

Introduction to Philosophy Syllabus

Basic Information

This course is a general introduction to philosophy. It will have five parts: (i) what philosophy is and why one might care about it; (ii) arguments about God's existence; (iii) Descartes's *Meditations*; (iv) personal identity; (v) four philosophical puzzles.

Each week there will be two lecture classes and one quiz section class. I, Stewart Duncan, am your main instructor. I'll teach the classes on Mondays and Wednesdays (HENZ 53, 1:30-2:20pm). The sections will be taught by Sruthi Rothenfluch.

My office hours will be on Mondays from 3-4pm and Tuesdays from 10-11am in my office, 1008 Oldfather Hall. The best way to contact me at other times during the week is by email at sduncan3@unlserve.unl.edu. You can also call my office at (402) 472-2073. I'll probably be in my office on most weekdays, but do call or email first if you want to meet me outside my office hours.

Sruthi's office hours will be on Wednesdays from 2:30-3:30pm and Thursdays from 10:30-11:30am in her office, 1019 Oldfather Hall. You can contact her by email at srothenf@unlserve.unl.edu.

Book

The one book required for the class is Perry and Bratman (ed.), *Introduction to Philosophy*, third edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997). I have ordered this at the bookstore. All required reading assignments will be from this book.

Website

The website for the class is at <http://www.geocities.com/sdrduncan/spring04/101/index.html>. The syllabus, schedule, and announcements will be there.

Assessment

There will be three pieces of assessed work for the class: an in-class midterm exam, a paper, and a final exam.

The midterm will be worth 25% of your overall grade. It will be held in class on 1 March. You will have to answer two essay questions from a choice of four. These will be on the material covered in class up to that point.

The paper will be worth 40% of your overall grade. You should write a paper of no more than 1500 words. Topics will be handed out on 10 March. Papers will be due in class on 31 March.

You should hand in your paper in the appropriate class. I will give extensions if you have good reasons, but not otherwise. Please let me know as soon as possible (preferably in advance) if you think you will need an extension. If you hand in a paper late without an extension, you will be penalized. You will lose one grade (e.g. drop from an A to an A- or from a C+ to a C) for every class your paper is late.

The final exam will be worth 35% of your overall grade. It will ask you to answer both essay and short answer questions. It will cover all the material in the course. The exam will be on 4 May from 1 to 3pm.

There will be no extra credit assignments or opportunities to rewrite papers for improved grades.

Academic Integrity

You should be aware that academic dishonesty is a serious offence, for which there are severe penalties. Consult section 4.2 of the Student Code of Conduct, which is available from <http://www.unl.edu/sja/>.

Schedule

All page references below are to the Perry and Bratman book.

1. What is philosophy?

- 12 January. Introduction. Read Perry & Bratman, "Introduction: on the study of philosophy" (1-6)
- 14 January. Plato, *Apology*. Read Socrates's first speech (27-38).
- 19 January. No class -- Martin Luther King Day
- 21 January. Plato, *Apology*. Re-read Socrates's first speech (27-38).
- 26 January. Plato, *Apology*. Read Socrates's second and third speeches (39-42).

2. The existence of God

- 28 January. Russell on philosophy and the existence of God. Read Russell's "The value of philosophy" (9-12) and his "Why I am not a theist" (53-6).
- 2 February. The moral argument and the Euthyphro dilemma. Re-read Russell's "Why I am not a theist" (53-6), focusing on the section "Moral arguments for the deity" (55-6).
- 4 February. The cosmological argument. Look again at what Russell's section "The first-cause argument" (53). Also read Aquinas, "The existence of God" (47-9). Pay particular attention to the paragraph that begins "The second way ..." (48).
- 9 February. The ontological argument. Read Anselm, "The ontological argument" (45-6). We'll also consider Gaunilo's objection (section 6 in particular).
- 11 February. The design argument. Read part II of Hume's *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (58-64).
- 16 February. More on the design argument. Read parts III-V of Hume's *Dialogues* (64-71).

- 18 February. The problem of evil. Read part X of Hume's *Dialogues* (77-82).
- 23 February. The problem of evil. Read part XI of Hume's *Dialogues* (82-8).
- 25 February. Pascal's wager. Read Pascal, "The wager" (49-52).
- 1 March. **Midterm exam.**

3. Descartes's *Meditations*

- 3 March. Meditation I (116-8) .
- 8 March. Meditation II (118-121).
- 10 March. Meditation III (121-7). **Paper topics handed out.**
- 22 March. Meditation IV (127-30).
- 24 March. Meditation V (130-3).
- 29 March. Meditation VI (133-9).
- 31 March. Final class on Descartes. **Papers due.**

4. Personal identity

All readings in this section are from Perry's "Dialogue on personal identity and immortality" (396-416).

- 5 April. Grounding personal identity in identity of body or soul. Read the section "The first night" (396-403).
- 7 April. Memory theories. Read the section "The second night" (403-410).
- 12 April. Further discussion. Read the section "The third night" (410-6).

5. Four puzzles

- 14 April. Zeno's paradoxes of motion. Read "Achilles and the tortoise" and "The racecourse" (786-7).
- 19 April. The heap. Read "The paradox of the heap" (789).
- 21 April. Identity over time. Read "The paradox of identity" (788-9).
- 26 April. No topic scheduled. We'll probably need the extra day to catch up with material before the end of the semester.
- 28 April. Review for final exam
- 4 May. **Final exam**, 1-3pm