



INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

"The unexamined life is not worth living."

Socrates

PHL 1050- A10-F10, Fall 2010

Immerwahr, Cuervo, DeAngelis, Filbert, Renault-Steele, Strong, Vendsel
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Syllabus

Format:

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

Instructors:

Name	Sec	F c lass	Office	E-mail@Villanova.edu
John Immerwahr			173 SAC	Immer@villanova.edu
Maria Cuervo	A10	Tol 309	108 SAC	maria.cuervo
Peter DeAngelis	B10	Tol 310a	108 SAC	peter.deangelis
Katherine Filbert	C10	Tol 314b	108 SAC	katherine.filbert
Charlie Strong	D10	Tol 405	108 SAC	richard.strong
Michael Vendsel	E10	Tol 418	108 SAC	michael.vendsel
Summer Renault-Steele	F10	Tol 416	108 SAC	summer.renault-steele

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. To meet at some other time, 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 there are 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 the office (610 519 5356) or at home (but not after 11:00 p.m.).

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. A number of other readings will be available on WebCT.

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

Marge Piercy, *A Woman on the Edge of Time*, Fawcett, ISBN-13: 978-0449210826

Plato, *Five Dialogues*, Hackett, ISBN-13: 978-0872206335

St. Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will*, Prentice-Hall, trans. Hackstaff and Benjamin, ISBN 13 978- 002308030 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.)

Tich Nhat Hanh, *The Diamond that Cuts Through Illusion*, Parallax Press, ISBN-13: 978-0938077510 (This one might not be in the bookstore yet, but we won't need it until November).

TurningTechnology Clicker (also available in the book store)

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." 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

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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 can 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.	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), Thich Nhat Hanh (Vietnamese Buddhist)	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 MyNova. Go to the link for this class, and then click on the icon that looks like people's heads. Then click on "mywebct" or select this course directly at <https://elearning.villanova.edu/webct/>. When you get to the course home page, *select Module 1: Plato* and you'll see your assignments. Don't click on the "Assignments" side link, there is nothing there. 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. All of the tests are cumulative.

Grades:

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

- Mid-term (October 8th)
- Final examination (December 13th, 1:30)
- First paper
- Second paper
- Grades on short assignments and in-class quizzes (the quizzes will not be announced)
- Participation in discussion class

All of your grades will be given on the 4 point scale. Your final letter grade will be computed this way: 3.83 and higher is an A, 3.5 and higher is an A-, 3.16 and higher is a B+, etc. Your grades will be posted on the WebCT grade book. We may add a class project (in which case it would be counted equally with the rest, and we may give either the mid-term or the final as an oral exam). You can check your grades on the WebCT gradebook.

Attendance:

We will take regular attendance. For freshmen students, if you miss more than six classes you will fail the class.

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 other 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	Tich Nhat Hanh gives a perspective from eastern philosophy.
Week 14	Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI) discusses belief and doubt in the contemporary world.

Success strategies:

I taught a rather similar version of this course in a previous 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 PowerPoints. 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.