

INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

Jerry Piven, Ph.D.

In case of *emergencies*, I can be reached at (201) 936-5843, or email me at jerry.piven@rutgers.edu

*For herein is the evil of ignorance,
that he who is neither good nor wise is nevertheless satisfied with himself: he has no
desire for that of which he feels no want.*

Know thyself!

-Plato

Philosophy is the love of wisdom. Over the eons great minds have contemplated the nature of the soul, the genesis of good and evil, the existence of God, the workings of the universe, and the way we perceive, reality. How does one know good from evil? Are we really social animals? Can one prove or disprove the existence of God? Is there a soul distinct from the body? Does one truly have free will? This course introduces students to some of the great ideas in world philosophy, exploring the metaphysics and ethics of the Greeks, the skepticism of Descartes, the transcendental philosophy of Kant, the atheism of Nietzsche, and the existentialism of Sartre.



Required Texts:

Nagel: *What Does It All Mean?*
Bonjour & Baker: *Philosophical Problems*

- Articles will also be provided to the class

Assignments and Grading:

In addition to the required reading, the students will be assigned:

- **1) Weekly Journal (25% of total grade)**

*These papers should be 1-2 paragraphs,
focusing on the central ideas of the text and
your questions about them.*

- **2) Online Discussion & Participation (25% of total grade)**

- **3) Final Philosophical Project (50% of total grade)**

Grading will be determined by the effort of the student, her/his evidence of having carefully read and contemplated the material, and her/his expression of independent thought on the ideas. Late assignments will suffer penalties as follows: the subtraction of one full letter grade per week.

COURSE OUTLINE:**I. INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY**

Overview and Course

Goals What is Philosophy?

The Six Branches of Philosophy

Why do we do Philosophy?

Readings:

- Nagel: Introduction
- Bonjour, chapter 1: What is Philosophy? (Baker, 2-16; Russell, 37-40)

II. BELIEF & KNOWLEDGE

Epistemology & Metaphysics

Rationalism & Empiricism

Correspondence and Coherence

Perceptions, Essences, and Things

Readings:

- Nagel, chapter 2: How Do We Know Anything?
- Plato: *Theaetetus* (pdf file)
- Bonjour, chapter 2: Knowledge and Skepticism (Descartes, 46-63; Locke, 64-73)
- Kant: *Critique of Pure Reason* (brief selection, pdf file)

Suggested Readings – Optional! For your interest and edification only:

John Locke: *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*

Errol Harris: *Fundamentals in Philosophy*

William James: *The Will to Believe*

Edmund Husserl: *Cartesian Meditations*

Linda Alcoff: *Real Knowing*

Epistemology: The Big Questions

Christopher Norris: *Epistemology: Key Concepts in Philosophy*

William Alston (Ed.): *Realism and Antirealism*

Paul Boghossian: *Fear of Knowledge*

III. PHILOSOPHY OF MIND

The Mind-Body Problem

Consciousness, Dualism, and Materialism

Identity, Self, and No-Self

Free Will & Determinism

Readings:

- Nagel, chapters 3, 5, 6: Other Minds; The Mind-Body Problem; Free Will)
- Bonjour, chapter 3: Minds and Bodies (Searle, 180-186; Nagel, 192-197)

- Bonjour, chapter 4: Personal Identity & Free Will (Parfit, 237-247; Edwards, 271-274)

Suggested Readings:

Hume: *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*
 Schopenhauer: *The World as Will and as Representation*
 Nietzsche: *Beyond Good & Evil*
 D.L. Miller: Nothing Almost Sees Miracles! Self & No-Self in Psychology & Religion
 David Loy: *Lack and Transcendence*
 Ron Leifer: *The Happiness Project*
 R.D. Laing: *The Divided Self*
 C.G. Jung: *The Undiscovered Self*
 Wilhelm Reich: *Character Analysis*
 Walter Davis: *Inwardness & Existence*

IV. MORALITY & ETHICS

The Good & The Just
 Individual and Social Responsibility
 Categorical Imperative & Relativism
 Utilitarianism
 Objective & Subjective Morality
 Morality Without Theology

Readings:

- Nagel, chapter 7: Right and Wrong
- Nagel, chapter 8: Justice
- Bonjour, chapter 5: Morality and Moral Problems (Mill, 329-335; Singer, 348-352; Kant, 353-362; Aristotle, 396-405; Rachels, 420-426; Feinberg, 427-433)
- Bonjour, chapter 6: The Legitimacy of Government and the Nature of Justice (Hobbes, 449-458; Locke, 459-468; Rawls, 483-494)

Suggested Readings:

Plato: *The Republic* (selections)
 Aristotle: *Nicomachean Ethics* (selections)
 Immanuel Kant: *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*
 J.S. Mill: *Utilitarianism*
 Friedrich Nietzsche: *Beyond Good & Evil* (selections)
 Simone de Beauvoir: *The Second Sex*
 Dietrich Bonhoeffer: *Ethics*
 Alasdair MacIntyre: *After Virtue*
 Hannah Arendt: *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*
 Richard Bernstein: *The Abuse of Evil*
 Peter Singer (ed.): *Ethics*
 Carol Gilligan: *In a Different Voice*
 John Caputo: *Against Ethics*

V. PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

Epistemology & Metaphysics Revisited

Cosmological, Ontological, and Teleological Arguments

Belief & Disbelief

The Meaning of Faith

The Death of God

Readings:

- Nagel, chapter 9: Death
- Bonjour, chapter 7: God and Faith (Aquinas, 518-520; Hume, 524-526, 538-549; Anselm, 554-555; Kant, 558-559; Mackie, 570-575)
- Nietzsche: *The Gay Science* (sections 108-125, pdf file) & *The Antichrist* (online)

Suggested Readings:

David Hume: *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*

Immanuel Kant: *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone*

Saint Augustine: *Confessions & The City of God*

Thomas Aquinas: *Summa Theologiae*

Friedrich Schleiermacher: *The Christian Faith*

Ludwig Feuerbach: *The Essence of Religion*

Soren Kierkegaard: *The Sickness Unto Death*

William James: *The Varieties of Religious Experience*

Sigmund Freud: *The Future of an Illusion & Civilization and Its Discontents*

Bertrand Russell: *Why I Am Not a Christian*

Weston La Barre: *The Ghost Dance*

Paul Kurtz: *The Transcendental Temptation*

William Alston: *Perceiving God: The Epistemology of Religious Experience*

J.Z. Smith: *Relating Religion*

Slavoj Zizek: *The Puppet and the Dwarf: The Perverse Core of Christianity*

VI. MEANING, EXISTENCE, & MOTIVATION

Existentialism

Essence and Existence

Significance & Insignificance

Love, Despair, & Faith

Morality Without God

Readings:

- Nagel, chapter 10: The Meaning of Life
- Sartre: *The Humanism of Existentialism / Freedom and Responsibility* (pdf file)
- Nishitani: *Religion and Nothingness* (What is Religion; pdf file)

Suggested Readings:

Simone de Beauvoir: *The Ethics of Ambiguity & All Men Are Mortal*

William Barrett: *Irrational Man*

Maurice Friedman: *The Worlds of Existentialism*
 Albert Camus: *The Myth of Sisyphus*
 Jean-Paul Sartre: *Being and Nothingness & Nausea & No Exit*
 Martin Buber: *I and Thou*
 Herbert Marcuse: *One Dimensional Man*
 Don Browning: *Generative Man*
 Ernest Becker: *The Birth & Death of Meaning*
 Walter Davis: *Deracination*

VII. CONCLUSIONS

The Wisdom Gleaned

Further Explorations: Philosophy in the 21st Century
 Modernism & Postmodernism
 Deconstruction & its Opponents

A Few Final Suggestions – *By No Means Complete* – For Future Reading (not for the faint at heart, but you have your whole life for this!):

Hans-Georg Gadamer: *Truth and Method*
Philosophical Hermeneutics
 Paul Ricoeur: *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*
Freud and Philosophy
 Jacques Derrida: *Of Grammatology*
The Post Card
 Rodolphe Gasche: *The Tain of the Mirror: Derrida and the Philosophy of Reflection*
Inventions of Difference: On Jacques Derrida
 Jean-Francois Lyotard: *The Postmodern Condition*
 Christopher Norris: *What's Wrong With Postmodernism?*
Deconstruction: Theory and Practice
Against Relativism
 Emmanuel Levinas: *Basic Philosophical Writings*
Totality and Infinity
Alterity and Transcendence
 Richard Rorty: *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*
Truth and Progress
 Willard Quine: *Quintessence: Basic Readings from the Philosophy of W. V. Quine*
Ontological Relativity
 Hilary Putnam: *Reason, Truth, and History*
Ethics Without Ontology
 Judith Butler: *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*
 Linda Alcoff: *Feminist Epistemologies*
 Charles Winquist: *Desiring Theology*
 Masao Abe: *Zen and Comparative Studies*
Zen and Western Thought
 Kitaro Nishida: *An Inquiry Into the Good*