

Philosophy 110W: Introduction to Philosophy
Fall 2014
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9am - 10:15am

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Syllabus

Course Description and Objectives

This course will survey some topics of interest to philosophers and prepare students for further work in various areas of philosophy. We will examine some perennial philosophical questions and their treatments by both classical thinkers and contemporary philosophers. Topics to be discussed include the nature of reality, the veridicality of experience, space and time, personal identity, the nature of mind, and moral judgments.

Successful study of philosophy requires both quiet study and active engagement. I expect students in this course to read serious philosophy and to participate in class discussions. This course is designated as writing-intensive; students will complete five writing assignments and have some opportunity to re-write in response to comments. Additionally, each student will prepare an in-class presentation. Less formally, students should come to each class prepared to discuss the assigned readings.

Texts

Articles posted on the course website
My notes posted on the course website after classes.

On-Line Resources

The website for this course is:

http://www.thatmarcusfamily.org/philosophy/Course_Websites/Intro_F14/Course_Home.html

The course website includes an html syllabus, readings, lecture notes, assignments, other handouts, and links to good philosophy websites.

Office Hours

My office hours for the Fall 2104, term are 11am - noon, Monday through Friday. My office is Room 210 in the Philosophy Building, 202 College Hill Road.

Assignments, Grading, and Due Dates

1. All the readings (or other preparatory assignments) listed below.
2. In-class participation (10%)
3. Five Writing Assignments (60% total)
 - (Up to) Three Précis: First due on September 9 (5%)
 - Exegesis: (600-800 words) due September 18 (10%)
 - Compare and Contrast: (800-1000 words) due October 7 (10%)
 - Argumentative Essay #1: (1250-2100 words)
 - due to peer reviewers October 30
 - due to me, with revisions, November 6 (20%)
 - Argumentative Essay #2: (1000-1800 words) due December 11 (15%)
5. One ten-to-fifteen minute in-class presentation (10%)
6. Final exam (20%)

The given weights are subject to minor adjustment.

Readings and Classes

Your preparation for class will ordinarily consist of either philosophical texts or illustrative readings. The nature of class discussion will vary depending on the assigned reading. Some classes will be discussions. Some classes will be exegetical lectures. Some classes will have *ad hoc* group activities. Our class is a cooperative endeavor, and I expect you to attend every class. There is no immediate penalty for missing class. But our class is small and any absence will be noted. You should discuss any missed classes with me, preferably in advance.

Writing Assignments

All writing assignments will engage one or more philosophical texts but may also invoke illustrative readings. In addition to the overview here, I will provide detailed assignment sheets for each.

The **précis** is a short expository writing exercise on some small topic in one of our readings. You have three opportunities to submit précis, starting at the beginning of our fourth class, on September 9; only fully successful précis will receive grades. The **exegesis** is a broader, but still brief, analysis of a philosophical text. The **compare and contrast** essay is like two exegeses run together, with connections between them. The two **argumentative essays** are standard, rhetorical papers, defending a thesis. The first will be distributed to peer reviewers who will comment on the essay. You will hand in your original essay, your peer comments, and a final, revised draft.

Standards for academic writing vary by discipline. Philosophical writing should be clear and focused and attentive to every detail. Do not be misled by the brevity of some of our assignments. Expect to revise your papers several times before submitting them.

Many Hamilton students take advantage of the excellent tutors at the writing center, located in KJ 152. I do not require that you use the writing center, but I may, early in the term, make a strong suggestion that you do so. You may approach them with early drafts of a paper, or even earlier in the writing process. You must make appointments, which you can do easily at their website. You are always welcome to ask for my help on a paper, in advance of the due date. I do not have strict guidelines about how much time you must give me before the due date, but you can not expect me to provide comments in less than two full days.

The exegesis and compare and contrast assignments may be re-written for an improved grade. All rewrites are due by November 20.

Presentations

Your presentation will be a discussion of one of the philosophy readings. A more specific assignment will be distributed in class. We will sign up for presentations early in the term.

Final Exam

For each assigned philosophical text, I will prepare reading guides, which are lists of questions corresponding to the reading. You can use the reading guides to help you determine your comprehension of the assignments. The final exam will be based directly on the reading guides.

On Grades

Grades on assignments will be posted on Blackboard, along with a running total, which I call your grade calculation. Your grade calculation is a guide for me to use in assigning you a final grade. There are no rules binding how I translate your grade calculation, which appears in Blackboard as a percentage, into a letter grade. In particular, the Hamilton College key for translating your letter grades into percentages, used for graduate school admissions, is not a tool for calculating your final grade. I welcome further discussion of the purposes and methods of grading, as well as my own grading policies.

Schedule

Class	Date	Topic	Readings To Complete Before Class
1	August 28	What is Philosophy?	Wells, "The Country of the Blind"
2	September 2	Reality and Illusion	Plato, from <i>Republic</i>
3	September 4	Illusion	Descartes, from <i>Meditations on First Philosophy</i> Descartes, "The Story of the Wax" Descartes, "The Story of the Sun"
4	September 9 First précis due	Sense Experience	Locke, "On the Primary/Secondary Distinction"
5	September 11	Idealism	Berkeley, from the <i>Principles</i>
6	September 16	Commonsense Realism	Moore, "Proof of an External World" Wittgenstein, from <i>On Certainty</i>
7	September 18 Exegesis due	Paradoxes of Motion	Parmenides' Poem
8	September 23	Absolute and Relational Space	Newton, from <i>Principia</i> Leibniz, from <i>Letters to Clarke</i>
9	September 25	The A-Theory	Zimmerman, "The Privileged Present: Defending an "A-Theory" of Time"
10	September 30	The B-Theory	Smart, "The Space-Time World"
11	October 2	Abortion and Personhood	Noonan, "Abortion is Morally Wrong" Warren, "The Personhood Argument in Favor of Abortion"
12	October 7 Compare and Contrast due	Personal Identity	Heinlein, "All You Zombies"
13	October 9	The Soul Theory of Identity	Plato, from <i>Phaedo</i>
14	October 14	The Consciousness Theory of Identity	Locke, "The Prince and the Cobbler" Reid, "Of Mr. Locke's Account of Our Personal Identity"
	October 16	No class: Fall break	
15	October 21	Irreducibility and Essentialism	Reid, "Of Identity" Kripke, from <i>Naming and Necessity</i>
16	October 23	The Bundle Theory	Hume, "The Self" Parfit, "Divided Minds and the Nature of Persons"

17	October 28	Personal Identity: A Case Study	Dennett, "Where Am I?"
18	October 30 AE#1 due to peer reviewers	The Mind	TBA
19	November 4 Peer reviews due to authors	Dualism	Descartes, "On the Nature of Mind" Arnauld and Descartes on the Mind
20	November 6 Final draft of AE#1 due	Behaviorism	Skinner, from <i>Science and Human Behavior</i> Hempel, "The Logical Analysis of Psychology" Locke, "On the Inverted Spectrum"
21	November 11	Materialism	Armstrong, "The Nature of Mind"
22	November 13	Functionalism	Fodor, "The Mind-Body Problem"
23	November 18	Epiphenomenalism	Jackson, "Epiphenomenal Qualia"
24	November 20	Ethics and Meta-Ethics	Plato, "What is Right Conduct?"
	No Classes	Thanksgiving Break	
25	December 2	Morality and Self-Interest	Plato, "Why Should I Be Moral"
26	December 4	Consequentialism	Mill, from <i>Utilitarianism</i> Nozick, "The Experience Machine"
27	December 9	Kantian Deontology	Kant, from <i>Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals</i>
28	December 11 AE#2 due	More Kant	

Final Exam: Monday, December 15, 7pm - 10pm

Peer Mentor: As part of the first-year experience, our course has a peer mentor, Jackson Kushner '17, jkushner@hamilton.edu.

First-Year Experience Librarian: Alexandra Rihm, arihm@hamilton.edu.

Accommodations: Hamilton College and I will make reasonable accommodations for students with properly documented disabilities. If you would like to make a request for this course, please discuss it with me during the first two weeks of class. You will need to provide Allen Harrison, Associate Dean of Students (Elihu Root House; 315-859-4021) with appropriate documentation.

Writing and Presentation Support: In addition to peer tutoring, both the Writing Center and the Oral Communications Center have an astoundingly wonderful set of resources to help you write and speak more effectively. Many of these resources are available on their respective websites.

The Hamilton College Honor Code will be enforced.