

INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY:
ETHICS, JUSTICE, AND COMPASSION

Philosophy 101-002
Spring 2013

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Skidmore College

A study of some of the basic questions of philosophy such as the nature of the self and one's relation to others, the value and meaning of existence, the status and extent of knowledge, and the nature of reality. Selections from both classical and contemporary authors from both Western and Asian traditions will be read and discussed.

- Texts:**
1. -----, The Dhammpada, tr. Balangoda Ananda Maitreya (Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1995).
 2. Descartes, Rene, Discourse on Method and Meditations, Fourth Edition, tr. Donald A. Cress (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1998).
 3. Keown, Damien, Buddhism: A Very Short Introduction (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996/2000).
 4. Plato, Republic, tr. G.M.A. Grube, revised by C.D.C. Reeve (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1992).
 5. Plato, The Trial and Death of Socrates, Third Edition, tr. G.M.A. Grube (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2000).
 6. Santideva, A Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life, tr. Vesna A. Wallace & B. Alan Wallace (Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications, 1997).
 7. Singer, Peter, Practical Ethics, Third Edition (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

Learning Goals:

(1) Study selected classic texts by philosophers from both the Western and Asian philosophical traditions and from both the ancient and modern periods.

(2) Hone subtle reading, writing, and analytical skills, including critical evaluation, by discussing readings in class and by writing essays about them.

(3) Cultivate working relationships with me and with others in the class in order to discuss controversial ideas in a lively and productive way that both appreciates but also critically evaluates the ideas of others. How can we cultivate philosophical dialogue with each other about controversial topics?

(4) Explore complex issues about the nature of the self, society, and ultimate reality. We will focus on the themes of ethics, justice, and compassion.

(5) Develop your own views about these issues to deepen your own philosophy of life. What can I know? What ought I to do? What may I hope for? Who am I?

WESTERN PHILOSOPHY: PRACTICAL ETHICS AND CONTEMPORARY PROBLEMS

- 22: Singer, Practical Ethics: About Ethics (Ch. 1).
24: Singer, Practical Ethics: Equality & Its Implications (Ch.2).
29: Singer, Practical Ethics: Equality for Animals? (Ch.3); DF1.1
What's Wrong with Killing? (Ch 4). DF1.2
31: Singer, Practical Ethics: Taking Life: Animals (Ch. 5); DF1.3
Asma, The Myth of Universal Love (handout).
5: Thomson, A Defense of Abortion (handout); DF1.4
Singer, Practical Ethics: Taking Life: Embryo & Fetus (Ch.6). DF1.5
7: Singer: Practical Ethics: Taking Life: Humans (Ch. 7). DF1.6
12: Singer, Practical Ethics: Rich and Poor (Ch. 8); DF1.7
Jesus, Sermon on the Mount: Matthew 5-7 (handout); DF1.8
Singer, Practical Ethics: Climate Change (Ch.9). DF1.9
14: Singer, Practical Ethics: The Environment (Ch. 10). DF1.10
19: Singer, Practical Ethics: Civil Disobedience, Violence and
Terrorism (Ch. 11). DF1.11
21: Singer, Practical Ethics: Why Act Morally? (Ch. 12).

WESTERN PHILOSOPHY: SOCRATES/PLATO ON CARE OF THE SOUL AND JUSTICE

The Death of Socrates
by Jacques-Louis David (1787)

- 26: Plato, The Trial and Death of Socrates (20-58). DF2.1
28: Plato, Republic1: Is Injustice More Profitable than Justice?
(St. 327a-369b).
4 (Monday): Essay #1 due by 10:00 a.m. sharp in Ladd 217.
5: Plato, Republic2: Social Organization; Education (St. 369b-
380a & 392bc & 402c-403e & 410b-427d).
7: Plato, Republic3: Virtues of the Republic & Individual DF2.2
Equality of Women (St. 427d-471c). DF2.3

Socrates
Plato and Aristotle
(details from
The School of Athens
by Raphael, 1510-1511)

- 12 Spring
14 break
- 19: Plato, Republic4: The Philosopher King/Queen; Divided Line;
Allegory of the Cave (St. 471c-521b). DF2.4
- 21: Plato, Republic5: Dialectic (St.532b-541b);
Pleasure (St. 579e-583a & 585c-592b); DF2.5
Immortality of Soul (St. 608d-611d);
Myth of Er (St. 612a-621d).

WESTERN PHILOSOPHY: DESCARTES ON DOUBT, SELF, AND GOD

- 26: Descartes1, Meditation One (59-63);
Meditation Two (63-69). DF2.6
- 28: Descartes2, Meditation Three (69-81); DF2.7
Synopsis (54-56)
- 2: Essay #2 due at start of class; discuss in class.
- 4: Descartes3, Discourse on Method (18-22 only);
Letter of Dedication (47-50);
Preface to the Reader (51-53);
Meditation Four (81 & 86 only); DF2.8
Meditation Five (87-92). DF2.9

EVIL AND THE WESTERN GOD OF LOVE

- 9: Hick, The Problem of Evil (handout). DF2.10
- 11: Hick, The Problem of Evil (handout). DF2.11

BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY: NO SELF, NO GOD, AND COMPASSION

- Buddha (Sarnath,
India, 4th-5th C)
- 16: Keown, Buddhism: Buddhism & Elephants (Ch. 1); DF3.1
Buddha (Ch. 2); DF3.2
Karma & Rebirth (Ch. 3); DF3.3
Four Noble Truths (Ch. 4). DF3.4
- 18: Keown, Buddhism: Meditation (Ch. 7); DF3.5
Ethics (Ch.8); DF3.6
The Dhammapada (all: Ch. 1-26). DF3.7
- 22 (Monday): Essay #3 due at 10:00 a.m. sharp in Ladd 217.
- 23: Keown, Buddhism: Mahayana (Ch. 5); DF3.8
Buddhism in Asia (Ch. 6);
Buddhism in the West (Ch. 9).
- 25: A Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life (Ch. I-V). DF3.9
- 30: A Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life DF3.10
(Ch. VI-VIII, Ch. X). DF3.11
(browse in Ch. IX)

Course Requirements

1. Participation (20%):

Participation in class meetings is essential to your learning in this course, and I encourage you to participate in discussions actively. It is extremely important that you read the assignments on time because later assignments presuppose earlier ones. Also, this course emphasizes discussion as an essential component, and if you haven't read the assignment, you will not get much out of the discussion.

(a) ATTENDANCE IS REQUIRED AT EVERY CLASS (except for a certified medical excuse or a religious holiday). Missing even one class (except for a medical or religious reason) will severely damage this component of your grade. I will grade your attendance and contribution to discussion as follows:

A or A- = attend all classes and makes useful contributions to discussion in nearly every class.

B+ or B = attend all classes and make regular contributions.

B- = attend all classes but seldom speak.

C, D, F = one or more absences no matter how much you talk.

Please don't arrive in class late. Please do not leave the room during class unless it is absolutely necessary. (Leaving class is rude and distracts me and other students. It also suggests a lack of concentration or lack of interest on your part.) Please be sure your cell phone and other electronics are turned off. Laptop use is not permitted in class unless you have special permission.

Your understanding of class discussions, and the quality of class discussion itself, depends on how well you prepare the reading assignments, so read the assignments carefully. Philosophy readings are difficult, so I strongly recommend underlining or highlighting passages and outlining or taking notes on the reading. Often you will need to read the assignment, or part of it, more than once. Read actively, not passively, by raising questions and criticisms about the readings.

Note that this course earns four, not three, credits. This means that this course involves considerable more work than a three credit course. Compared to a three credit course, each of our classes will meet an extra 30 minutes (1 hour and 50 minutes instead of 1 hour and 20 minutes). The Skidmore College guideline is that students should study two hours outside of class for every hour of class time. Thus I expect you to spend about 3½ hours preparing for each class, and I have assigned work based on that expectation. I suggest that you work out a study schedule that sets aside a regular 3½ hour period of time to prepare for each class. If you finish the assignment in less time, then go back and use the full 3½ hours to prepare by taking notes or underlining or highlighting the reading in more detail

(b) Study guides: Written **assignments on the readings** will be required regularly to help you prepare for class discussion and for the essays. They will be graded pass/fail and are due at the beginning of class. Late study guides will receive no credit or only partial credit.

(c) Discussion focus: Three times during the semester you will team up with someone else in class to focus our discussion on a particular passage and issue that you have selected from the reading. You must meet in person with your partner at least once outside of class to discuss what to focus on. These classes are marked DF.

The combination of class attendance, participation in discussion, study guides, and discussion focus will count 20% of your final course grade.

2. Three essays (80%): Three essays are required. Essay #1 (due in my office on Monday, March 4) will count 20% of your final course grade and should be about five pages long. Essay #2 (due in class on Tuesday, April 2) and Essay #3 (due in my office on Monday, April 22) will each count 30% of your final course grade, and each should be about eight pages long. I will provide detailed written instructions later.

There is no final exam for this course.

Learning Disability: If you have a certified learning disability, please let me know as soon as possible.

Honor Code: Skidmore has a strong Honor Code that I will strictly enforce. I will discuss issues about plagiarism when I give you the essay topics. Read the Honor Code section in the Student Handbook about "Academic Policies," as well as the section on "Documentation and Plagiarism" in The Skidmore Guide to Writing.

I will be delighted to talk with you outside of class. Make an appointment to see me or drop by during my office hours.

Office hours: Monday & Wednesday: 4:30- 5:30
 Tuesday & Thursday: 5:30- 6:00
 Friday: 10:30-11:30
 (other times by appointment)

Office: Ladd 217
Office phone: 580-5407 (Please don't call me at home.)
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