

Philosophy 110W: Introduction to Philosophy
Spring 2012
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1pm - 2:15pm
Benedict 105

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Syllabus

Course Description and Objectives:

This course will survey a range of topics of interest to philosophers and prepare the student for further work in several areas of philosophy. We will examine some perennial philosophical questions and their treatments by both classical thinkers and more contemporary philosophers. Topics to be discussed include the nature of reality, the veridicality of experience, space and time, personal identity, the nature of mind, and moral judgments.

Successful study of philosophy requires both quiet study and active engagement. I expect students in this course to read serious philosophy and to participate in class discussions. This course is designated as writing-intensive, which means that you will complete at least four writing assignments and have some opportunity to re-write in response to comments. Students will write a précis, four papers and a final exam. Additionally, each student will prepare an in-class presentation.

Texts:

Articles posted on the course website
Three movies screened as listed below and available on reserve
My lecture notes posted on the course website after classes.

On-Line Resources

The website for this course is:

http://www.thatmarcusfamily.org/philosophy/Course_Websites/Intro_S12/Course_Home.html

The course website includes an html syllabus, readings, lecture notes, assignments, other handouts, and links to good philosophy websites.

Assignments, Grading, and Due Dates

1. All the readings (or other preparatory assignments) listed below.
2. In-class participation (10%)
3. One Précis (5%)
4. Four papers (55% total)
 - Paper 1 (600-800 words) due February 7 (10%)
 - Paper 2 (800-1000 words) due February 23 (10%)
 - Paper 3 (1250-2100 words)
due to peer reviewers March 29
due to me, with revisions, April 5 (20%)
 - Paper 4 (1000-1800 words) due May 3 (15%)
5. One ten-to-fifteen minute in-class presentation (10%)
6. Final exam (20%)

The given weights are subject to adjustment.

Readings and Classes: Your preparation for class will ordinarily consist of either of two kinds of assignments: 1. Philosophical texts, or 2. Illustrative readings or movies. The nature of class discussion will vary depending on the assigned reading or movie. Some classes will be discussions. Some classes will be exegetical lectures. Some classes will have *ad hoc* group activities.

Our class is a cooperative endeavor, and I expect you to attend every class. There is no immediate penalty for missing class. But our class is small and any absence will be noted. You should discuss any missed classes with me, preferably in advance.

Précis: The précis is a short expository writing exercise on some small topic in one of our readings. You will receive either an A or an A- on the précis. In order to receive your grade, you must submit a worthy précis. Your first opportunity to submit a précis will be at the beginning of our third class, on January 24; everyone in class must submit a précis that day. If your précis is not worthy of an A or A-, you must submit a new précis at the beginning of each class until you have submitted an acceptable one. Précis are to be no more than 500 words.

Papers: All papers will engage one or more philosophical texts but may also invoke illustrative readings or movies. The first two papers will be short critical analyses of a philosophical text. The third and fourth papers will be standard, rhetorical essays, defending a thesis. The third paper will be distributed to peer reviewers who will comment on the essay. You will hand in your original essay, your peer comments, and a final, revised draft.

Standards for academic writing vary by discipline. Philosophical writing should be clear and focused and attentive to every detail. Do not be misled by the brevity of some of our assignments. Expect to revise your papers several times before submitting them.

Many Hamilton students take advantage of the excellent tutors at the writing center, located in KJ 152. I do not require that you use the writing center, but I may, early in the term, make a strong suggestion that you do so. You may approach them with early drafts of a paper, or even earlier in the writing process. You must make appointments, which you can do easily at their website. You are always welcome to ask for my help on a paper, **in advance of the due date**. I do not have strict guidelines about how much time you must give me before the due date, but you can not expect me to provide comments in less than two full days.

The first and second papers of the term may be re-written for an improved grade. All rewrites are due by April 17.

Presentations: Your presentation will be an exegetical discussion of one of the philosophy readings. A more specific assignment will be distributed in class. We will sign up for presentations early in the term.

The Oral Communication Center, in KJ 222, can help you prepare an effective presentation. If you wish, you can practice your presentation, and have it recorded and analyzed. If you wish to do use the OCC, you should make an appointment early. See their website.

Final Exam: For each assigned philosophical text, I will prepare reading guides, which are lists of questions corresponding to the reading. You can use the reading guides to help you determine your comprehension of the assignments. The final exam will be based directly on the reading guides.

In addition to peer tutoring, both the Writing Center and the Oral Communications Center have an astoundingly wonderful set of resources to help you write and speak more effectively. Many of these resources are available on their respective websites.

The Hamilton College Honor Code will be enforced.

Schedule

Note: The assignments listed in each row are to be completed before class.

Class	Date	Topic	To Prepare for Class...
1	January 17	What is Philosophy?	--
2	January 19	Reality	Wells, "The Country of the Blind"
3	January 24	Illusion	Plato, from <i>Republic</i> Descartes, from <i>Meditations on First Philosophy</i>
	January 25, 7pm	Screening of <i>Inception</i>	SC G027
4	January 26	Sense Experience	Watch <i>Inception</i> Descartes, "The Story of the Wax" Descartes, "The Story of the Sun" Locke, "On the Primary/Secondary Distinction"
5	January 31	Idealism	Berkeley, from the <i>Principles</i>
6	February 2	Commonsense Realism	Moore, "Proof of an External World" Wittgenstein, from <i>On Certainty</i>
7	February 7 Paper 1 due	Paradoxes of Motion	Parmenides' Poem Heinlein, "All You Zombies"
8	February 9	Absolute and Relational Space	Newton, from <i>Principia</i> Leibniz, from <i>Letters to Clarke</i>
9	February 14	The A-Theory	Zimmerman, "The Privileged Present: Defending an "A-Theory" of Time"
	February 16	No Class	
10	February 21	The B-Theory	Smart, "The Space-Time World"
	February 21, 7pm	Screening of <i>Eternal Sunshine</i>	KJ 125
11	February 23 Paper 2 due	Personal Identity	Watch <i>Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind</i>
12	February 28	The Soul Theory of Identity	Plato, from <i>Phaedo</i>
13	March 1	The Consciousness Theory of Identity	Locke, "The Prince and the Cobbler" Reid, "Of Mr. Locke's Account of Our Personal Identity"

14	March 6	Irreducibility and Essentialism	Reid, "Of Identity" Kripke, from <i>Naming and Necessity</i>
15	March 8	The Bundle Theory	Hume, "The Self" Parfit, "Divided Minds and the Nature of Persons"
16	March 27	Personal Identity: A Case Study	Dennett, "Where Am I?"
	March 27, 7pm	Screening of <i>Blade Runner</i>	KJ 125
17	March 29 Paper 3 due to peer reviewers	The Mind	Watch <i>Blade Runner</i>
18	April 3 Peer reviews due to authors	Dualism	Descartes, "On the Nature of Mind" Arnauld and Descartes on the Mind
19	April 5 Final draft of Paper 3 due	Behaviorism	Skinner, from <i>Science and Human Behavior</i> Hempel, "The Logical Analysis of Psychology" Locke, "On the Inverted Spectrum"
20	April 10	Materialism	Armstrong, "The Nature of Mind"
21	April 12	Functionalism	Fodor, "The Mind-Body Problem"
22	April 17	Epiphenomenalism	Jackson, "Epiphenomenal Qualia"
23	April 19	Ethics and Meta-Ethics	Plato, "What is Right Conduct?"
24	April 24	Morality and Self-Interest	Plato, "Why Should I Be Moral"
25	April 26	Consequentialism	Mill, from <i>Utilitarianism</i> Nozick, "The Experience Machine"
26	May 1	Kantian Deontology	Kant, from <i>Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals</i>
27	May 3 Paper 4 due	Abortion and Personhood	Noonan, "Abortion is Morally Wrong" Warren, "The Personhood Argument in Favor of Abortion"

Final Exam: Wednesday, May 9, 7pm - 10pm

Office Hours

My office hours for the Spring 2012, term are 10:30am - noon, Monday through Friday. My office is upstairs in the Philosophy Building, 202 College Hill Road.