



## INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

*“The unexamined life is not worth living.”*

*Socrates*

### PHL 1050- A11-F11, Fall 2009

Immerwahr, Aggleton, Eltringham, Feigenbaum, Hartmann,  
Karas, Schultz

## Syllabus (Draft)

### Format:

This class meets twice a week (Monday and Wednesday) in a large lecture format, with most of the lectures given by Immer. On Fridays we break up into small discussion classes, led by section instructors.

### Instructors:

| Name            | Sec | F 12:30 class | Office  | VU E-Mail@villanova.edu | Tel |
|-----------------|-----|---------------|---------|-------------------------|-----|
| John Immerwahr  |     |               | 173 SAC | Immer@                  |     |
| Derek Aggleton  | A11 | Bartley 2072  | 108 SAC | derek.aggleton@         |     |
| Kate Eltringham | B11 | Bartley 1064  | 108 SAC | katherine.eltringham@   |     |
| Ryan Feigenbaum | C11 | Bartley 2044  | 108 SAC | ryan.feigenbaum@        |     |
| Thomas Hartmann | D11 | Driscoll 225  | 108 SAC | thomas.hartmann@        |     |
| Brien Karas     | E11 | Driscoll 221  | 108 SAC | john.karas@             |     |
| John Schultz    | F11 | Driscoll 246  | 108 SAC | john-patrick.schultz@   |     |

### Office Hours:

All sections have an office hour on Friday at 1:30, immediately after the discussion sections. Just let your instructor know that you want to meet, in most cases we will just go over to the Bartley Exchange and meet at one of the tables. For additional times, see your discussion leader after class and make an appointment. John Immerwahr's office hours are on Monday and Thursday from 3:00 to 4:30 p.m. Sometimes I have meetings scheduled at those times as well, so the best thing is to make an appointment before you come. See me after class or e-mail me for an appointment. To make an appointment or if you have a brief question, you may also call me at home (but not after 11:00 p.m.) at 610 xxx xxxx.

### Books:

Please purchase all of the books right away. Use the ISBN numbers to make sure you get the right edition (sometimes the bookstore has different editions or translations of the same book and you absolutely need the one assigned for the class). If you can't find the book, ask the bookstore staff. Sometimes the books for one course are shelved with the books for another course, and they can tell you where the book is located. If they tell you the book is unavailable, e-mail immer@villanova.edu right away.

John Immerwahr, *Introduction to Philosophy, Readings* (includes Descartes, Locke, Marx)

J. Krishnamurti, *Education and the Significance of Life*, ISBN 0-06-064876-07

Marge Piercy, *A Woman on the Edge of Time*, Fawcett, ISBN: 0449210820

Plato, *Five Dialogues*, Hackett, ISBN 0872206335

St. Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will*, MacMillan, ISBN 0-02308030 2 (Note: a lot of courses use a different translation of this work from Hackett. **Don't buy it!** It is a perfectly good translation, but you'll be very confused if you buy it since we'll always be referring to the MacMillan translation.)

Some other readings will be available on WebCt.

**Clickers:**

You will also need to purchase a TurningTechnology audience response device (a “clicker”) at the bookstore. This is the standard Villanova University clicker, so you'll probably be using it in other classes as well. You will also need to bring this with you to class every day.

**Asking Difficult Questions:**

Since this course is an introductory course in philosophy, one of our major goals is to understand what philosophy is and how philosophers think. Once you know more about philosophy, you won't be surprised to hear that there are almost as many definitions of philosophy as there are philosophers. But for our purposes, we'll start with one of the most famous philosophers, Aristotle, who said that “philosophy begins in wonder.” What are the things that we wonder about?

Sometimes we wonder about questions that have two characteristics: 1) they are questions that are important, at least to us (otherwise we probably wouldn't spend a lot of time thinking about them), and 2) they are questions that cannot easily be answered. We can turn that into a preliminary understanding of what philosophy is. In this course we will spend a lot of time thinking about questions that are important, but difficult to answer, and we will see how some of the greatest minds before us approached those questions. We will come back especially to three difficult questions: 1) what is a human being and what is our relationship to the universe? 2) how should we live? 3) how do we know the answers to these and other similar questions?

**Course Goals:**

Here is a more formal version of our course goals.

| Goal: As a result of taking this course you will:            | Some of the things that we will do that will promote this goal are:  | We will know how well you have done on this goal by evaluating your work on:   |
|--|--|--|
| Better understand philosophy as a discipline                 | Reading and discussing a variety of philosophical texts and topics   | Papers, exams, discussion sections, group work   |
| Improve your skill in reading difficult primary source texts | Especially in the beginning of the course, we'll be reading a number of difficult texts from Plato, St. Augustine, Locke | Papers that require detailed understanding of these texts, over and above what you will learn from class discussion and lectures |
| Improve your skill in critical thinking                      | Many of the issues read and discussed involve complex reasoning and critical thinking                                    | Papers, class discussion   |
| Improve your skill in writing                                | Short assignments, papers  | Critically evaluating your papers  |
| Improve skills in oral discussion                            | Discussion classes, group work   | Class discussion; final exam will include oral portion as well as written  |

|  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| Better understand Catholic and Christian philosophical ideas | Detailed reading of St. Augustine and Caputo.   | Papers, exams  |
| Better understand the history of philosophy                  | Read several major figures from the history of philosophy: Plato; St. Augustine, Descartes; Locke | First paper will focus on an important historical figure; exams will also cover this material                              |
| Better understand some issues in the contemporary world      | Discussion of philosophical grounding of Marxism, capitalism, feminism, ecology, post-modernism   | Second paper will focus on application to contemporary issues; as will exams and class discussion in second half of course |
| Be exposed to the thinking of women and people of color      | Reading Piercy (American feminist), Krishnamurti (India),   | Exams; class discussion  |

**Assignments:**

In general your assignments will be given on the Web CT page for the class. You can access Web CT from the "My Classroom" feature of the homepage, or select this course directly at <https://elearning.villanova.edu/webct/>. When you get to the course page, select Module 1: Plato, then move to Module II when we finish Plato. Notice that all of the tests are cumulative. As you will see, most of the readings, especially in the beginning of the course, are short and difficult. You will be expected to know them well. You may be able to grasp the big concepts from the lectures, but the tests and papers will also test mastery of the texts. You'll need to read the texts very carefully, and you will certainly find that you will need to read them over several times.

**Grades:**

Six major elements will go into computing your grade, all of which will count equally:

- Mid-term
- Final Examination
- First Paper
- Second Paper
- Group Project
- Grades on short assignments and in-class quizzes (the quizzes will not be announced). I'll add some extra credit points (worth two short assignments), so if you miss a two assignments you won't be penalized (but you won't get any extra credit either).

**Due Dates:**

Coming

**Attendance:**

We will take regular attendance. If you have attended most or all classes, we are much more likely to be sympathetic if you encounter problems or issues or are on the borderline for grades.

**Some Ground Rules:**

- Ask questions. If you don't understand something, or if you have concerns, ask one of us.
- Comfort zone. Some of the material (especially in the second part of the course) may be new and different, and will touch on sensitive subjects such as religion, politics, and sexuality. If you

are in any way uncomfortable reading or discussing any of the material, please let me know or speak confidentially to one of the instructors. If necessary we will arrange alternative assignments for you. Sometimes in lectures or discussions we may use outrageous examples to clarify points; if you are offended by something that is said, please accept our apologies in advance. Please express your concern to one of the teaching staff. Your concerns will be held confidential, and we'll try to avoid that situation in the future.

- ❑ Concerns about grades. When graded material is returned to you, it is your responsibility to make sure you understand exactly why you received the grade that you were given. If you do not understand, please resubmit your work to me, with a written explanation of your concern or question. I will reread your work, change your grade upwards (if necessary), and return it to you with additional comments. Under no circumstances will your grade be lowered as a result of this process. If you still have concerns or questions, please make an appointment to meet with me in person to discuss the work. Do not discuss the work with me until after you have resubmitted it and it has been returned to you.
- ❑ Copies of work. Please keep copies of all the work that you submit for the entire semester. A lot of paperwork will be flying around and we may lose copies of some of your assignments. You will be responsible for producing a new copy if necessary.
- ❑ Academic Integrity. We will be holding students in this class to the strictest standards of academic integrity. All of your assignments can, and should be done, without using outside sources other than the assigned texts. However, **if you use any sources other than the assigned texts you must have scrupulous documentation for any sources you use, following the MLA format.** You must use footnotes to indicate any passages that you have quoted or paraphrased from other sources. You must also footnote ideas that are taken from other sources, even if the words are your own. You must also indicate any other sources that you have consulted, even if you don't rely on the specifically. If we have concerns about your paper, we will submit it to a subscription data base service that checks papers extensively for web sources. You also are expected to follow all other rules regarding acceptable and unacceptable collaboration on any given assignment. Again, please ask for clarification if you are the least bit unsure. When doing tests and quizzes, be sure you do not attempt to give or receive unauthorized information. Violations of the academic integrity code will typically result in a failure for the course, so be extremely careful in this area.
- ❑ Learning Disabilities. Villanova seeks to make reasonable academic accommodations for students with disabilities. If you are a person with a disability, please contact me outside of class, and make arrangements to register with the Learning Support Office (x 9 5636; nancy.mott@villanova.edu).
- ❑ Laptops in Class. Please do not use laptops in class without express permission, since the use of laptops often distracts other students (especially if the student is using the laptop for non-classroom related activities such as Facebook). If using a laptop is extremely important to you, please contact me and request permission.

**Course overview:**

| Week     | Key concepts   |
|----------|--|
| Week 1-2 | The Sophist challenge and Plato's anti-materialistic response.                                   |
| Week 3-4 | St. Augustine: synthesizing Plato and Christianity, Augustine's solution to the problem of evil. |

|            |  |
|------------|--|
| Week 5-7   | Descartes and Locke: transforming Plato and Augustine in a "modern" world view, integrating science, technology, and freedom, materialism now has a positive meaning |
| Week 8-9   | Marx seeks to overturn the ideas of Plato-Augustine-Locke.   |
| Week 10-11 | Novelist Marge Piercy uses science fiction to introduce ideas of feminism and eco-feminism.  |
| Week 12-13 | Krishnamurti: an Eastern perspective. "Truth is a trackless land."   |
| Week 14    | Joseph Ratzinger discusses doubt in the contemporary world   |

**Success strategies:**

I taught a rather similar version of this course last year. At the end of the semester, I asked the students to write a brief note to you (the students who would be taking the course this semester), and I asked them to suggest some success strategies that would help you do well in this course. Here are some of the themes that they suggested:

- When you take notes, DON'T just recopy the pPowerPoints. You can get them on line after the lecture. Try to take notes on what is NOT on the PowerPoints.
- Keep an open mind and be willing to hear crazy beliefs that you would have never thought of. Then take these beliefs and see what they mean to you.
- Keep on top of the readings, you never know when there will be a quiz.
- Try to get a head start on the second paper, and show a draft to the instructor before you hand it in.
- Do the reading and also highlight the quotes that Immer discusses in class. You'll need them for the final.
- Try to think outside the box and be sure to contribute to the group discussions.
- The material is confusing, so don't hesitate to ask questions.
- Embrace clickers.