

Introduction to Philosophy

Course Description

This course introduces the Western tradition of philosophical inquiry through the close examination of three classic texts from the modern period. The purposes of the course are to (1) examine some fundamental questions of universal human concern about knowledge, existence, and values, (2) explain philosophical methods for answering these questions, (3) examine the relationships between philosophy and other intellectual disciplines, and (4) improve the student's capacity for logical, analytical, and critical thinking.

Required Texts

Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, 3rd edition, ed. Cress (Hackett)
Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, 2nd edition, ed. Popkin (Hackett)
Mill, *On Liberty*, ed. Bromwich and Kateb (Yale University Press)

Course Prerequisites

This is an introductory course and has no prerequisites.

Course Requirements

Three 5-page papers are required, one on each philosopher (I will provide guidelines and suggestions for topics). Always bring the text to class. Do not repeatedly come late to class, leave early, or talk to each other during class. Turn all cell phones and beepers off. No text messaging is allowed. No web surfing is allowed. No solid food is allowed.

Office Hours

I will be available in the Barnes & Noble bookstore, cafe section, on any day that the course meets, from 11:00 until noon or by appointment. You are encouraged to speak with me about this course in particular or any intellectual matter in general. My e-mail address is mcolby@rutgers.edu. Jean Urteil is the philosophy department's undergraduate secretary; her e-mail address is jurteil@philosophy.rutgers.edu and her phone number is 848-932-6800.

Date, Topic, and Reading Assignments

In addition to these specific reading assignments, you are required to read the editors' introductions, which provide crucial historical and intellectual background information. I will post handouts on the Sakai site for this course as a further instructional aide.

- 7/7 Introduction: the nature, scope, aims, and methods of Western philosophy
- 7/8 Knowledge: Descartes, *Meditations*, Letter, Preface, and Meditation I
- 7/9 *Meditations*, Meditation II
- 7/10 *Meditations*, Meditation III
- 7/14 *Meditations*, Meditation IV
- 7/15 *Meditations*, Meditation V
- 7/16 *Meditations*, Meditation VI
- 7/17 Existence: Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, Part I; Descartes paper due

Date, Topic, and Reading Assignment (continued)

- 7/21 *Dialogues*, Parts II and III
- 7/22 *Dialogues*, Parts IV and V
- 7/23 *Dialogues*, Parts VI and VII
- 7/24 *Dialogues*, Parts VIII and IX
- 7/28 No class
- 7/29 *Dialogues*, Parts X-XII
- 7/30 Values: Mill, *On Liberty*, Ch. I; Hume paper due
- 7/31 *On Liberty*, Ch. II
- 8/4 *On Liberty*, Ch. II continued
- 8/5 *On Liberty*, Ch. III
- 8/6 *On Liberty*, Ch. IV
- 8/7 *On Liberty*, Ch. V
- 8/13 Last class; final thoughts
- 8/14 Mill paper must be e-mailed by this date