

Philosophy 322: Final Exam Questions

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Your final exam will be held on Wednesday, May 6, at 10 a.m.. **You must bring two blue books and a writing implement with you to class.** Please do not bring anything else. If you have a cell phone or similar device (e.g., a Blackberry), you will need to turn it off and put it away for the duration of the exam. If you are seen using a cell phone (or other device) during the exam, that will strongly suggest that you are cheating, and that is not a strong suggestion it is in your interest to make.

On the final, you will be required to answer **three** of the questions listed below. The exam is one hour and fifty minutes. I would expect that you would spend thirty minutes on each question, and that this would be plenty of time for you to produce a good response. However, this expectation is conditional on the assumption that you will have prepared your answers in advance, and thus will come into the exam more-or-less already knowing what you are going to say.

You will have *some* choice about which questions to answer, though I will not at this point disclose any further information about the exact mechanics of the test. I may pick four of these questions and ask you to answer three of those that I've picked. Or, I could put all of them on the exam and tell you to take your pick. Or, I could divide the exam into three sections and instruct you to answer one question from each section. You just can't be sure. To be on the safe side, then, you should be prepared to answer all of the questions—though given that you'll be able to skip at least one of the questions on the exam, you can safely neglect to prepare for one of them.

You are free—indeed *encouraged*—to work with others in preparing for the final exam. Answering the questions well will require you to think through the positions and arguments of the authors we have read, and not merely to repeat information we have gone over in class.

1. Descartes and Berkeley each offer an argument for the existence of God that begins with an observation concerning certain *ideas* he finds himself with. Explain each argument, and compare their strengths and weaknesses. Is either argument successful? Why or why not?

2. Explain Hume's skeptical argument against inductive reasoning. Kant's claim that we have synthetic *a priori* knowledge, and his account of how we can have such knowledge, might be seen as a defense against Hume's argument. How? Is this defense successful? Why or why not?
3. What is Hume's view about the origin of our ideas, and what importance does he take his view to have for philosophy? Are there reasons to doubt his view? If there are, are those reasons compelling? Or do you think that Hume could adequately respond to them? Ultimately, do you think that Hume's view on this matter can serve the philosophical purpose he intends it to serve? Why or why not?
4. Compare and contrast how Descartes and Spinoza each understand the relationship between minds and bodies. Does one of these philosophers have a more compelling or satisfying theory than the other? Why or why not? Which one do you think is more compatible with our current understanding of the nature of the mind, and why?
5. Leibniz and Kant both hold that some true propositions are analytic; i.e., that there are truths in which the predicate is somehow contained in the subject. They differ, however, in that Leibniz thinks that *all* true propositions are like this, while Kant thinks that only *some* are. Discuss how this difference is significant in their respective philosophies. Which view, if either, is correct? Are there problems that can be avoided by favoring Leibniz's view here? Or is Kant's view superior?
6. Compare and contrast the views of **three** of the following philosophers concerning our knowledge of bodies: Descartes, Berkeley, Hume, and Kant. Which philosopher has the most plausible view? Defend your answer.
7. Discuss Locke's argument against "innate ideas," and briefly explain Leibniz's response to the argument. Which side of the debate do you think Kant would take? Why? Is Locke's argument successful? Why or why not?
8. Leibniz and Locke both offer compatibilist accounts of freedom. Compare their views, then evaluate them. Is either successful? Why or why not?