



Philosophy
Holy Cross College

Introductory Philosophy: PHIL 201-4

Fall & 2024

Instructor: John William Waldrop
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Time: Th, 6:30PM to 9:00PM
Room: Vincent Hall 143

Course description: This course offers an introduction to philosophy through selective encounters with key thinkers throughout history, exploring fundamental questions such as: What is the nature of reality? Is there a God? How should I conduct myself in the world? We will address these questions by examining how significant philosophers have approached them, critiquing their positions, and considering how their views influence contemporary thought.

The course is structured around thematic modules that approach key premodern and early modern texts with a unifying focus on particular, enduring philosophical questions. Through close reading, discussion, and critical analysis, students will develop the skills to think philosophically and translate philosophical principles into concrete actions.

Learning Outcomes:

1) A student taking this course will be able to identify and understand significant features of and developments in philosophical traditions on key questions concerning the nature of philosophy, God and religion, and living a good life. 2) A student taking this course will be able to analyze, compare, and evaluate philosophical views. 3) A student taking this course will be able to think philosophically about her interactions in the world. 4) A student taking this course will raise questions on philosophical issues pertaining to the development of her own worldview.

Student Responsibilities: To be successful in this philosophy course, students should attend all lectures prepared to actively participate in discussions; meticulously complete readings before class to enable productive dialogue; thoroughly review material in preparation for exams; and submit assignments on time while following provided format guidelines:

- Carry out the one practice exercise and bring the resulting work to class on the listed due date.
- Email short papers to me by 11:59pm on the listed due date.
- Schedule a 20-minute slot in the week of October 15th (i.e., week 8) for an oral exam. Sign ups will take place during the prior week. Arrive at the appointed time and take the exam.
- Schedule a 20-minute slot in exam week for an individual oral exam. Sign ups will take place during the last week of classes. Arrive at the appointed time and take the exam.

Adhering to these expectations and procedures will lead to an enriching semester.

Course Materials: Most of the readings for the course will be from three required textbooks:

1. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*
2. St. Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will*
3. Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*
4. Plato, *Five Dialogues*
5. Plato, *Gorgias*

The remaining readings for the course will be available INSERT DESCRIPTION HERE.

Course Requirements: Course Requirements:

1. Participation and Attendance (10%)
2. One practice exercise for completion (5%)
3. One mid-term exam (20%)
4. Two short papers (20% each)
5. One final exam (25%)

Important Deadlines: See the course schedule below.

Late submission policy: Paper assignments should be submitted by or prior to the listed due date. I will not typically punish reasonable delays, and please feel free to email me with good-faith requests for extensions. If this lenient policy is abused or if I conclude that it is leading to poor learning outcomes, a more inflexible policy will be instituted.

Attendance and Participation: Students should arrive on time to all lectures and should participate in discussions. Please feel free to email me informing me of reasonable reasons for your absence. For now, no particular penalties will attach to repeated absences, though if this lenient policy is abused or if I conclude that it is leading to poor learning outcomes, a more inflexible policy will be instituted.

Technology Policy: To facilitate engaged dialogue, laptops, phones and other devices must be closed during class. Students should possess hard copies of all textbooks. Those requiring technology access due to learning needs or disabilities should provide appropriate notice.

Outside of class, assignments should be completed without the assistance of LLM chatbots like ChatGPT or Claude.

Other Notes on Classroom Etiquette: Be respectful, kind, encouraging, and patient with others.

Interesting links:

1. The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <https://iep.utm.edu>
2. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <https://plato.stanford.edu/index.html>

Course Schedule:

Week	Thursday
Week 1	8/29
Week 2	9/5
Week 3	9/12
Week 4	9/19
Week 5	9/26
Week 6	10/3
Week 7	10/10
Week 8	10/17: Oral Exams
Week 9	No class: Fall break
Week 10	10/31
Week 11	11/7
Week 12	11/14
Week 13	11/21
Week 14	No class: Thanksgiving Day
Week 15	12/5
Week 16	12/12: Last day of class

Reading Schedule:

1. 8/29, *First day of class*: No reading
2. 9/5, *The trial of Socrates*: Plato, *The Apology*; *Descartes on knowledge*: Descartes, *Meditations* (Meditations I-II)
3. 9/12, *Descartes on God & the Soul*: Descartes, *Meditations* (Meditation III-VI (skim IV))
4. 9/19, *Pascal*: Pascal, selections from *Pensées*

- **NOTE: Practice assignment due in class.**

5. 9/26, *Plato*: Plato, *Gorgias* (all of parts 1 and 2; skim part 3)
6. 10/3, *Aristotle on virtue & the good life*: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, I.1-5, 7-8, 13, II (entire book)
7. 10/10, *Aristotle on magnificence, magnanimity, and friendship*: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, IV.2-3, VIII
8. 10/17, **Oral Midterms in Progress**

- **NOTE: Paper #1 due by Saturday.**

*** Fall Break ***

9. 10/31, *Aristotle on happiness & Plato on the good*: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, X.7-9; Plato, *The Euthyphro*
10. 11/7, *Augustine on God and creation I*: Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will*
11. 11/14, *Augustine on God and creation II*: Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will*
12. 11/21, *Augustine on God and creation III*: Augustine, *On Free Choice of the Will*
13. 11/28, No class - **Thanksgiving Break**
14. 12/5, *Anselm on goodness and freedom*: Anselm, *On the Fall of the Devil*
15. 12/12, *Contemporary philosophy & conclusion*: Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality"

- **NOTE: Paper #2 due by Saturday.**