

PHI 1050: Introduction to Philosophy

Instructor: Dera Sipe, MA
Villanova University, Spring 2007
Monday, Wednesday, Friday from 11:30-12:20
Tolentine Hall, Room 309
CRN: 32738

Contact Information

Email: dera.sipe@villanova.edu

Office Hours: I will be in my office, Old Falvey 304E, from 12:30-1:30 on Mondays and Wednesdays. Please come to talk with me at that time if you have any questions or need help with anything. If that time does not work for you, you may contact me after class or via email to schedule an appointment.

Course Objectives

What is the meaning of life? What is real? What is human nature? Are we social or autonomous beings? Is mind distinct from body? Is there an enduring self? Do we have free will? Is morality relative? What is justice? Does God exist? Can we know God through experience? Is reason the source of knowledge? Does knowledge depend on experience? Does truth exist? These are only a few of the questions tackled by philosophers.

In this course, we will delve into the work of several prominent philosophers in order to attempt an answer to the very loaded question, *what is philosophy?* This examination will help us to understand how our worldview has been structured by some of these influential thinkers. We will begin with the origins of Western thought through a glimpse into the ancient Greek world with Plato and the Roman Christian world with Augustine; these early thinkers left a noticeable legacy – their metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics have been formative to the way we think today. We will see the impact that these early thinkers had on the modern world through their influence on Descartes. We will then take a shift towards our contemporary world with an analysis of the materialism of Locke and Marx. Finally, we will end the semester with a look at two philosophical movements that have shaped our current culture and conception of the human being dramatically, feminism and existentialism.

Since this is an introductory course, we will focus on developing an understanding of the methods and aims of philosophical thinking. Some of our main objectives will be to introduce several of the major texts in the history of philosophy, to read and discuss authors who have shaped Western culture and the history of Western philosophy and who have a vision for a future philosophy, and to develop our ability to raise critical questions and enhance our writing and conversation skills in an academic setting.

Texts

For this course we will be using a primary textbook as well as additional assorted essays. Since we will read in class you are expected to bring the assigned text to class each day, so please purchase your books right away. You must be sure to have the same edition of the textbook the rest of us are using – sometimes bookstores have different editions of the same book and you absolutely need the one assigned for the class so that we can all be on the same page. Use the ISBN number to make sure you get the right edition. If you cannot find the book, ask the bookstore staff. If they tell you it is unavailable, email me right away.

- *Philosophic Classics: From Plato to Derrida*, edited by Forrest E. Baird and Walter Kaufmann. Publisher: Prentice Hall. Year: 2003. Edition: 4th. ISBN: 0-13-048561-6.

The following books are optional to purchase. We will be reading essays out of each. I will have copies of the selected readings from them for you, but some students prefer to own the actual book.

- *On Female Body Experience: “Throwing Like a Girl” and Other Essays*, by Iris Marion Young. Publisher: Oxford University Press. Year: 2004. ISBN: 0-19-516193-9.
- *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*, by Albert Camus. Publisher: Vintage International. Year: 1991. ISBN: 0-679-73373-6.
- *The Society of the Spectacle*, by Guy Debord. Publisher: Zone Books. Year: 1995. ISBN: 0-942299-79-5.

***We will be reading from the following texts throughout this semester
(see the Class Schedule for exact readings each day):***

Plato
Apology, Phaedo, and Republic

Augustine
Confessions and City of God

Descartes
Meditations on First Philosophy

Pascal
Pensées

Hobbes
Leviathan

Kierkegaard
Fear and Trembling

Locke
*Second Treatise of Civil
Government*

Marx
“Alienated Labor,” “A
Contribution to the Critique of
Political Economy,” *Communist
Manifesto*, and *Capital, Volume I*:
“Section Four: The Fetishism of
Commodities and the Secret
Thereof”

Sartre
Being and Nothingness and
Existentialism is a Humanism

Debord
The Society of the Spectacle

Rorty
“Failed Prophecies, Glorious
Hopes”

Young
“Throwing Like a Girl”

Beauvoir
The Second Sex

Camus
*The Myth of Sisyphus and Other
Essays*

Grading and Policies

You can easily keep track of your grade in the course by adding up your points as we go along. Added together, all of the components of this course are worth a total of 1,000 points.

Reading Quizzes (this component is worth **10%** of your total course grade)

These short quizzes, which will be completed at the beginning of class once each week, will indicate that you have been keeping up with the reading regularly. These will be graded on a pass/fail basis.

Analytic WebCT Responses (this component is worth **10%** of your total course grade)

Reading philosophy can be difficult; the WebCT Discussions forum should be seen as a tool to help you work through the texts. I will occasionally pose questions for you to address on the WebCT Discussions forum, but you may also include any questions you think of, reactions you might have, or even just random thoughts that the texts have inspired you to think. Thoughtful participation in this online forum is worth 100 points towards your total course grade.

Term Paper (this component is worth **10%** of your total course grade)

Due on the last day of class, this five page term paper will be developed from a theme you found interesting during the course of the semester. Your paper should be organized and carefully edited. See “Tips on Writing a Philosophy Paper” (<http://www.cofc.edu/~portmord/tips.htm>) if you would like some additional direction for how to write a philosophy paper. You will submit a thesis for my review by March 30th. This paper will be worth 100 points towards your course grade.

Group Presentation (this component is worth **10%** of your total course grade)

Fridays will be discussion days, a time for us to hash out the questions from the reading. Every other week or so this discussion will be led by a small group of students; this group will have prepared questions from the reading ahead of time and will lead the class through the discussion by analytically commenting on the reading, by bringing our attention to interesting passages, by asking prompting questions, and by relating the text to current social, political, or even personal issues.

- Presentation groups (of approximately four students) will be assigned towards the beginning of the semester. Please pick a time that works for you and stick to it.
- Your grade will be based partially on peer review and partially on the level of the discussion (how thoughtful your group was about the text under consideration: were the questions asked philosophically interesting? Were the commentaries about the text careful and analytic?)

Participation and Attendance (this component is worth **20%** of your total course grade)

Philosophy requires a thoughtful stream of steady discourse; sharing your thoughts regarding the issues we are examining in this course will help everyone to better learn how to engage in philosophy. For this reason, you are required to participate in class discussions on a regular basis. Your participation grade will be determined by your involvement in the larger class discussions. Because you cannot participate if you are not here, your participation grade is tied to attendance. Participation and attendance are worth 200 points towards your total course grade.

Midterm and Final Exams (this component is worth **40%** of your total course grade)

Your midterm and final exams are each worth 200 points towards your total course grade (20% of your grade). The midterm will be an in-class exam and the final will be during the assigned exam time. We will have a class study session prior to each exam to help prepare you. In order to be prepared for these exams,

you must do the assigned readings every week, attend and participate in class regularly, and begin to study well before the scheduled exam.

Statement on Academic Integrity

This course will enforce strict standards of academic integrity. Papers must have scrupulous documentation of any sources used and must be entirely your own work. You also are expected to follow any other rules given by the instructor regarding acceptable and unacceptable collaboration on any given assignment; please ask for clarification if you are the least bit unsure. When doing tests 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.

For further details about Villanova's academic integrity policy, please consult Villanova's webpage at <http://www.vpaa.villanova.edu/academicintegrity/>

Statement on 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 by calling 610/519- 5636 or sending an email to nancy.mott@villanova.edu.

Statement on Cell Phone Use

As you know, cell phones can be very distracting, and so they should be turned off during class time. If a cell phone rings during class or is being used inappropriately the user may be asked to leave the classroom for the day.

Class Schedule and Reading Assignments

*Readings listed on a certain day are *to have been read* on that day*

Wednesday, January 17:

Discuss syllabus and get to know one another

The Art of Questioning: What is Philosophy?

Friday, January 19:

Plato's *Apology* (pages 21-37 in *From Plato to Derrida*)

Monday, January 22:

Plato's *Phaedo* (pages 46-57 in *From Plato to Derrida*)

Wednesday, January 24:

Plato's *Republic*, Book VI and Book VII (pages 130-142 in *From Plato to Derrida*)

Friday, January 26:

Discussion

Questions of God: Grappling with Metaphysics

Monday, January 29:

Augustine's *Confessions* (Book VIII, pages 290-295 in *From Plato to Derrida*)

Wednesday, January 31:

Augustine's *City of God* (pages 305-315 in *From Plato to Derrida*)

Friday, February 2:

Discussion

Monday, February 5:

Descartes' *Meditations on First Philosophy* (First and Second Meditations, pages 405-414 in *From Plato to Derrida*)

Short film clip

Wednesday, February 7:

Descartes' *Meditations on First Philosophy* (Third Meditation, pages 414-423 in *From Plato to Derrida*)

Friday, February 9:

Discussion

Monday, February 12:

Descartes' *Meditations on First Philosophy* (Fourth Meditation, pages 424-428 in *From Plato to Derrida*; Sixth Meditation, pages 433-442 in *From Plato to Derrida*)

Wednesday, February 14:

Pascal's *Pensées* (in *From Plato to Derrida*)

Friday, February 16:

Discussion

Questions of Sociality: Social and Political Philosophy

Monday, February 19:

Hobbes' *Leviathan*, selected passages from Chapters 13-14, 17-18 (in *From Plato to Derrida*)
Locke's *Second Treatise of Civil Government*, Chapter I (in course pack)

Wednesday, February 21:

Locke's *Second Treatise of Civil Government*, Chapters II and V (in course pack)

Friday, February 23:

Discussion

Monday, February 26:

Review for midterm exam

Wednesday, February 28:

Midterm examination

Friday, March 2:

Discussion

Monday, March 5:

Midterm semester recess (no class)

Wednesday, March 7:

Midterm semester recess (no class)

Friday, March 9:

Midterm semester recess (no class)

Monday, March 12:

Marx's "Alienated Labor" (pages 1011-1019 in *From Plato to Derrida*)

Marx's "A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy" (page 1030 in *From Plato to Derrida*)

Wednesday, March 14:

Marx's *Communist Manifesto* (pages 1020-1029 in *From Plato to Derrida*)

Friday, March 16:

Marx's *Communist Manifesto* continued (pages 1020-1029 in *From Plato to Derrida*)

Monday, March 19:

Marx's *Capital, Volume I*: "Section Four: The Fetishism of Commodities and the Secret Thereof" (in course pack)

Short film clip, "The Ad and the Ego"

Wednesday, March 21:

Debord's *The Society of the Spectacle* (in course pack or optionally purchased text)

Friday, March 23:

Discussion of Rorty's "Failed Prophecies, Glorious Hopes" (in course pack)

Monday, March 26:

Beauvoir's introduction to *The Second Sex* (in course pack)

Wednesday, March 28:

Young's essay "Throwing Like a Girl" from *On Female Body Experience: "Throwing Like a Girl" and Other Essays* (in course pack or optionally purchased text)

Friday, March 30:

Young's "Throwing Like a Girl" continued

Film and discussion

*Term paper thesis due

Questions of the Individual: Existentialism, Freedom, and Subjectivity

Monday, April 2:

Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling* (in *From Plato to Derrida*)

Wednesday, April 4:

Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling* (in *From Plato to Derrida*)

Friday, April 6:

Easter recess (no class)

Monday, April 9:

Easter recess (no class)

Wednesday, April 11:

Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* (pages 1154-1168 in *From Plato to Derrida*)

Friday, April 13:

Discussion

Monday, April 16:

Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* (pages 1154-1168 in *From Plato to Derrida*)

Wednesday, April 18:

Sartre's *Existentialism is a Humanism* (pages 1169-1175 in *From Plato to Derrida*)

Friday, April 20:

Discussion

Monday, April 23:

Camus' *The Myth of Sisyphus*, "The Myth of Sisyphus" and "An Absurd Reasoning: Absurdity and Suicide" (in course pack or optionally purchased text)

Wednesday, April 25:

Camus' *The Myth of Sisyphus*, "An Absurd Reasoning: Absurd Freedom" (in course pack or optionally purchased text)

Friday, April 27:

Discussion

Monday, April 30:

Philosophical film

Tuesday, May 1:

Friday class schedule, finish philosophical film and discuss

Wednesday, May 2:

Review for the final exam

*Term papers due

Friday, May 4:

Reading Day (no class)

Final examination

The final exam will be held during the university scheduled exam time, **Wednesday, May 9th from 8:00-10:30** in our usual classroom. If you have a serious conflict with that time or have three or more exams scheduled for that day, please let me know ASAP so that I can arrange for you to do the exam on a different day.