

PHIL 1200-A03: INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY
Semester: FALL-WINTER 2011
Professor: NEIL McARTHUR

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Office Hours: MWF 10.30-11.20

Texts (available in the bookstore)

Philosophical Inquiry: Classic and Contemporary Readings. Edited by Jonathan E. Adler and Catherine Z. Elgin
The Moral Life: An Introductory Reader in Ethics and Literature, 4th edition. Edited by Louis P. Pojman and Lewis Vaughn
Simon Blackburn, *Think: A Compelling Introduction to Philosophy*
Michael Sandel, *Justice: What's the Right Thing to Do?*
(The Sandel and Blackburn books are also available in slightly-cheaper Kindle editions from Amazon.com.)

Course Objectives

This course has two objectives. First of all, students will be introduced to key problems in philosophy, and will gain experience in discussing and writing about them critically. Second, students will be introduced to some of the most important figures in the history of philosophy from ancient Greece through the Renaissance all the way to modern times, and they will learn some of these thinkers' most important ideas and the arguments they used to defend them.

Philosophy is at once the most useful, and the most useless, of all academic disciplines. It teaches students skills of critical reasoning and textual analysis that are essential to excel at nearly any university course, and that are guaranteed to be of use in a wide variety of professions, and especially at the highest levels of business and government. However, it also demands that students turn their attention to problems that are abstract and often far removed from their daily lives. The true purpose of such abstract thinking is not to find a solution to these problems but instead to pursue a kind of self-exploration, one that only comes when the mind is forced to apply itself to some of the most fundamental, and most vexing, questions of human existence. This process can be harrowing. Not all philosophers wear black and sit in cafes looking depressed. But many do, and there are good reasons why this is so.

Grading

There will be three in-class exams: two during the first term, one during the second. Each will be worth 15%. There is a final exam worth 30%. There will also be an essay, due during the second term, worth 25%.

Withdrawal Deadline

The last date for voluntary withdrawal from courses in the fall 2011 term is November 17, 2011.

Grades

In this course (though not necessarily in any other course in the Department of Philosophy) the following equivalence between letter grades and percentages is used:

A+: 90-100	A: 80-89	B+: 75-79	B: 67-74
C+: 60-66	C: 50-59	D: 45-49	F: 0-45

Late Policy

Overdue papers will only be accepted with a documented medical excuse.

How to Reach Me

Email is an efficient way to reach me if you have practical questions (e.g. “Can I bring a dictionary into the exam?”; “How should I format my footnotes?”) or administrative matters that need clearing up. However, I cannot answer actual philosophical questions (e.g. “What was Descartes’s view of free will again?”) through email. Questions like that really need to be hashed out in person. Please come see me during my office hours – or if that is not possible, email me to set up an appointment.

Plagiarism and Cheating

Please consult section 7 of the General Academic Regulations and Requirements in your Undergraduate Calendar for information concerning plagiarism and cheating, which can also be found on the Web at:

<http://webapps.cc.umanitoba.ca/calendar07/regulations/plagiarism.asp>

Plagiarism is a very serious offence that can result in failure of this course and more serious penalties. It is never tolerated. Often, worries about plagiarism are the result of simple misunderstandings about standards of academic honesty, misunderstandings that can easily be cleared up in advance, before it is too late. If you have any questions about academic honesty, please come talk to me.

Professional scholars consult and rely on other people’s work all the time; students may as well. The important thing is to acknowledge the place from which you’ve taken your information or ideas. If you are using someone else’s words, enclosing those words in quotations marks, followed by a footnote, solves all problems. If you are wondering about your use of materials from outside the course, the simplest thing is to bring me a copy of both the material you are consulting and a draft of your own writing before you have submitted it, and I can tell you whether and how you need to acknowledge it.