

PHL 101 Introduction to Philosophy

fall semester 2018

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Section 006: 122 Berkey

Office Hours: T: 3-4pm; W: 2:10-3:10pm or by appointment (email me)

D2L: <https://d2l.msu.edu/d2l/login/>

Socrates: The unexamined life is not worth living for a human being.—Plato, Apology 38a

By taking this class, you are joining a *conversation* that began thousands of years ago when our ancestors began to wonder about themselves and the world around them and to talk seriously with one another about what they thought *and why*. Are there gods? What is death? What makes a life worth living? Are our perceptions reliable? What can we certain about? Are we in control of our own lives? Why be good? Are we responsible for others? Philosophy aims—if it cannot answer such questions for all time and all people—at least to inquire thoughtfully into the nature of reality and the process of reasoning and reflecting about issues that matter universally, fundamentally, and timelessly.

Practically speaking, the study of philosophy demands that we examine our own most cherished beliefs, that we imaginatively stand outside ourselves to understand others' perspectives and to see ourselves as they see us. Philosophy requires that we take seriously the way we speak and write, but it equally requires us to think clearly and precisely about our own views and those of others. Besides all that, philosophy is fun.

...if truth is to be sought in every division of philosophy, we must, before all else, possess trustworthy principles and methods for the discernment of truth. —Sextus Empiricus

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS:

All books are in the MSU bookstore, and ***NO OTHER TRANSLATIONS OR EDITIONS MAY BE USED (do not buy e-texts)***. Always bring your book to class; write in the margins; make the text your own (they're cheap!). Note that the bookstores will return books-on-hand to publishers early in the semester, so don't put off buying your books.

Berkeley, George. *Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous*, Indianapolis: Hackett: 1979.

Descartes, René. *Meditations on First Philosophy*, 3rd edition, Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993.

David Hume. *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, 2nd edition, Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998.

Kant, Immanuel. *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, 3rd edition, Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993.

Mill, J.S. *Utilitarianism*, 2nd edition, Indianapolis: Hackett, 2001.

Plato. *Five Dialogues [5D]*, Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987.

Weston, Anthony. *A Rulebook for Arguments*, 5th edition, Indianapolis: Hackett, 2018.

Required and optional selections on D2L (see schedule of readings and assignments) and other handouts.

In a republican nation, whose citizens are to be led by reason and persuasion and not by force, the art of reasoning becomes of the first importance.

—Thomas Jefferson

Observations and advice:

1. ***Jump in and keep swimming:*** you'll improve with practice. Just as you must *play* the guitar to become a good guitarist, you have to *participate* in philosophical dialogue to do it well, and some of your best ideas for writing will be sparked by classmates' remarks. **You can discuss philosophy with your classmates through D2L.** Philosophy is not about the transfer of information, so *I won't post lecture notes* that might lull you into thinking you can catch up later. Budget three hours of homework time for each hour of time in the classroom.
2. ***I keep office hours*** and will warn you in advance (by email) if I can't; but I *enjoy* office hours, so please don't hesitate to *drop in*. If posted hours are inconvenient, make an appointment by email. I answer email daily when I am in town. I am frequently out of town on weekends, but even then I typically answer email.
3. ***Do your own work cooperatively:*** You are strongly encouraged to study, discuss, and dispute with others everything we do in this course. Over the years, the students who performed best were those who shared their ideas and written work with one another. But give credit! **Do not submit for credit in this course work completed for another course; and do not submit work that is not your own.**
4. ***Email*** is how I communicate if I need to give you information, so be sure you have a reliable email connection, and **check it often**. Note that my comments on your written work, if submitted by email attachment, are not displayed on iPhones or iPads; comments are visible only on a regular computer.
5. ***Accommodation for Students with Disabilities.*** Students with disabilities should contact the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities to establish reasonable accommodation.

Evaluation: Your grade in the course will have the following components, each being be **weighted** as such:

Quizzes: (10% of your final grade)

There are **five** short in-class True/False quizzes. The questions will cover material from Weston, lecture, class discussion, and the readings. See schedule for quizzes.

Reading Comprehension Exercises (3% of your final grade)

Five times throughout the semester, there are prefabricated reading comprehension exercises, available on D2L. Please **download** them as pdf files and answer them *by hand*. They are due at the **beginning** of class on their due dates. These are graded from 0 (not turned in) to 3 (the reading has been comprehended), and 2 points in between. See schedule.

Three Exams (47% of your final grade)

There are **three** exams this semester. The third is a **cumulative final exam**. The exams are weighted as follows:

Exam 1: 15%

Exam 2: 15%

Final Cumulative Exam: 17%

Three Argument Papers (30% of your final grade)

There are **three** argument papers. **NOTE:** these papers are *not like any you've ever written*. See the Paper Handout and come to class on October 3rd for more information.

Attendance and Participation (10% of your final grade)

I will take attendance throughout the semester with a sign-in sheet. Attendance and participation will figure in the calculation of the final grade, not in some mechanical sense, but in a more subjective way: *if you're around and attentive, I notice. If you're not, I notice that too.*

Important notices about Attendance and Participation:

1) Attendance: If you come to class and leave early without letting me know in advance, *you are not counted for that day, even if there was no sign-in sheet*. See “policies specific to this course” below.

2) Participation: it is nearly impossible to do **reasonably well (=3.0)** in this course *without* being actively engaged in it. The people who do well in the course (a) come to class every day, and (b) follow the participation guidelines. See “policies specific to this course” below.

Policies Specific to this Course

- Try not to come to class late, but **don't leave early** (unless you notify me **prior** to class that you must be somewhere else). This is an issue about classroom *courtesy*. You are **marked absent** if you leave early.
- Respect others and me in class.
- **Please turn off and put away phones in class.** I also **frown** on the use of laptops/tablets. Studies show *handwritten notes* help you retain information better than type-written notes. *Here's one:* <http://msutoday.msu.edu/news/2016/internet-use-in-class-tied-to-lower-test-scores/>. Also, screen use distracts your neighbors who *are* taking hand-written notes. Use of phones in class affects your **participation** grade.

Participation Guidelines

- **Academic Bank:** the concept of the *academic bank* is one that can **help** you at the *end of the course*, but *only if you take advantage of the concept from the beginning of the course*. The concept is this: I tend to be more sympathetic to your “issues” at the end of the course if you have earned a certain amount of “academic capital” to put in the “bank”: you come to class, you engage, you don't leave early. In a word, you **try**. If this is or becomes a “blow off” course for you, I tend to have little to no sympathy about your circumstances at the end of the course, *especially if you inform me of such circumstances only toward the end of the course*.
On this note: **if** this course seems like it is not going to be something you can handle, take note of the **drop date**. If you're way behind and you fail to take advantage of it, you have two choices: start working harder or fail.
- **Budget your study time:** you simply cannot engage in the course if you're *not doing the readings*. They are not easy and each requires attention and concentration.
- **Bring your questions to class and ask them.** It is just par for the course that any question you have about the readings or concepts discussed in class are *shared by your peers*, whether you think so or not. Asking questions **benefits everyone**.
Note on Academic Capital: at the end of the semester, *borderline cases that have earned academic capital are typically rounded up*. You will not be “rounded up” if you have not earned it.

Grading

This is a work-intensive course (see schedule). It requires that you **read the material on time**, and that you engage with the material *actively outside of class* for about three hours for every one hour of class. That may seem like a lot. It is. But philosophy is as difficult as it is important (and rewarding, even if

you may not feel its effects for *years* afterwards!).

Each section of the course (quizzes, exams, etc.) is added up as *weighted averages* at the end of the course. For example, all your quiz percentages are *weighted* at 5% of your final grade.

All grades are computed according to the scale below. The final grade will be converted to 4-point scale according to this scale:

- 92.0—100% = 4.0: Excellent to Superior work
- 87.0—91.9% = 3.5: Very Good to Excellent work
- 82.0—86.9% = 3.0: Good to Very Good work
- 77.0—81.9% = 2.5: Average to Good work
- 72.0—76.9% = 2.0: Satisfactory to Average work
- 66.0—71.9% = 1.5: Less than Satisfactory to Satisfactory work
- 60.0—65.9% = 1.0: Borderline to Less than Satisfactory work
- 0—59.9% = 0.0: Fails to Meet the Requirements (F)

SAMPLE OF A STUDENT'S FINAL GRADE IN THE COURSE—HOW THINGS BREAK DOWN

You may fill in your OWN scores as the semester goes along to keep track

Q1: 87 _____

Q2: 90 _____

Q3: 77 _____

Q4: 78 _____

Q5: 83 _____

Q AVG: 83 _____

Q WEIGHT: 8.3/10 _____

RC1: 2 (67) _____

RC2: 2 (67) _____

RC3: 1 (33) _____

RC4: 3 (100) _____

RC5: 2 (67) _____

RC AVG: 66.8 _____

RC WEIGHT: 2/3 _____

EXAM1: 84 _____

EXAM 1 WEIGHT: 12.6/15 _____

EXAM2: 85 _____

EXAM 2 WEIGHT: 12.8/15 _____

EXAM 3: 87 _____

EXAM 3 WEIGHT: 14.8/17 _____

PAPER1: 84 _____

PAPER 1 WEIGHT: 8.4/10 _____

PAPER2: 83 _____

PAPER 2 WEIGHT: 8.3/10 _____

PAPER3: 79 _____

PAPER 3 WEIGHT: 7.9/10 _____

ATTENDANCE/PARTICIPATION: 85 _____

ATTENDANCE WEIGHT: 8.5/10 _____

CURRENT PERCENT AVERAGE: 81.9 (*these are never very accurate*) _____

CURRENT FINAL WEIGHT: [8.3+2+12.6+12.8+14.8+8.4+8.3+7.9+8.5] = 83.6 (84) = 3.0 _____

COMPARE PERFECT SCORE: [10+3+15+15+17+10+10+10+10] = 100 (100) = 4.0

NOTE: Thesis Statements are *not* graded, but *not* turning them in will *negatively* impact your attendance/participation grade

Dates Read Assignments **Before** Class! What's Due, In-Class Exercises, Quizzes, Exams

W 8-29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to philosophy and the course • Syllabus • Argument Indicators and Operators handout 	
F 8-31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plato: <i>Apology</i> [5D] • Weston II, III, Appendix I 	Film (10 minutes)
M 9-3	NO CLASS: Labor Day	
W 9-5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plato: <i>Meno</i> [5D] • Weston VI 	
F 9-7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plato: <i>Meno</i> [5D] • Weston VI 	
M 9-10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plato: <i>Meno</i> [5D] 	QUIZ 1: <i>Apology</i> , (some) <i>Meno</i> , Weston
W 9-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Descartes: <i>Meditations</i> 1 	
F 9-14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Descartes: <i>Meditations</i> 1/2 	Thesis Statements: The How and What D2L: Reading Comprehension 1 DUE
M 9-17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Descartes: <i>Meditations</i> 2 	
W 9-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Descartes: <i>Meditations</i> 2 	
F 9-21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Berkeley: <i>Three Dialogues</i> 1 	QUIZ 2: <i>Meditations</i> 1-2
M 9-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Berkeley: <i>Three Dialogues</i> 1 	
W 9-26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Berkeley: <i>Three Dialogues</i> 2 	
F 9-28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Berkeley: <i>Three Dialogues</i> 2 	THESIS 1 DUE
M 10-1	EXAM 1: Weston through Berkeley	EXAM 1: Weston through Berkeley
W 10-3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weston I, VII, VIII 	<i>Weston/Papers: The How and What</i>
F 10-5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • D2L: Anselm/Aquinas • Weston IV 	IN CLASS EXERCISE
M 10-8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Descartes: <i>Meditations</i> 3 	D2L: Reading Comprehension 2 DUE
W 10-10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Descartes: <i>Meditations</i> 3 	
F 10-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Descartes: <i>Meditations</i> 3 	PAPER 1 DUE
M 10-15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hume: <i>Dialogues</i>: II-III 	QUIZ 3: Anselm/Aquinas, <i>Meditations</i> 3
W 10-17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hume: <i>Dialogues</i>: IV-V 	
F 10-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hume: <i>Dialogues</i>: VII-VIII 	
M 10-22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hume: <i>Dialogues</i>: IX 	
W 10-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hume: <i>Dialogues</i>: X-XI 	THESIS 2 DUE
F 10-26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • D2L: Mackie: "Evil and Omnipotence" 	QUIZ 4: Hume D2L: Reading Comprehension 3 DUE
M 10-29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • D2L: Mackie: "Evil and Omnipotence" 	
W 10-31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • D2L: Mackie: "Evil and Omnipotence" 	
F 11-2	EXAM 2: Anselm through Mackie	EXAM 2: Anselm through Mackie
M 11-5	Ethics: Introduction	
W 11-7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plato: <i>Euthyphro</i> [5D] 	PAPER 2 DUE
F 11-9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kant: <i>Grounding</i> 1 	D2L: Reading Comprehension 4 DUE
M 11-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kant: <i>Grounding</i> 1 	
W 11-14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kant: <i>Grounding</i> 2 pp. 19-42 (§437) 	
F 11-16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kant: <i>Grounding</i> 2 pp. 19-42 (§437) 	
M 11-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kant: <i>Grounding</i> 2 pp. 19-42 (§437) 	THESIS 3 DUE
W 11-21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mill: <i>Utilitarianism</i> CH1 	
F 11-23	NO CLASS	Doorbusters! Savings! Black Friday!

M 11-26	• Mill: <i>Utilitarianism</i> CH2	D2L: Reading Comprehension 5 DUE
W 11-28	• Mill: <i>Utilitarianism</i> CH3-4	
F 11-30	• Mill: <i>Utilitarianism</i> CH5	QUIZ 5: <i>Euthyphro</i> , Kant, Mill
M 12-3	• Plato: <i>Crito</i> [5D]	
W 12-5	• Plato: <i>Crito</i> [5D]	
F 12-7	• Plato: <i>Phaedo</i> [5D] 115b-188a (the end)	PAPER 3 DUE Film (30 minutes)
THURSDAY 12-13	FINAL EXAM: 7:45AM - 9:45AM 122 BERKEY	