Smart, 'Extreme and Restricted Utilitarianism' (GSC)
Williams, 'Utilitarianism, Integrity, and Responsibility' (GSC)

Spring Break (March 9-13)

Week 9 (March 16-20): Moral Challenges

Reading: Singer, 'Rich and Poor' (GSC)
Norcross, 'Puppies, Pigs, and People' (GSC)

Week 10 (March 23-27): Egoism and Relativism

SECOND TEST DUE MONDAY, MARCH 23

Reading: Rachels, 'Egoism and Moral Skepticism' (GSC)
Rachels, 'The Challenge of Cultural Relativism' (GSC)

Week 11 (March 30-April 3): Divine Command Theory

Reading: Plato, *Euthyphro* (Blackboard)
Adams, 'A Modified Divine Command Theory' (Blackboard)

Knowledge and Reality

Week 12 (April 6-10): Skepticism and Responses

Reading: Descartes, 'Meditations 1 and 2' (GSC)
Moore, 'Proof of an External World' (GSC)
Moore, 'Certainty' (GSC)

Week 13 (April 13-17): Skepticism and Responses

Reading: Vogel, 'Cartesian Skepticism and Inference to the Best Explanation' (GSC)

Week 14 (April 20-24): The Nature of Reality

Reading: Plato, 'The Allegory of the Cave' (GSC)
Berkeley, selections from *Of the Principles of Human Knowledge* (GSC)

Week 15 (April 27-May 1): Catch-up, Wrap-up, and Review

No reading