

Figures in Western Philosophy

Fall, 2002

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Course Objectives

This course is designed to serve as an introduction to philosophy by way of a close study of seminal texts by Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, and Kant—four of the most important figures in the history of Western philosophy. After some preliminaries on the origins of philosophy and on the force—and value—of argument, we'll be exploring the following topics among others: the nature of human excellence and the metaphysical status of human beings; the possibility and desirability of striving for absolute certainty in the sciences; and the limits of human knowledge and the origins of our concepts of space, time, objects in general, the soul, the world, and God.

The works you'll be reading this semester contain discussions of some of the most basic problems of logic, ethics, metaphysics, and epistemology. By studying them, you'll learn a good deal about philosophy. More important, however, you'll get some sense of what philosophers *do*, and you'll have a chance to try your hand at doing it yourself. In addition, the course will give you a sense of the historical framework of the discipline of philosophy, will familiarize you with some of the most impressive intellectual and aesthetic achievements in the history of Western philosophy, and will provide you with some sense of the impact that philosophy has had and can still have on people's lives. So far as skills are concerned, the course is designed to help you to sharpen your ability to read carefully, to write reflectively, and to recognize, analyze, and construct arguments—abilities that are essential for thinking clearly about philosophical questions (or, for that matter, about anything else).

Texts

The primary readings for the course are contained in the following books, which are available at The Book Stop, the book store located at 915 16th Street.

Aristotle. *Introduction to Aristotle*. Ed. Richard McKeon. Second revised and enlarged edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974.

Descartes, René. *Discourse on Method and Meditations*. Trans. Laurence J. Lafleur. New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1960.

Kant, Immanuel. *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*. Trans. rev. and with an introduction by Lewis White Beck. New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1950.

Plato. *Great Dialogues of Plato*. Trans. W.H.D. Rouse. Ed. Eric H. Warmington and Philip G. Rouse. New York: New American Library, 1956.

You'll also need a copy of the *Study Guide* I've written to be used with these texts (this is a fifth required text, not merely a recommended text). The *Study Guide* will also be available at the Book Stop.

While there are many translations of the works by Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, and Kant we'll be reading, I advise you strongly to use the ones contained in the editions listed above. Differences among translations can be substantial, and they can be very confusing; furthermore, you'll find that the *Study Guide* is keyed to these editions.

Electronic versions of translations of all these texts are also available, and these can save you money—but at the cost of the difficulties described above. You can access a set of such e-texts from the class Web site, at <http://www.unco.edu/philosophy/current/110-009.html>.

* And, of course, by appointment.

Course Requirements and Grades

First of all, you are required to have an e-mail account. If you don't have one already, you should arrange to get one by Wednesday. You can get a UNC account in any of the computer labs on campus or at Bear Logic, the computer store in the University Center. Accounts with other ISPs (AOL, Hotmail, Yahoo, Excite, CTOS, etc.) are perfectly acceptable as well.

Reading Assignments:

The reading assignments are in the course outline at the end of the syllabus. Make sure these are done on time. In each case, you're to read not only the assigned primary material but also the corresponding chapter of the *Study Guide*. You should expect to spend a good deal of time on the readings—they're challenging, serious texts that will require extensive study and reflection.

Quizzes:

Brief, unannounced quizzes will be given on the assigned readings from time to time. Under no circumstances may missed quizzes be made up. Your average on these quizzes will be worth 10% of your final grade.

Newsgroup Submissions:

You're required to make regular contributions to the class newsgroup—the chief forum for class discussion outside class. I'll expect at least one carefully and thoughtfully written contribution each week of at least 15 lines—not counting quotations. See the separate handout for more on what you should do in your newsgroup submissions. The quantity and quality of your contributions to the newsgroup will be worth 20% of your final grade.

Essays:

You're required to write two 3-4 page essays for the course—the first due on November 1 and the second due on December 13. More information as to what will be required in these essays will be available soon. Your grade on each essay will be worth 10% of your final grade.

Hour Tests:

There will be three hour tests consisting of objective questions (e.g., true-false questions, multiple choice questions, short answer questions)—the first on Friday, September 27, covering the work we'll have done on Plato, the second on Friday, October 25, covering the work we'll have done on Aristotle, and the third on Friday, November 15, covering the work we'll have done on Descartes. All the hour tests (and the first half of the final) will also include questions on arguments and argument analysis. Each of these tests will be worth 10% of your final grade.

Final Examination:

There will be a two and a half hour final—part of it covering the work we'll have done on Kant and part of it comprehensive—from 10:45 a.m. to 1:15 p.m. on Friday, December 13. Your performance on the final will be worth 20% of your final grade.

General Rules Regarding Submission of Work:

To receive credit for the course, you must submit both essays and take all the hour tests and the final examination. Zeros will be recorded for missed quizzes and missing newsgroup submissions.

Overall Determination of Grades:

Summing up, your overall grade will be determined as follows: quizzes, 10%; newsgroup submissions, 20%; essays, 20%; hour tests, 10% each; final exam: 20%.

Penalty for Cheating or Plagiarism:

The penalty for cheating on any of the tests (the quizzes, the hour tests, or the final) or for plagiarism (i.e., for copying either the ideas or the words of another without appropriate attribution) on the tests or in your essays or newsgroup articles will be denial of credit for the entire course.

Course Outline

Because of the amount of material we've got to cover in this course, we'll stick to the following calendar very closely. If anything, you should get *ahead* in your reading. *Don't get behind.*

Aug.	M	26	Introductory.	
	W	28	The Origins of Philosophy in Ancient Greece (on-line reading assignment*).	
	F	30	The New Interest in Argument and the Origins of Logic (on-line reading assignment*).	
Sept.	M	2	<i>No class</i>	<i>Labor Day; Add Deadline: Sept. 3</i>
	W	4	The Anatomy of Arguments and Telling the Good from the Bad (on-line reading assignment*).	
	F	6	More of the Same; Contradiction, Logical Impossibility, Truth (on-line reading assignment*).	
	M	9	Plato's <i>Apology</i> .	<i>Drop Deadline: Sept. 9</i>
	W	11	Plato's <i>Crito</i> .	
	F	13	Plato's <i>Crito</i> , cont'd., and <i>Sokratease: The Game of Dialectic</i> .	
	M	16	Plato's <i>Phædo</i> , 57A–70C.	
	W	18	Plato's <i>Phædo</i> , 70C–107B.	
	F	20	Plato's <i>Phædo</i> , 107C–107B.	
	M	23	Plato's <i>Phædo</i> , 107C–107B.	
	W	25	Plato's <i>Phædo</i> , 107B–118.	
	F	27	No assignment.	<i>First Hour Test</i>
	M	30	Aristotle's <i>Ethics</i> , Book I.	
Oct.	W	2	Aristotle's <i>Ethics</i> , Book II.	
	F	4	Aristotle's <i>Ethics</i> , Book III, Chapters 1–5.	
	M	7	Aristotle's <i>Ethics</i> , Book VI.	
	W	9	Aristotle's <i>Ethics</i> , Book VI.	
	F	11	Aristotle's <i>Ethics</i> , Book X, Chapters 6–9.	
	M	14	Aristotle's <i>De Anima</i> , Book I, Chapter 1, Book II, Chapters 1–3.	
	W	16	Aristotle's <i>De Anima</i> , Book II, Chapters 1–3.	
	F	18	Aristotle's <i>De Anima</i> , Book II, Chapters 1–3.	<i>Withdrawal Deadline: Oct. 18, noon</i>
	M	21	Aristotle's <i>De Anima</i> , Book II, Chapters 4–12, and Book III.	
	W	23	Philosophy after Aristotle in Antiquity and the Middle Ages.	
	F	25	No assignment.	<i>Second Hour Test</i>
	M	28	Descartes's <i>Meditations</i> , Front Matter, First Meditation.	
	W	30	Descartes's <i>Meditations</i> , Second Meditation.	
Nov.	F	1	Descartes's <i>Meditations</i> , Second Meditation.	<i>First Essay Due</i>
	M	4	Descartes's <i>Meditations</i> , Third Meditation.	
	W	6	Descartes's <i>Meditations</i> , Third Meditation.	
	F	8	Descartes's <i>Meditations</i> , Fourth Meditation.	
	M	11	Descartes's <i>Meditations</i> , Fifth Meditation.	
	W	13	Descartes's <i>Meditations</i> , Sixth Meditation.	
	F	15	No assignment.	<i>Third Hour Test</i>
	M	18	Kant's <i>Prolegomena</i> , Introduction, Preamble.	
	W	20	Kant's <i>Prolegomena</i> , Part I.	
	F	22	Kant's <i>Prolegomena</i> , Part I.	
	M	25	Kant's <i>Prolegomena</i> , Part II.	
	W	27	Kant's <i>Prolegomena</i> , Part II.	
	F	29	<i>No class</i>	<i>Thanksgiving Holiday</i>
Dec.	M	2	Kant's <i>Prolegomena</i> , Part III.	
	W	4	Kant's <i>Prolegomena</i> , Conclusion, Solution.	
	F	6	Philosophy after Kant.	
	F	13	Final Exam: 10:45 a.m.-1:15 p.m.	<i>Final Examination; Second Essay Due</i>

* See class Web site for on-line assignments and for changes, if any, in reading assignments throughout the semester.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Students who believe that they may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to contact the Disability Access Center (970) 351-2289 as soon as possible to ensure that accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion.