



Introduction to Philosophy

Philosophy 401.03/04, Fall 2016

Professor William Seeley

University of New Hampshire

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Course Description:

This course offers an introduction to the unique way that philosophers have tried to answer a range of questions that each of us has taken time at moments in our lives wonder about: "Why do we exist?"; "What is real?"; "What can I know?"; "What is the basis of moral judgments?"; and "Why is there so much suffering in the world?" Along the way we will explore issues in critical reasoning, the philosopher's method of inquiry, the nature of arguments, and various strategies we use when we give reasons to support and sustain our basic beliefs about the world. Course readings will be drawn from a range of historical and contemporary texts in metaphysics, epistemology, ethics and cognitive science.

Course Goals:

Introduce students to foundational issues in metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics through a close reading of historical texts. Develop an understanding of a range of argumentative strategies fundamental to good philosophical method. Develop critical reasoning skills via a close reading of a range of a range of central arguments from the history of philosophy.

Requirements:

Students will be asked to write: four online reading quizzes (worth 15% of the final grade each); one 6-page paper (worth 20% of the final grade); write an in-class midterm (worth 25% of the final grade), and write a cumulative final exam (worth 40% of the final grade). In addition, attendance will be scored. Each 4 missed classes will subtract a +/- mark from your final grade. Students will be given a choice between several topics for the paper.

Attendance:

Class participation is a requirement. Attendance is a minimum requirement for class participation. Therefore, excesses absences will affect a student's final grade as detailed in the "Requirements" section.

Required Texts:

- Anthony Weston, *A Rulebook for Arguments*, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 4th Edition, 2009. **(W)**
- Renee Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, 3rd Edition, Hackett. **(D)**
- George Berkeley, *Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Understanding*, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company. **(B)**
- David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Hackett. **(H)**
- readings on eReserve **(eReserve)**

Assignments:

Online Reading Quizzes (15%) – Students will be asked to complete four 10 question reading quizzes online over the course of the semester. The average of these quizzes will be worth 15% of the final grade. See the Schedule of Readings for the schedule of quizzes

Mid-term – cumulative (25%)

6 Page Paper (20%) - Write a 6 page paper (1800 word) on one of two topics to be announced on the distribution date for the midterm. Your paper should be double-spaced in 12 point font with 1” margins. The purpose of this paper is twofold: a) evaluate a standard argument in the literature; and b) demonstrate that you can synthesize the material covered in the 1st half of the semester into a coherent position.

Due Date: 04/03/16

Final Exam – cumulative (40%)

Some Miscellaneous Notes and Guidelines:

Moral behavior is the grounds for, and the framework of, a healthy society. In this regard it is each of our responsibility as individuals within the community of our classroom to act responsibly. This includes following the rules and guidelines set out by the college for academic behavior. Plagiarism is a serious matter. It goes without saying that each of you is expected to do his or her own work and to cite EVERY text that is used to prepare a paper for this class. In general philosophy papers are NOT research papers. Your preparations for papers and presentations should focus on material from the syllabus, assigned supplemental readings, and class discussion.

I ask that you not use the internet for your research except as assigned in class.

The assignments are designed to give you a chance to stretch your legs a bit while you learn about the discipline of philosophy (and to give me a chance to assess your understanding of the material). Your job for each of the writing assignments is to offer a *philosophical defense* of your take on the issue at hand. However, this does not mean that they are free forums for opinions. Make sure that your discussions remain focused on the philosophical problems that surround the assigned question or topic.

There is some flexibility built in to the reading schedule so that we can spend more time on issues that are of particular interest to you. I will occasionally suggest supplementary materials for students who want to pursue particular issues beyond class discussion. I also reserve the right to modify the syllabus as needed to accommodate our interests as a group.

Finally, please come see me at the beginning of the semester to discuss athletic schedules or any accommodations you might need for the class work.

Syllabus:

Topic 1: A Science of Arguments

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| Weston | Deductive Arguments |
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Topic 2: Minds, Reasons, and Our Knowledge of the External World

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| Plato | Theaetetus (excerpt) |
| Descartes | <i>Meditations on First Philosophy</i> |
| Locke | <i>An Essay Concerning Human Understanding</i> (excerpt) |
| Berkeley | <i>Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous</i> (excerpt) |
| Berkeley | <i>Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Understanding</i> , |
| Hume | <i>An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding</i> |

Topic 3: Personal Identity

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| Dennett | Where Am I? |
| Dennett | The Self as a Center of Narrative Gravity |

Topic 4: Moral Explanations and Ethical Theories

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| Harman | Ethics and Observation |
| | Nihilism & Naturalism |
| Pojman | A Defense of Ethical Objectivism |
| Wells | <i>The Country of the Blind</i> |
| Boorse | On the Distinction between Disease and Illness |
| Aronson | Sound and Fury (film) |
| Crouch | Letting the Deaf Be Deaf |
| Loeb | We made the Deaf Hear, Now What? |
| Tomblin et al | Developmental Constraints on Language Development for Children with Cochlear Implants |
| Silvers | A Fatal Attraction to Normalizing |

Bibliography:

- Anthony Weston, Chapter 6: Deductive Arguments, *A Rulebook for Arguments*, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 4th Edition, 2009.
- Renee Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, 3rd Edition, Hackett.
- John Locke, Chapter 8: Primary and Secondary Properties, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Niddich (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), §§7-26.
- George Berkeley, *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous*, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1979.
- George Berkeley, *Principles Concerning Human Understanding*, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1979.
- David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company.
- Daniel C. Dennett, "Where Am I?" in *Brainstorms: Philosophical Essays on Mind and Psychology*, (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1981), 310-323.
- Daniel C. Dennett, "The Self as a Center of Narrative Gravity," in eds. F. Kessel, P. Cole and D. Johnson, *Self and Consciousness: Multiple Perspectives* (Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 1992), pp. 103-115.
- Gilbert Harman, "Ethics and Observation," *The Nature of Morality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 3-10.
- Gilbert Harman, "Nihilism and naturalism," *The Nature of Morality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 11-26.
- Louis P. Pojman, "A Defense of Ethical Objectivism," in *Moral Philosophy: A Reader*, eds. Louis P. Pojman and Peter Tramel (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishers, 2003), pp. 38-52.
- H. G. Wells, "The Country of the Blind," *The Country of the Blind and Other Stories* (London: T. Nelson & Sons), 537-567.
- Christopher Boorse, "On the Distinction between Disease and Illness" in eds. James Lindeman Nelson & Hilde Lindeman Nelson, *Meaning and Medicine* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 16-37.
- Movie: *The Sound and the Fury*, dir. Josh Aronson (2001).
- Robert Crouch, "Letting the Deaf Be Deaf," in eds. James Lindeman Nelson & Hilde Lindeman Nelson, *Meaning and Medicine* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 360-370.
- Gerald Loeb, "We Made the Deaf Hear. Now What?" in Eds. Theodore Berger & Dennis Glanzman, *Towards Replacement Parts for the Brain: Implantable Biomimetic Electronics as Neural Prostheses* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 3-14.
- J. Bruce Tomblin, Brittan A. Barker, Sarah Hubbs, "Developmental Constraints on Language Development in Children with Cochlear Implants," *International Journal of Audiology*, 46(9), 2007: 512-523.
- Anita Silvers, "A Fatal Attraction to Normalizing: Treating Disabilities as Deviations from 'Species Typical' Functioning," in Ed. Erik Parens, *Enhancing Human Traits: Ethical and Social Implications* (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2000), 95-123.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS:

What follows is a provisional syllabus. This schedule may change, as may the readings within it, as a result of class interests and time constraints. In fact it is likely to change in accordance with the pace of our day to day conversations and discussions in class. Any changes will be announced in class prior to the date of the change of assignment. Also, importantly, I will let you know each day how to approach the readings for the next class, whether some readings are more important than others, and, occasionally, whether we will drop a reading from a session (it has happened). You can't get this information if you are not in class.

| Date | Readings | Assignments |
|-------|---|---|
| 08/29 | Course Introduction | |
| 08/31 | Weston, Chapter 6: Deductive Arguments (<i>W</i>) | |
| 09/02 | More on Arguments: Rational Reconstruction | |
| 09/05 | Plato, <i>Theaetetus</i> (excerpt) | |
| 09/07 | Plato, <i>Theaetetus</i> (excerpt) | |
| 09/09 | Descartes, Meditation I (<i>D</i>) | |
| 09/12 | Descartes, Meditation 1 & II (<i>D</i>) | |
| 09/14 | Descartes, Meditation II (<i>D</i>) | |
| 09/16 | Discussion: The Wax Argument | |
| 09/19 | Locke, Essay, §§ 7-26 (<i>eBook</i>) | 1 st Online Reading Quiz due September 18 @ midnight |
| 09/21 | Berkeley, First Meditation | |
| 09/23 | Berkeley, First Meditation | |
| 09/26 | Berkeley, Principles §§1-24 (<i>B</i>) | |
| 09/28 | Berkeley, Principles §§25-33 (<i>B</i>) | |
| 09/29 | Berkeley, Principles §§85-90 (<i>B</i>) | |
| 10/03 | Hume, Enquiries, §IV, Skeptical Doubts Concerning the Operation of the Understanding (<i>H</i>) | 2 nd Online Reading Quiz due October 2 @ midnight |
| 10/05 | Hume, Enquiries, §IV, Skeptical Doubts Concerning the Operation of the Understanding (<i>H</i>) | |
| 10/07 | Hume, Enquiries, §IV, Skeptical Doubts Concerning the Operation of the Understanding (<i>H</i>) | |
| 10/10 | Hume, Enquiries, §V, Skeptical Solution of These Doubts (<i>H</i>) | |
| 10/12 | Hume, Enquiries (Hume's skepticism, continued) (<i>H</i>) | |
| 10/14 | Epistemology Review | Mid-term Exam's Due Sunday April 3 @ midnight |
| 10/17 | MIDTERM EXAM (IN CLASS) | |
| 10/19 | Dennett, Where Am I (<i>eReserve</i>) | watch Dennett, "Where Am I: The Movie" on you tube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KP7rTp2vwTs |

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| 10/21 | Dennett, Where Am I (<i>eReserve</i>) | |
| 00/24 | Dennett, The Self as a Center of Narrative Gravity (<i>eReserve</i>) | |
| 10/26 | Dennett, The Self as a Center of Narrative Gravity (<i>eReserve</i>) | |
| 10/28 | Harmon, Ethics and Observation (<i>eReserve</i>) | |
| 10/31 | Harmon, Ethics and Observation (<i>eReserve</i>) | |
| 11/02 | Harmon, Nihilism and Naturalism (<i>eReserve</i>) | |
| 11/04 | Harmon, Nihilism and Naturalism (<i>eReserve</i>) | |
| 11/07 | Pojman, A Defense of Ethical Objectivism (<i>eReserve</i>) | |
| 11/09 | Pojman, A Defense of Ethical Objectivism (<i>eReserve</i>) | |
| 11/11 | NO Class; Veteran's day | |
| 11/14 | Wells, The Country of the Blind http://www.online-literature.com/wellshg/3/ | Paper Topics Distributed |
| 11/16 | No Class | |
| 11/18 | No Class | |
| 11/21 | Sound and Fury (movie in class) | 4 th Online Reading Quiz due November 20 @ midnight |
| 11/23-11-27 Thanksgiving Break | | |
| 11/28 | Boorse, On the Distinction between Disease and Illness (<i>eReserve</i>) | |
| 11/30 | Boorse, On the Distinction between Disease and Illness (<i>eReserve</i>) Loeb, We Made the Deaf Hear. Now What? (<i>eReserve</i>) | |
| 12/02 | Loeb, We Made the Deaf Hear. Now What? (<i>eReserve</i>) Crouch, Let the Deaf Be Deaf (<i>eReserve</i>) | |
| 12/05 | Silvers, A Fatal Attraction to Normalizing (<i>eReserve</i>) | |
| 12/07 | Silvers, A Fatal Attraction to Normalizing (<i>eReserve</i>) | |
| 12/09 | Silvers, A Fatal Attraction to Normalizing (<i>eReserve</i>) | 6 Page Paper due December 2 @ midnight |
| | FINAL EXAM | |