

Syllabus for Introduction to Philosophy

St. Francis College, Spring 2007

Course: Philosophy 1101. Basic Problems in Philosophy

Instructor: Mark Zelcer

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Office Hour: By appointment (I'll be available after class every Friday till 11:00)

Meetings: 9:05-10:00 AM Monday, Wednesday, and Friday

Text: *Exploring Philosophy*. Edited by Steven M. Cahn. Oxford University Press, 2005 Second edition. (The book can be obtained from the St. Francis College bookstore and other places.)

Requirements: You will be required to participate in class discussions, and write three short papers. **YOU MUST DO ALL THE READING FOR THE COURSE.** You must attend each class. You must also not arrive late.

Grading: You will be given six paper topics over the course of the semester. You must complete three and only three of them. At least one of them must be submitted well before midterm grades are due. Your grade will be derived mainly from these papers. You are also responsible to do the readings and participate in the class. Your grade will take both of these into consideration. Lack of class participation will decrease your grade.

Paper format: All papers should be typewritten. Neatness, grammar, and good organization count. Papers should be about four to six pages in length. Use appropriate margins and a reasonable font. Your paper should have a clear, well-defined position and either a new argument to defend the position or an argument critiquing the position.

Your paper must be original. **DO NOT USE WORK THAT IS NOT YOUR OWN** without giving proper credit. Submitting other people's work would be very unethical, make me most irate, and lead to a VERY poor grade. **You will most likely be asked to leave the class and fail the course.** If you are using anyone else's work, make sure you use appropriate citations. Should you have any questions about proper citing of sources consult *Writing With Sources: A Guide for Students*, by Gordon Harvey (Hackett, 1998). If in doubt, use citations. St. Francis College has very strict policies about academic honesty, and it is expected that you will adhere to them. This is non-negotiable. Even a few words of text, if taken from somewhere, must be cited.

Each essay is due two weeks after it is assigned. Your essays should be submitted on paper during class. **Do not email them to me. No late papers will be accepted.**

Attendance will be taken before each class. You will be penalized for poor attendance and lateness.

Should you feel that your grade was incommensurate with the quality that your actual work demonstrated, please see me. Should you feel that the paper (and its grade) did not reflect

the quality-level of the work that you would like to present, I may, at my discretion, allow you to revise and resubmit the work. You must speak with me about any such situation. You will not be allowed to re-submit work if you failed because of academic dishonesty. If you should fail the course because of academic dishonesty, the chair of the philosophy department can advise you on how to proceed.

This course is an introduction to some basic problems of philosophy. We will address a variety of philosophical topics and questions. The topics include the philosophy of religion, metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, philosophy of mind, free will, and Political Philosophy. Hopefully we will cover the bulk of the following:

Part 1

What is philosophy?

Readings:

- "What is Philosophy?" by Monroe C. Beardsley and Elizabeth Lane Beardsley
- "Defense of Socrates" By Plato

Part 2

Thinking and reasoning

Reading:

- "Science and Common Sense" by Ernest Nagel

Part 3

What is Knowledge?

Readings:

- "Appearance and Reality" by Bertrand Russell
- What can I know? by D. Z. Phillips
- "Knowledge and Belief" by Norman Malcolm
- Meditations on First Philosophy (First meditation) p125 by Descartes

Part 4

What is the mind?

Readings:

- "The Ghost in the Machine" by Gilbert Ryle
- "Do Computers think" by John Searle
- "Second Meditation" (174) by Descartes

Part 5

God

Readings:

- "Why God Allows Evil" by Richard Swinburne
- "Pascal's Wager" by Simon Blackburn
- "Euthyphro" by Plato

- "The five ways" in the *Summa Theologia* by Thomas Aquinas

Part 5

How should I live?

Readings

- "The Challenge of Cultural Relativism" by James Rachels
- From the *Nicomachean Ethics* by Aristotle
- From the *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals* by Kant
- From *Utilitarianism* by J. S. Mill

Part 6

How should we live?

Readings:

- "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" by M. L. King, Jr.
- *Crito* by Plato
- *On Liberty* by J. S. Mill