

PH 101-001 and PH 101-002: Introduction to Philosophy (Fall 2013)

Time and place of class meetings:

PH 101-001: M, 11:15-12:10 and TR, 11:10-12:30 in Tang Museum, Whitman room

PH 101-002: M, 1:25-2:20 and TR, 2:10-3:30 in Scribner Library 213

Instructor: Prof. Jo-Jo Koo

Office: Ladd Hall, room 216

Office hours: TR, 3:40-4:40; W, 11:40-12:40; and by appointment

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Course Description

This introductory course to philosophy aims to give students an appreciation of what resources (especially in the way of critical-thinking skills) philosophy provides for understanding and evaluating inescapable aspects of human life, in addition to being a selective survey of some classical and contemporary philosophical reflections on a few perennial questions in philosophy and our wider culture as a whole. The first topic we will address is: What is philosophy, i.e., what is its general method and value? Once we acquire a working sense of what this is, we will learn to see the power and scope of philosophical reflection on questions that matter to every human being such as the following: Does morality require a religious basis? Is cultural (moral) relativism tenable? What is the good life? How should we live and act? What are race and gender really as currently inescapable ways in which we understand ourselves, others, and society in general? What can we know? What is the nature of scientific reasoning and must there be a conflict between science and religion? Do we have free will? Students should come out of this course with a concrete sense of how philosophy empowers them to engage in critical and self-critical reflection about some basic aspects of what it is to live a (significant) human life.

Course Objectives

- (1) To equip students with the indispensable *critical thinking and writing skills* that they will need to use in order to think critically and write analytical argumentative papers.
- (2) To enable students to *understand and assess some influential arguments* that support or criticize the positions or outlooks concerning the topics that we examine in the course.
- (3) To hone students' *verbal* abilities in engaging in serious discussion among one another about philosophical issues.

Texts

- (1) Vaughn, L., *The Power of Critical Thinking*, 3rd ed. (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).
- (2) Rauhut, N., and Bass, R. (eds.), *Readings on the Ultimate Questions*, 3rd ed. (Boston: Prentice Hall, 2010)
- (3) Schafer-Landau, R. *The Fundamentals of Ethics*, 2nd ed. (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

Please make sure to get these particular editions!

Course Requirements

In-class reading quizzes once a week (1 point each): 12%

Take-home exercise questions: 8% (2% for each set; 4 sets total)

Participation (attendance, in-class assignments, engagement in class discussions, etc.): 10%

First paper: 20%

Second paper: 20%

Cumulative final exam: 30%

- *In-class reading quizzes can be given in any class meeting, once a week, no more no less. They are evaluated in terms of some plausible indication that you have done the reading for that day, no more no less. Note that readings quizzes cannot be made up after they are given in-class.*
- *Other in-class assignments will be announced at the instructor's discretion. Note they cannot be made up after they are given in-class.*
- *Take-home exercise questions will be evaluated for completeness.*
- *Students will be called on via random drawings each class meeting. If you attend classes regularly but only participate minimally, the best grade you can get for participation is a B-.*
- *The final exam will be cumulative. Its format will be decided at a later time.*

Grading Policies

All letter grades will be converted to numerical grades, and vice versa, for purposes of calculation of the final course grade according to the following grading scale:

A+ = 97.5	B+ = 87.5	C+ = 77.5	D+ = 67.5	F = 0
A = 95	B = 85	C = 75	D = 65	
A- = 92.5	B- = 82.5	C- = 72.5	D- = 62.5	

A-range grades are reserved for **outstanding** work: very clear, complete, convincing, displaying a *non-instrumental* attitude toward the subject matter (the course), *intellectually curious*, *philosophically original in the relevant sense*, and very well written work.

B-range grades are reserved for **very good** or **competent** work: clear, generally complete, convincing, and well-written work, no more but also no less.

C-range grades are reserved for **average** work: meets the basic goals of the assignment but exhibits some confusion or errors about the topic; is incomplete or not very clearly or well written; or else unconvincing because it fails to take into account possible objections.

D-range grades are reserved for **unsatisfactory** work: fails to meet the main goals of the assignment; is poorly written, incomplete, or quite confused or filled with errors; unconvincing because it fails to take into account obvious objections.

F grades are reserved for **failing** work: shows no understanding of the goals of the assignment at all; is entirely incomplete or confused, let alone unconvincing; fails entirely to address the topic in question.

Late Policy for Papers

Late papers will be penalized one-third letter grade for each day late, up to seven days. Thus, if a paper is due on a Sunday, the latest I will accept your paper and still give it a grade will be the following Sunday, with a seven point penalty (so that the best possible grade you can get is a C- for the paper). Requests for extensions on assignments are permitted as long as you have a *legitimate* excuse (please contact me ahead of time about this). Note that I will not grant extensions *within 24 hours* of when the assignment is due (e.g., no extension will be granted if you ask for one the night before an assignment is due).

Plagiarism and Cheating

Students in this course will be expected to respect and work *in every way in accordance with the College's Honor Code and policy on academic integrity*. Any student suspected of violating this obligation for any reason will be required to participate in the procedural process as outlined in the College's Honor Code and policy on academic integrity. Take this very seriously because it is very easy to get caught!

Accommodation for 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 Student Access Services. You will also need to provide documentation that verifies the existence of a disability and supports your request. For further information, please call (518) 580-8150, or stop by the office of Student Academic Services in Starbuck Center.

General Advice

If there is some special circumstance in your life that may or will affect your performance in this course, please let me know about it at your discretion ahead of time. *It will be treated with the strictest confidence unless circumstances demand immediate intervention*. Please do not wait until the circumstance has happened before telling me about its impact on your performance in the course.

Schedule of Readings (subject to occasional changes during the semester)

Students must read the texts we discuss **before** the class meeting for which they are assigned. Expect **one reading quiz in class almost every week**. Please always **bring the readings (texts) to class** for each meeting.

* indicates that a take-home exercise set is due in class that day.

Dates	Readings from Vaughn, <i>The Power of Critical Thinking</i>	Readings from Rauhut (ed.), <i>Readings on the Ultimate Questions</i>	Readings from Schafer-Landau, <i>The Fundamentals of Ethics</i>	Other Readings (posted in Blackboard)
T, 9/3				Jones, "Liberal Arts, and the Advantages of Being Useless"

The Value and Method of Philosophy

R, 9/5	Ch. 1	Russell, "The Value of Philosophy" (pp. 27-30)		Blackburn, "What is Philosophy?"
M, 9/9*	Ch. 2			
T, 9/10	Ch. 3			
R, 9/12*	Ch. 5			

"Gateway" Issues to Ethics

M, 9/16		Rachels, "Must God's Commands Conform to Moral Standards?" (pp. 385-88)		Plato, excerpt from <i>Euthyphro</i>
T, 9/17		Mathieu, "Male Chauvinist Religion" (pp. 364-76)	Schafer-Landau, "Morality and Religion" (Ch. 5)	
R, 9/19	Re-read Ch. 2, pp. 51-2		Schafer-Landau, "Ethical Relativism" (Ch. 19)	Rachels, "The Challenge of Cultural Relativism"
M, 9/23				Vaughn, "Defending a Thesis in an Argumentative Essay"

T, 9/24			Schafer-Landau, "Ten Arguments against Moral Objectivity" (Ch. 21)	
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How Should I Live (What is the Good Life)?

R, 9/26				Plato, Book I and Opening of Book II of <i>Republic</i>
M, 9/30		Plato, excerpt from <i>Apology</i> (pp. 15-27)		
T, 10/1		- Epicurus, "Letter to Menoeceus" (pp. 11-12) - J.S. Mill, "Higher and Lower Pleasures" (pp. 403-07)	Schafer-Landau, "Hedonism: Its Powerful Appeal" and "Is Happiness All that Matters?" (Ch. 1-2)	
R, 10/3			Schafer-Landau, "Getting What You Want" and "Problems for the Desire Theory" (Ch. 3-4)	Nozick, "The Experience Machine"

M, 10/7: First paper due as an e-mail attachment by 1pm in my e-mail account (no class)

What Ought We to Do?

T, 10/8		Bentham, "The Principle of Utility" and "Push-Pin and Poetry" (pp. 396-403)		Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality"
R, 10/10			Schafer-Landau, "Consequentialism" (Ch. 9-10)	
M, 10/14			Schafer-Landau, "The Kantian Perspective: Fairness and Justice" (Ch. 11)	Kant, "The Moral Law" [Warning: dense reading, so read S-L's Ch. 11 first!]

T, 10/15			Schafer-Landau, "The Kantian Perspective: Autonomy and Respect" (Ch. 12, pp. 168-75)	O'Neill, "Kantian Approaches to Some Famine Problems"
R, 10/17	Ch. 11 (focus especially on pp. 455-61)	Langton, "Maria von Herbert's Challenge to Kant" (pp. 416-29)	Schafer-Landau, "The Kantian Perspective: Autonomy and Respect" (Ch. 12, pp. 176-86)	

Philosophy of Race and Gender

M, 10/21		<i>NO</i>	<i>READING</i>	<i>ASSIGNMENT</i>
T, 10/22				Taylor, "Three Challenges to Race-Thinking" (pp. 29-38, 48-52)
R, 10/24				Taylor, "Three Challenges to Race-Thinking" (pp. 38-48, 52-69)
M, 10/28*		<i>NO</i>	<i>READING</i>	<i>ASSIGNMENT</i>
T, 10/29				Taylor, "What Races Are" (pp. 72-92)
R, 10/31				• McIntosh, "White and Male Privilege" • Fay, "Do You Have to Be One to Know One?" • Kimmel, "Who's Afraid of Men Doing Feminism?"

M, 11/4				De Beauvoir, “Introduction to <i>The Second Sex</i> ”
T, 11/5		Meyers, “Feminist Perspectives on the Self” (pp. 183-93)		• Frye, “Oppression” • Cudd and Jones, “Sexism”
R, 11/7				Haslanger, “Gender and Race: (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them To Be?”

M, 11/11: Second paper due as an e-mail attachment by 1pm in my e-mail account (no class)

What Can I Really Know?

T, 11/12		• Descartes, “Meditations 1 and 2” (pp. 32-41) • Russell, “Appearance and Reality” (pp. 57-62)		
R, 11/14	Re-read Ch. 2, p. 52	• Huemer, “The Lure of Radical Skepticism” (pp. 47-57)		Hume, “Of the Academical or Sceptical Philosophy”
M, 11/18				Hume, “Sceptical Doubts concerning the Operations of the Understanding”
T, 11/19				Hume, “Sceptical Solution of these Doubts” and “On the Idea of Necessary Connexion”
R, 11/21	Ch. 4	• Clifford, “The Ethics of Belief” • James, “The Will to Believe”		
M, 11/25	Ch. 9-10*			

T, 11/26		• Behe, “Molecular Machines” (pp. 301-314) • Kitcher, “Born-Again Creationism” (pp. 314-22)		Kitcher, “A Mess of Pottage”
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THANKSGIVING BREAK

Do We Have Free Will?

M, 12/2		• R. Taylor, “Determinism” (pp. 75-79) • Stace, “Compatibilism” (pp. 79-86)		
T, 12/3		Siderits, “Beyond Compatibilism: A Buddhist Approach” (pp. 86-100)		
R, 12/5		• Chisholm, “Human Freedom and the Self” (pp. 106-14) • Kane, “Libertarianism” (pp. 114-31)		

In What Sense Does Human Life Have Meaning (If It Does)?

M, 12/9				Nagel, “The Absurd”
T, 12/10				Wolf, “The Meanings of Lives”

Final exam time and place:

PH 101-001: Monday, Dec. 16, 6-9pm, Ladd 207

PH 101-002: Wednesday, Dec. 18, 1:30-4:30pm, Scribner Library 213