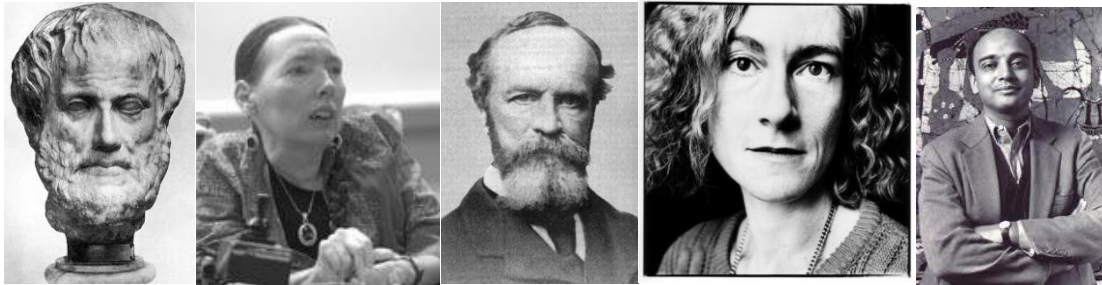


Philosophy 101

Introduction to Philosophy

Skidmore College
Fall Semester 2011
Ladd 206
Tues/Thurs 3:40-5:30

Professor William Lewis
e-mail: wlewis@skidmore.edu
office: Ladd 216, phone x5402
office hours: XXXX



Course Theme: What Do We Owe to One Another?

Course Description and Goals

This course provides an intensive introduction to the practice of philosophy. I say practice here rather than “discipline” or “subject” because, even though you will leave the course with an understanding of what philosophy is and what kind of things it studies, what I most hope you will take away is an approach to asking questions and of finding answers to them that is unique to philosophy and which can serve you well for the rest of your lives. To introduce this practice, we will look at the question of whether or not the duties we owe to one another are cultural or universal. To animate and give substance to this practice, we will read and discuss classical and contemporary attempts to answer these questions offered by philosophers who have thought deeply about such matters. Through reading, discussion, and writing papers, it is hoped that each of you will come away from the class comfortable with philosophic texts and able to formulate, argue, and answer philosophical questions on your own. There are no exams in this section. Therefore, you will be demonstrating your knowledge of the ideas that we discuss in class at the same time that you critique them in writing and discussion, a task much more challenging than mere memorization and regurgitation.

*Aristotle, Harriet McBryde-Johnson, William James, Kwame Anthony Appiah, Martha Nussbaum

Evaluation and Grading

a. reading, discussion, and skill building questions: 15%

About once a week (and maybe more) I will assign a question that (a) has to do with the next reading, or (b) that is designed to spur discussion in a subsequent class, or (c) that starts you working on a philosophic or scholarly skill. On questions of the first two types, please take the time to write a paragraph or so in response and have it ready to turn in at the beginning of the next class. Those answers that demonstrate thought and engagement with the text through citation, exegesis, critical thought, and/or relation of the reading to other texts, experiences, or events will receive full credit and either a "√" or a "√+." Responses that evidence little effort or thought will receive no credit and a "-." Like the gold star in elementary school, the "+" is its own reward and indicates how well you are engaging with the class materials. The mark also remains in my grade book and, come May, will remind me of your hard work.

b. class participation and attendance: 15%

Philosophy and philosophical texts are very difficult and often hard to understand on our own. Because of this and because this class includes discussion and discussions need participants, attendance is mandatory and you are expected to take part in all class discussions. This aspect of your performance will be reflected in a portion of your grade that in no way reflects its overall importance to the class. However, it should also be easy given that this participation is basic to the class and demands no more of you than showing up ready to express an informed opinion after having read the texts or thought about the discussion questions assigned for the day. This grade is based upon the quality (not necessarily quantity) of your participation. However, it is very hard to participate well if you don't show up to class and if you seldom speak. You will be asked to assess your own class participation and attendance at the end of the semester. This assessment will then be compared against my own records and impressions in order to determine a final grade.

c. 3 papers: (23.3% each)

There will be 3 papers written for the class. One will be on Aristotle, one on Value Theory in general, and the third will deal with Rousseau and Contemporary Cosmopolitanism. We will spend time in class discussing what constitutes a philosophic argument and how to write a philosophy paper. Learning to incorporate original texts into your papers and to make philosophical arguments is best learned through trial and revision. Because of this you will have the opportunity to meet with me before each paper is due to make sure that you are executing the best paper possible.

Policies

No late assignments will be accepted without express permission of the instructor obtained at least 24 hours before the assignment's due date. Violations of the Skidmore College Honor Code will result in an "F" for a class grade as well as all penalties imposed by the Honor Council.

Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability and believe you will need academic accommodation, you must formally request accommodation from Meg Hegener, Coordinator for Students with Disabilities. You will also need to provide documentation which verifies the existence of a disability and supports your request. For further information, please call 580-8150, or stop by the office of Student Academic Services in Starbuck Center.

Readings and Films

Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism*

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics, Politics*

Werner Herzog, *The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser*

Tim Holt, "Divine Command Theory"

William James "The Moral Philosopher & The Moral Life"

Harriet McBryde Johnson, "Unspeakable Conversations"

Krzysztof Kieslowski, *Dekalog I*

John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*

Mark Murphy, "Theological Voluntarism"

Martha C. Nussbaum, "Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism"

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "Discourse on the Origin of Inequality"

Peter Singer, BBC2 interview with William Crawley

Henry David Thoreau, "Civil Disobedience"

Schedule

(note: schedule is subject to change based on class needs and interests, [CP] = Course Packet)

Week 1, September 4-10

Thurs Syllabus Review
Introduction

Week 2, September 11-17

Tues Introduction continued
Exercise: How to Read Aristotle
Hand-Out: Dos and Don'ts of Writing Good Reading Responses

Thurs Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book I→chapters 1-4 (chapter 4 read only 1096a12-23)
••Citation Exercise••

Week 3, September 18-24

Tues Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book I→chapters 5-13
••Citation Exercise Due••

Thurs Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book II→chapters 1-6

Week 4, September 25-October 1

Tues Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book II→chapters 7-9

Thurs Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book VI→chapters 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 13

Week 5, October 2-8

Tues Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book X→chapters 6-10

Thurs Formal Discussion: Aristotle and the Honor Code
How to Write a Philosophy Paper
••paper #1 assigned••

Week 6, October 9-15

Tues Divine Command Theory Hand-out [CP]
Screening: Krzysztof Kieslowski, *Dekalog I*

Thurs Thoreau, "Civil Disobedience [CP]"

Week 7, October 16-22

Tues Mill, *Utilitarianism*, selections

Thurs Mill, *Utilitarianism*, selections
Screening: Peter Singer, BBC2 interview with William Crawley
••paper #1 due at beginning of class ••

Fri Study Day

Week 8, October 23-29

Tues McBryde Johnson, "Unspeakable Conversations" [CP]
Formal Discussion: "Utilitarianism and Disability"

Thurs ••Paper #2 Assigned••

Week 9, October 30-November 5

Tues Rousseau, "Discourse on the Origin of Inequality" [CP]

Thurs Rousseau, "Discourse on the Origin of Inequality" [CP]

Week 10, November 6-12

Tues Rousseau, "Discourse on the Origin of Inequality" [CP]

Thurs Screening: Werner Herzog, *The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser*
••paper #2 due at beginning of class ••

Week 11, November 13-19

Tuesday Rousseau and Herzog Debate and Discussion

Thursday Nussbaum, "Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism" [CP]

Week 12, November 20-26

Tuesday Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism*, Chapters 1-2

Thursday Thanksgiving Break

Week 13, November 27-December 3

Tuesday Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism*, Chapters 3-5
••Paper #2 Assigned••

Thursday Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism*, Chapters 6-8

Week 14, December 4-10

Tuesday Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism*, Chapters 9-10

Thursday Final class discussion: The Value of Philosophy

Week 15, December 11-17

Final Paper Due, Date To Be Announced