Introduction to Philosophy
01:730:103:06
Spring 2010
Instructor: Allison Hepola

Course Meetings
Mondays and Wednesdays 6:10 - 7:30 p.m.
213 Murray Hall, College Avenue Campus

Communication
EMAIL

hepola@philosophy.rutgers.edu

In order that I don’t mistake your email for spam, please use course-specific phrases like “Philosophy 103” or “Sally Smith with a question” in your subject line. Please do not use vague phrases like “hello,” “question” or “paper” in the subject line. This is especially important if you do not use a Rutgers email account for your outgoing messages.

I check my email frequently during the week, but only rarely over the weekend.

At times I may need to communicate with individual students or with the class as a whole over email. I will email students at the email addresses provided to me by the university, which are Rutgers email accounts. You are responsible for checking your Rutgers email account on a regular basis even if you use another account (such as gmail or yahoo) for the majority of your email.

COURSE WEBSITE

http://sakai.rutgers.edu

Log in with your NetID and password in order to view the course website

OFFICE HOURS

Mondays 4:30 - 6:00 p.m. in the Student Activities Center lounge
Wednesdays 7:45 - 8:30 p.m. at the Rutgers Student Center food court

Required Texts

The course readings are available through the Rutgers Library’s Electronic Reserves. One additional reading is available on an external website. A link to this reading is on our course’s website.
Goals for the Course

All students enrolled in this course should, first and foremost, gain knowledge of how historical and contemporary philosophers have responded to issues such as the existence of God, skepticism, the relationship between the mind and the body, the possibility of life after death, free will, the nature of society and political authority, and ethics. Students should understand the role that specific philosophers, ideas, and controversies have played in Western intellectual history. Furthermore students should recognize how both historic and contemporary philosophical positions are relevant to current debates about religion, human nature, politics, and ethics.

While it is important for all students to master the content of the course, I also hope that all students will sharpen their analytical skills through studying philosophy. Over the course of the semester, students should develop the ability to critically assess and evaluate philosophical arguments. Students should learn to think incisively and creatively about the philosophical issues raised in this course and develop their own positions. Finally students should be able to formulate, express, and defend their own philosophical positions in both speech and writing.

Students will achieve these goals through the careful study of philosophical texts, regular attendance at lectures, participation in class discussions, and completion of the assignments.

Assignments and Grading

RESPONSE PAPERS

Two short (2-3 pages) response papers are required. A response paper consists of two parts. In the first part of the paper, you will summarize a point, idea, or argument that a philosopher has made in one of our readings. This should be something that you find particularly interesting and it should be something brief enough to be discussed in less than two pages. In the second part of the paper, provide your response to this point. Do you agree with what the philosopher has said? Do you disagree? Do you detect a potential objection to the point? Whatever your opinion, you will need to give a reasoned argument for it. It will not do to simply write, “I think Descartes is right” - explain why.

You may write a response paper on any of the readings from our syllabus. For whatever reading you choose to write on, you must turn in your response paper no later than one week after the reading is last discussed in class. The schedule of course readings and topics is included in the syllabus. For example we are scheduled to finish up discussing J.L. Mackie’s “Evil and Omnipotence” on February 22. If you choose to write your response paper on Mackie, it will be due no later than 6:10 p.m. on March 1. Of course, you may turn in a response paper on Mackie earlier than that. Finally, if you write a response paper on readings from April 26-May 3 (the last week of class) you must turn it in no later than May 3 (the last day of class).

You must submit a hard copy of your response paper in person and in class. Emailed papers will not be accepted. Late papers will be penalized one full letter grade for every class session that they are overdue.
The first response paper must be done on a reading from before the March 8 midterm exam. The second response paper must be done on a reading from after the March 8 midterm exam.

MIDTERM EXAM

The midterm will be on Monday March 8 during regular class hours. It will be a standard blue book exam consisting of two essay questions.

FINAL EXAM

The final exam is scheduled for Monday May 10 from 8:00 - 11:00 p.m. The final is not cumulative; it will cover only material studied after the midterm. It will be a standard blue book exam consisting of two essay questions.

MAKE-UP EXAMS

A student will be allowed to take a make-up midterm or final exam only if he or she has a valid and documented excuse for missing the original exam. It is impossible to list all the possible scenarios that could constitute a valid excuse for missing an exam, but they generally fall along the lines of significant illness, deaths in the family, and the like. However one scenario that does not constitute a valid excuse is when an exam conflicts with a student’s vacation plans. The dates and times of the exams are available well in advance; please plan your vacations accordingly.

If you request a make-up exam, you will need to provide me with documentation. The appropriate documentation can be obtained through your dean’s office.

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

All students are expected to do the assigned readings and come to class prepared to discuss them. Philosophy is largely a communal activity; one must engage in rigorous conversation and debate with others in order to truly understand most philosophical topics. Students who are not inclined to speak much in class can still earn strong class participation grades by attending office hours. Above all, students must attend class on a regular basis. See the “Attendance Policy” section for more information.

FINAL GRADES

Final grades will be determined in the following manner:

- First response paper: 10%
- Second response paper: 10%
- Midterm Exam: 30%
- Final Exam: 35%
- Attendance/Participation: 15%

Attendance Policy

Roll will be taken at the beginning of every class to record attendance.
Every student is allowed 4 unexcused absences for any reason, no questions asked. A student who has 5 or more unexcused absences over the course of the semester will receive an “F” for his or her participation grade. This is no small consequence; since participation is 15% of one’s final grade, an F in participation can result in a straight A student receiving a B+ for his or her final grade.

What constitutes an “excused absence”? Any student who provides appropriate documentation for his or her absence(s) will have the absence(s) excused. Appropriate documentation includes (but is not limited to) a dean’s note, a doctor’s note, and a letter from an athletic department/coach. Please do not send me emails along the lines of “I’m sick so I won’t be in class today” because I cannot count those as excused absences. Remember you are allowed up to 4 unexcused absences, so it is not necessary to email me every time you won’t be in class due to minor illness, fatigue, personal situations, etc.

If you will miss class due to a religious holiday or observance, please let me know ahead of time. Students who give prior notice will have such absences excused.

Regardless of why a student is absent, he or she is responsible for the material and assignments that were missed (including any announcements). Students should make sure that they get notes on the missed material from other students, as I do not put my lecture notes online or otherwise provide them to students.

Habitual lateness will not be tolerated. It is disrespectful to me and to your fellow classmates, and it creates an unneeded distraction in the classroom. If I notice that a student is habitually late, I will start recording this. Every 2 latenesses will be considered equivalent to 1 unexcused absence.

**Classroom Policies**

Cell phones, music players, and other kind of devices that make noise must be turned off and put out of sight before class begins. You may bring a laptop to take notes, but any of its noise-making features must be muted before class begins.

Food and drink are allowed in the classroom as long as they are not a distraction to others.

General rules of classroom decorum apply. Habitual violations of these rules - such as carrying on private conversations while your classmates or I am talking, using the internet, texting, or playing games during class, disrespectful speech or behavior towards your classmates, and creating a distraction during class - will result in an ”F” for your participation grade.

**Academic Honesty**

Rutgers University’s academic honesty policy will be strictly enforced. The policy is published in the student handbook and on the university’s website. If you are not already familiar with the policy, it is your responsibility to consult one of these sources.

Any violation of the policy will result in a grade of “F” for the entire course, not just for the assignment in question. Academic dishonesty is an insult to all the students.
who work diligently on the material, even when it is intimidating and difficult. Consequently I have zero tolerance for these violations.

**Schedule of Readings**

**Week 1 (January 20)**
Introductory business

**Week 2 (January 25-27)**
St. Anselm, “Proslogion”

**Week 3 (February 1-3)**
St. Anselm, “Proslogion”
St. Thomas Aquinas, “The Five Ways”

**Week 4 (February 8-10)**
David Hume, selections from *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*

**Week 5 (February 15-17)**
al-Ghazali, “The Incoherence of the Philosophers”
J.L. Mackie, “Evil and Omnipotence”

**Week 6 (February 22-24)**
Mackie, “Evil and Omnipotence”
Rene Descartes “Meditations on First Philosophy”

**Week 7 (March 1-3)**
Descartes, “Meditations on First Philosophy”

**Week 8 (March 8-10)**

**MIDTERM: March 8**

For March 10 read
Descartes, “Discourse on Method”
Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia, “Letters to Rene Descartes”

**Week 9 (March 15-17)**
Spring break - no classes

**Week 10 (March 22-24)**
Paul Churchland, selections from *Matter and Consciousness*
William Hasker, “Afterlife”***

**Week 11 (March 29-31)**
Hasker, “Afterlife”
Steven Hales, “The Traditional Problem of Free Will”

**Week 12 (April 5-7)**
Hales, “The Traditional Problem of Free Will”
Thomas Hobbes, “Leviathan”
Week 13 (April 12-14)
  Jean-Jacques Rousseau, selections from *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*
  Louis Pojman, “A Critique of Ethical Relativism”

Week 14 (April 19-21)
  Pojman, “A Critique of Ethical Relativism”
  John Stuart Mill, “Utilitarianism”

Week 15 (April 26-28)
  Mill, “Utilitarianism”
  Immanuel Kant, “The Categorical Imperative”

Week 16 (May 3)
  Kant, “The Categorical Imperative”

*** This reading is not on the electronic reserves, but rather on an external website

**Instructions for accessing readings on electronic reserve**

1. Go to the Rutgers Libraries homepage [http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu](http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu)
2. To log in, click on the link that says “Not Logged In”
3. Enter your NetID and password
4. Once logged in, select “Find Reserves” from the menu on the left
5. A new page will display. Click on a link that says “Connect to Reserves”
6. Search for the reserve readings either by my last name, the course number, or the course name.
7. A list of all the readings should come up. To read one, click on the button that says “Details” and then click on the long web address link that is labeled “Electronic Access.” The reading will display in pdf format.