



PHI 100: Introduction to Problems of Philosophy

Fall 2017

Instructor: Mark Zelcer

@markzelcer

Email: mark.zelcer@oswego.edu

Office: 212 Marano

Office Hours: Tue 3:45-4:45, Thu 12:30-1:30, and by appointment. Students are also invited to join me for lunch most Wednesdays.

Course Text: *Exploring Philosophy*. 5th Edition. Steven M. Cahn (ed). Oxford University Press, 2015.

Class Meetings: Tue, Thu 2:20 -3:40; Maranno CC, room 132

Requirements: 1) Participation: 8%. You will only get these points if the class hears you participate throughout the semester. You will not get these points otherwise. Attendance is not the same as participation. 2) There will be 8 short (1 page, i.e. 250-300 word) written assignments about the course reading: 32%. 3) Midterm exam: 30%. 4) Final exam: 30%.

You are responsible for keeping track of your papers and knowing the exam schedule. Your paper should contain your student number, not your name.

- **Class policies:** Attend class
 - Possess a copy of the assigned text.
 - Read the assigned material.
 - Do not use electronic devices in class.
 - Do not talk in class.
 - There is no need to email if you will miss a class.

Course Description: 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, the philosophy of mind, free will, and political philosophy. Hopefully we will cover the bulk of the following:

Schedule (approximate)

What is philosophy? (8/29, 8/31)

- "What is Philosophy?" by Monroe C. Beardsley and Elizabeth Lane Beardsley (pp 3-12)

What is Knowledge? (9/5, 9/7)

- "What is Knowledge?" by A. J. Ayer (pp 88-90)
- "Appearance and Reality" by Bertrand Russell (pp 94-97)

What is the mind? (9/12, 9/14, 9/19)

- "The Ghost in the Machine" by Gilbert Ryle (pp 149-152)
- The Mind-Body Problem by Paul Churchland (pp 156-168)
- "What is it like to be a bat?" by Thomas Nagel (pp 169-171)
- "Computing Machinery and Intelligence" by Alan Turing (pp 177-181)
- "Do Computers think?" by John Searle (pp 181-183)

Free Will (9/26, 9/28)

- "Free Will" by Thomas Nagel (pp 199-203)
- "Free Will and Determinism" by W. T. Stace (pp 204-206)
- "Free Will or Determinism" by Steven M. Cahn (pp 207-216)

God (10/3, 10/5, 10/10)

- "Does God Exist?" by Ernest Nagel (pp 247-253)
- "Why God Allows Evil" by Richard Swinburne (pp 254-263)
- Pascal's Wager from his *Penses* (pp 323-325)

Midterm (10/12)

How should I live? (10/17, 10/19, 10/24, 10/26)

- From *Utilitarianism* by J. S. Mill (pp 438-445)
- From the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* by Kant (pp 433-437)
- From *Nicomachean Ethics* by Aristotle (pp 428-432)

How should we live? (10/31, 11/2, 11/7, 11/9, 11/14)

- From *Leviathan* by Thomas Hobbes (pp 669-675)
- From *On Liberty* by J. S. Mill (pp 615-623)
- *Crito* by Plato (pp 602-614)
- Letter from a Birmingham Jail by Martin Luther King, Jr. (pp 548-560)

- From *A Theory of Justice* by John Rawls (pp 631-634)
- From *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* by Robert Nozick (pp 635-639)

Thinking about death (11/16, 11/21)

- “Death” by Thomas Nagel (pp 733-740)

The Meaning of Life (11/28, 11/30)

- “Meaning in Life” by Susan Wolf (pp 795-798)
- “Philosophy and the Meaning of Life” by Robert Nozick (pp 801-803)

The final two classes TBA

Final Exam (12/12/17, 2-4PM). The final exam will cover the material studied since the midterm.

Students with disabilities: The Office of Disability Services is available to assist students who have a legally documented disability or students who suspect that they may have a disability. If you have a disabling condition that may interfere with your ability to successfully complete this course, please contact the Office of Disability Services. (Alternative testing for students with learning disabilities is available through Disability Services.)

Intellectual Integrity: Intellectual integrity on the part of all students is basic to individual growth and development through college coursework. When academic dishonesty occurs, the teaching/learning climate is seriously undermined and student growth and development are impeded. For these reasons, any form of intellectual dishonesty is a serious concern and is therefore prohibited. For more information see: www.oswego.edu/integrity. Should you commit any form of academic dishonesty, you may fail the course.