Introduction to Philosophy

Skidmore College
Spring 2013
PH 101-001
W/F 12:20-2:10 pm
Tisch 302

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W 2:30-4:00pm
& by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is an introduction to philosophy through the study of selected classic texts from the Western tradition. It focuses on theories of human nature and explores their implications for one's understanding of moral and political relations, the role of knowledge in human life, and our relation to non-human animals.

REQUIRED TEXTS

- Plato, *Five Dialogues* (Hackett)
- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics (*Library of Liberal Arts)
- Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Hackett)
- De Waal, *Primates and Philosophers* (Princeton)

Additional readings will be made available on the course website, which you can access at: http://blackboard.skidmore.edu

COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course combines close readings of texts with classroom discussion and written assignments. These three components are designed to introduce you to the practice of philosophy through the active appropriation of some fundamental philosophical ideas and issues. Specifically, we will learn how to:

- Read a philosophical text. This requires the ability to identify a writer's premises and conclusions and to assess and critique his or her mode of argumentation.
- Write a philosophical essay. You will be able to formulate a clear thesis, support it with clear arguments, and assess and respond to objections raised against it.
- Engage in philosophical discussion. In class you will present philosophical views and interpretations and articulate the reasons for thinking those views are true; you will respond to objections that others raise for your views, and formulate questions for others so as to develop and strengthen their position.

COURSE POLICIES

Please leave laptops, cell phones and other electronic devices turned off (there may be exceptions for students with documented disabilities).

Please ALWAYS bring the text(s) we are discussing to class; we will read passages from them.

I will probably communicate with you via e-mail throughout the course. Please check your Skidmore e-mail account regularly.

Please feel free to come to my office hours with any question you may have about the course, the material we are discussing or any other issue. If you cannot make it to regular office hours, please feel free to make an appointment with me.

Attendance:
You are expected to arrive to class on time. Attendance is mandatory. More than one unexcused absence will have a depressing effect on your *final* grade.

Academic Integrity:
All of your work for this course is subject to the College Honor Code. Two main things must be noted for this class:

a. Papers: any source that you use in your papers, including internet sources, *must* be quoted and cited. Failing to do so constitutes plagiarism. If you are not sure about what plagiarism is or have questions about a specific case, please consult me or a librarian. *When in doubt, cite*.
b. Exams: you may study together to prepare for exams (in fact it can be very fruitful) but you *may not* make use of any notes or help from others (in any form) during exams.

Accommodations:
If you have a disability that requires accommodation, please contact me during office hours to discuss your specific needs.

Assignments:
No late assignment will be accepted without express permission of the instructor obtained at least 24 hours before the assignment's due date.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

Participation (20% of the final grade):

- Open class discussion: this is a discussion-based course, therefore your regular participation is essential. You must read the texts carefully, often more than once, and be prepared to discuss the readings in class and share your insights. After class, I will record next to your name a number between 0 and 2 corresponding to your participation for that day.
- At the beginning of class, a student will briefly summarize and present the main ideas discussed in our previous meeting, and pose one question related to them that engages the class in a meaningful discussion.
- Discussion groups (explanation will be provided in class)
- Group presentation. Each student will be a member of a group that once in the semester will present and discuss a section of the assigned readings. Students who are not presenting should prepare one or two questions to pose to the discussion leaders.

Short written assignments (15% of the final grade):
At least once a week (and maybe more) you will write a one-page essay based on questions that I will assign in class. They will typically be on the next reading and their goal is to help you interpret the text and/or spur lively discussion in a subsequent class. At times, however, they may be on topics that we covered in class.
Responses and papers that demonstrate careful analysis, engagement with the text, critical thought, and/or relation of the text to other readings or issue will receive full credit and either a "√ " (1 point) or a "√+" (2 points). Assignments that evidence little effort or thought will receive no credit and a "-" (0 points).
In class I may randomly select students to read or present their responses. Your classmates and I will respond to your presentation and this will lead us to the discussion of the reading themselves.
At times written reading reports may replace the short essays. They will be graded satisfactory/ unsatisfactory.

One exam (15 % of the final grade)

Three papers (50% of the final grade).
The first paper counts for 10% of the final grade; the second and the third 20% each.
In class we will discuss how to write a philosophy paper and each assignment will be explained in detail.

There is no final exam for this course.

TENTATIVE CLASS SCHEDULE

The schedule is subject to change based on class needs and interests. Additional readings may be added at the discretion of the instructor. Precise reading assignments for each meeting will be provided in class.

Week 1
Jan. 23: Introduction to the course

Jan. 25: Plato, *Apology* (17a-28b); excerpts from Aristophanes, *The Clouds* (Blackboard)

Week 2
Jan. 30: Plato, *Apology* (28b-42a)

Feb. 1: Plato, *Laches* 178a-192b (Blackboard); *Laches'* Outline (Blackboard); Plato, *Republic* 474b-480a (Blackboard)

Week 3
Feb. 6: Plato, *Laches* 192c-201c

Feb. 8: Plato, *Symposium* 174a-178a; 189d-201c
First group presentation

Week 4
Feb. 13: *Symposium* 201c-212c; *Theaeatetus* 148c-151d (Blackboard)

Feb. 15: *Symposium* 212c-223d; *Phaedrus* 274b-277a (handout)

Week 5
Feb. 20: **Exam**

Feb. 22: Hobbes, *De Corpore* Ch. 1; Ch. 6, only sections 1 to 7 (pp.18-26) and 10 to 13 (pp.28-34) (Blackboard); *Leviathan*, Introduction

Week 6
Feb. 27: Hobbes, *Leviathan* Part I, Ch. 1-5, 6, 10, 11

March 1: Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Part I, Ch. 13-14

Week 7
March 6: Hobbes, *Leviathan* Part II, Ch. 17; handout: "How to write a philosophy paper" (Blackboard)

March 8: Hobbes, *Leviathan* Part II, Ch. 18 and 21

Week 8
March 9-17: Spring Break

Week 9
March 20: Aristotle, *Politics* 1.1-2 (Blackboard); Handout: "Aristotle and the desire to understand" (Blackoard)

March 22: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 1, Ch. 1-5, 7, 13
•••First paper due•••

Week 10
March 27: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 1, Ch. 8-10; Book 2, Ch. 1-4
Second group presentation

March 29: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 3, Ch. 1-4; Book 2, ch. 6; Book 4, Ch. 1 and 6; Book 6, Ch. 7, 1141b8-23

Week 11
April 3: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 3 Ch. 5; Book 6, Ch. 1, 5, 7

April 5: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 10, Ch. 6-8; *Politics* VII.13 and 14 (up to 1334b7) (handout)
***Third group presentation ***

Week 12
April 10: de Waal, et al., *Primates and Philosophers*, 3-42 (de Waal)
•••Second paper due•••

April 12: *Primates and Philosophers* 42-58 (de Waal); 140-151 (Singer)
Fourth group presentation

Week 13
April 17: *Primates and Philosophers* 98-119 (Korsgaard)

April 19: Singer, "All Animals are Equal" (Blackboard)

Week 14
April 24: Cohen "The Case for the Use of Animals in Biomedical Research" (Blackboard)

April 26: Final discussion
Last day of classes

Week 15
•••Final paper due •••Date to be announced