

Questions to Prepare for the Final Exam

Reading Guide #1 - Reality and Experience

1. Describe Plato's cave analogy. How, according to Socrates, are the cave-dwellers like us?
12. "I am obliged in the end to admit that none of my former ideas are beyond legitimate doubt; and this, not from inconsideration or frivolity, but for strong and well-thought-out reasons" (Descartes). Explain what these three reasons are.
14. What is the first thing that Descartes claims he can not doubt? Why can't he doubt it?
18. "[I]t will be convenient to distinguish them as they are ideas or perceptions in our minds; and as they are modifications of matter in the bodies that cause such perceptions in us..." (Locke). What does this mean? Why does Locke think that this distinction is important?
20. What are the primary qualities? (Provide a description and a list.)
21. What are the secondary qualities? (Provide a description and a list.)
28. How does Locke's discussion of the water support his primary/secondary distinction?
29. How does Locke demonstrate that figure is a primary quality?
32. What is an object, like an apple, for Berkeley?
40. Why, according to Berkeley, can't our ideas of objects resemble material substance? How does this show the primary/secondary distinction to be unhelpful?
43. Explain Berkeley's argument against the primary qualities from the relativity of perceptions.
53. How does Moore prove the existence of the external world? Why does he call his proof "perfectly rigorous"?
55. Why might someone want proof of Moore's premises? How does Moore respond?
61. How, according to Wittgenstein, does Moore's view overlook statements like, "I thought I knew"?
62. "My believing the trustworthy man stems from my admitting that it is possible for him to make sure" (Wittgenstein). Explain. How does this assertion relate to the question of the existence of the material world?
69. Explain Wittgenstein's river bed analogy. To what do the river and the river bed correspond?

Reading Guide #2 - Space and Time

1. How does absolute time differ from relative time? Characterize each.
2. How does absolute space differ from relative space? Characterize each. What is the difference between place and space?
7. Describe Newton's bucket experiment. What does it show, and how?
12. For Leibniz, what does it mean that space and time are "merely relative"?
16. "Two states indiscernible from each other are the same state" (Leibniz). Explain.
20. Distinguish the A-properties from the B-relations. What is an A-theorist? What is a B-theorist?
31. How, according to Zimmerman, is the A-theory commonsensical?
33. What is a tenseless theory of time?
34. How are mathematical and physical theories expressed tenselessly?
42. How is the A-theorist's world dynamic while the B-theorist's is static?

Reading Guide #3 - Personal Identity

1. How, according to Plato, can we get closest to knowledge? What does this imply about the relationship between mind and body?
9. What, according to Locke, is a person? What attributes are essential?
12. Describe Locke's case of the prince and the cobbler. What does it show?
17. Describe Reid's case of the old general. Why is it a problem for Locke's account? Be specific.
28. "I am not thought, I am not action, I am not feeling; I am something that thinks, and acts, and suffers" (Reid). Explain.
36. What do Kripke's considerations tell us about personal identity?
38. "It must be some one impression, that gives rise to every real idea. But self or person is not any one impression, but that to which our several impressions and ideas are supposed to have a reference" (Hume). Explain
40. What, according to Hume, are people?
44. How, according to Parfit, do split-brain cases undermine a view of the self as undivided?
47. Distinguish the ego theory of the self from the bundle theory.

Reading Guide #4 - The Nature of Mind

5. Does Descartes's argument that he exists prove the existence of his body? Explain.
8. According to Descartes, what is the self? Describe the self and its faculties, especially sensing.
16. "The fact that I can clearly and distinctly understand one thing apart from another is enough to make me certain that the two things are distinct..." (Descartes). Explain. What does this mean about the relationship between the mind and the body?
22. How, according to Descartes, does the divisibility of the body show it to be distinct from the mind?
23. How does Descartes account for the body's ability to provide misleading sensations to the mind?
24. How does Arnauld's triangle example undermine Descartes's argument that the mind is distinct from the body?
33. Why, according to Skinner, is, "He eats because he is hungry," a redundant description?
38. How does the behaviorist attempt to link psychology and physics?
41. According to Hempel, how can we determine the meaning of a psychological sentence, like, 'Paul has a toothache'?
49. What is scientism? How does Armstrong defend scientism? Consider the Harvey case.
62. What is identity theory? What is its chief advantage?
63. Distinguish token physicalism from type physicalism. Why is type physicalism implausible?
67. How does functionalism capture the best features of materialism?
72. What is a qualia freak? How do qualia freaks argue against physicalism?
75. What is the modal argument against physicalism? How is it disputed?

Reading Guide #5 - Ethics

10. Socrates concludes, “[N]o other ruler, in any kind of government, insofar as he is a ruler, seeks what is to his own advantage... (Plato).” Sketch his argument. Why does Thrasymachus resist this conclusion?
11. How is Thrasymachus’s sheep and shepherd analogy a response to Socrates’s argument that true rulers always rule in the interests of the governed?
6. How, according to Glaucon, would some one who possessed the ring of Gyges act? What does he think this shows?
8. What are the three parts of the soul, according to Socrates? What is a just man?
9. What is an unjust man, according to Socrates?
1. What is the Greatest Happiness Principle?
4. “[It is] better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied” (Mill). Explain. How does Mill rectify this claim with his hedonism?
2. “What else can matter to us, other than how our lives feel from the inside?” (Nozick).
4. Does the experience machine allow us to be what we want to be? How is plugging in to the machine like suicide?
1. What is the only thing Kant thinks good without qualification? Why are intelligence and wealth not good without qualification?
7. Explain the categorical imperative in the formula of universal law.
14. “Now I say that man, and in general every rational being, *exists* as an end in himself, *not merely as a means* for arbitrary use by this or that will...” (Kant). Explain.
8. “Moral judgments often rest on distinctions, but if the distinctions are not to appear arbitrary fiat, they should related to some real difference in probabilities” (Noonan). Explain. How do considerations of probabilities underlie Noonan’s criterion of personhood?
1. What is a moral community? How do criteria for humanity differ from criteria for moral personhood?
3. What are Warren’s five criteria for personhood? Are they all necessary conditions?
4. What kinds of human beings may not be people? What kinds of people may not be human beings?