

PHI 2010 Introduction to Philosophy Fall 2011, Syllabus

Class Time: Tuesday and Thursday, 2:30-3:45

Instructor: Dr. Benjamin Murphy, bmurphy@fsu.edu, 317-0367 ext. 230, Office A

Web-site: <http://mailer.fsu.edu/~bmurphy/>

Office Hours: Mon and Wed: 2:30-4pm. Tues and Thurs: 4-5:30pm.

Prerequisites: None. The course is suitable for all students, from the first semester of university study onwards.

Students with disabilities: Students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should; (1) register with and provide documentation to the Student Disability Resource Center; (2) bring a letter to the instructor indicating the need for accommodation and what type. This should be done during the first week of class. For more information about services available to FSU students with disabilities, contact the:

Student Disability Resource Center, Dean of Students Department
+00(850) 644-9566 (voice),+00 (850) 644-8504 (TDD)
SDRC@admin.fsu.edu

Course Description:

The course is described in the General Bulletin as follows:

An introduction to the central problems in philosophy. Students will also learn how to construct and criticize arguments and develop their own philosophical positions.

We will focus on one central problem: the nature of knowledge. This problem is central to philosophy because whenever we consider any interesting philosophical statement – about the existence of God, the nature of numbers or relationship between mind and body, the question arises “How do you know that?” Anyone can offer an opinion on such topics, but philosophers aspire to knowledge, which is much more difficult to attain. In a philosophy paper, you are expected to state what you think, you should not merely repeat other people’s conclusions, but you do not get credit simply for stating your thoughts – you have to demonstrate that you have thought carefully about the matter, and that you are aiming for knowledge rather than mere opinion. So, any work in philosophy presupposes some understanding of the nature of knowledge, which makes it a suitable topic for your first university-level philosophy class.

We will tackle this question about the nature of knowledge by studying works of Plato, Descartes and Hume, as well as some more recent material.

Course Objectives:

By the end of the class, you should be able to read, understand, analyze and evaluate works of philosophy. You should have some understanding of what separates a good argument from a bad one, and should be able to offer arguments of your own. You should understand the difference between empiricism and rationalism, and the significance of this on-going philosophical debate for some other areas of philosophy.

Set Texts: Plato: *Five Dialogues* Descartes: *Meditations, Objections and Replies*. David Hume: *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*.

Grading:

94+ A
90+ A-
86+ B+
82+ B
78+ B-
74+ C+
70+ C
66+ C-
64+ D+
60+ D
56+ D-

Papers: 60% (Best two out of three)

Quizzes: 20% (Best five out of seven)

Final Examination: 20%

Each paper will receive a mark on 30: the best two will count towards the 60% for papers, with one exception: if you plagiarize, you will receive 0/30, **and this will be counted towards the final grade, however well you do on other papers.** If the average grade for all 3 papers is higher than 25/30, you will receive extra credit, two extra points for every point by which your average is higher than 25. Papers are designed to test all the skills described in the course objectives. More information about how they will be graded is available on the web-site. Quizzes are designed to test whether you have been reading the required material carefully, and paying attention in class. Each quiz will be based on all of the material that you should have read by that date, and also on what has been discussed in class. If you miss a class, you should borrow notes from another student, and you can also discuss it with me. However, a class is an unrepeatable event (unfortunately, we do not have the resources to record classes on video), so you should avoid missing any classes if possible. You may drop the lowest two quiz grades, and if you miss two quizzes, those will be the two you drop. **There will be no make-up quizzes.** The final examination will involve a comprehensive quiz, and an essay section.

Evaluation: So, you want to get an A? You must demonstrate that you understand the topics that you discuss, and have the ability to make a reasoned choice between competing points of view. You must demonstrate that you can see how the answer to different questions are connected. Papers must be written in fluent English, and must be well-structured.

Schedule:

8th September: Quiz 1

22nd September: Quiz 2

27th September: Paper 1 due: **What is knowledge?**

6th October: Quiz 3

14th October: Last day to drop without special permission

20th October: Quiz 4

27th October: Paper 2 due: Do we have a priori knowledge?

8th November: Quiz 5

22nd November: Quiz 6

6th December: Could we ever know whether or not we have a soul? Quiz 7

15th December: Final Examination, 12:30-3:00

Policies: So, you want to receive an F? Just ignore the following rules.

I do not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences: if you miss a class or arrive late, I assume it is for a good reason and ask for no explanation. If you have compelling reasons for missing more than one third of the course, then you should drop the class. You are permitted 6 absences: this means that you can miss 3 weeks of class without any automatic penalty. This is a generous allowance of absences that you should use wisely. Once you miss more than this, you *automatically* lose 1 point for every absence. **If you miss 9 classes, you automatically fail.** If you are late, or leave the class early, that counts as half an absence.

At the start of the class, I will close the door and then call roll. If you arrive when the door is closed, please wait patiently and quietly. Do not disturb the class. After 30 minutes, I will open the door, giving a chance for latecomers to enter and early-leavers to depart – in each case, receiving a half-credit for attendance.

Clocks on this campus are unreliable: I set my watch by the computer in my office – this is the same time as is displayed on computers in classrooms and in the library. (Administrative computers, e.g. in the Student Affairs Office are on a different server, although the time-difference is only a few seconds.)

Remember, you should always aim to be the classroom before the lesson begins. By the time I call roll, you should be sat at your desk waiting.

Cell phones must be switched off in class. You will be penalized for breaking this rule. Food is prohibited, but you may quietly imbibe non-alcoholic drinks.

Late Work: Work must be handed in during class on the date given. If you know that you will be unable to make a class, you may arrange for a friend to deliver the work to me, but the responsibility is yours. I will only consider grading late work in exceptional cases (e.g. serious illness, with a doctor's note). If I consider it appropriate, I will penalize late work. Unless you have a very good reason for presenting the work late, it will receive an F.

Highlights/Lowlights: To help all students in the class produce better papers, I intend to select the best and worst pieces of work that are submitted on the web-site along with my comments. These extracts will be presented anonymously. Please indicate on every paper you submit whether you are willing for parts of it to be used in this way. "Y" indicates "Yes", "N" indicates "No".

THERE IS A FATE WORSE THAN F!

If you deliberately violate the Academic Honor Code, you are trying to get more credit for your work than you deserve by deceiving your instructor. I do not tell my students lies, and it makes me angry when students try to deceive me. Furthermore, you are attempting to gain an unfair advantage over honest students. Taking steps to deal with plagiarism takes up a lot of my time, and slows down the whole process of grading. So, please read the following instructions and follow them carefully.

If you are using *any* words taken directly from any book, or web-site, or CD-ROM, they must be enclosed in inverted commas - "...", or else clearly indicated by an indented margin and change of format:

As with this piece of text, which clearly stands apart from the rest of this paragraph. This is how a quotation from another source should appear in your paper when printed, unless it is just a "couple of words" that you want to mention.

You must state from which book they were taken, preferably including a page number. The reference must be given in the text, when the quotation is used, so that I can see when grading your paper exactly what is your work and what is taken from another source. Use either footnotes¹, or (parentheses). It is *not* sufficient to list sources at the end of the paper, although you should also do this.

If you are using ideas or information taken from a book, a web-site, a lecture or a conversation with a friend, acknowledgement must be given in the text, at the point in which the idea or information is used.

Even if you are not quoting directly, there should still be a clear acknowledgement of your sources: this is known as paraphrasing – you explain someone else's ideas in your own words. By giving a footnote, you give credit to the

¹ This is a footnote. It would state the exact source of the quotation. If you are using Word, you can **Insert** footnotes and they will automatically be numbered. Footnotes are numbered consecutively throughout the paper. If you refer twice to the same book, you do not repeat the same number.

person whose information you are using. You also advertise to the professor that you have been reading about the subject.

If you have any doubts about meeting these requirements, contact me as soon as possible. Further notes are available on my web-site.

Papers must be written by you in English. If you write it in Spanish, you must translate it yourself: you are being graded, in part on your ability to communicate effectively in English. You are allowed to have help with “proof-reading” - i.e. you may ask someone to read what you have written in English and point out any mistakes. You must acknowledge your gratitude to your proof-reader at the start of the paper.

Plagiarism also includes the use of illicit material in closed book quizzes and final examinations. If I discover that you are guilty of plagiarism, you will receive an F for the piece of work in question, and it will be counted towards your final grade. As required by p.73 of the General Bulletin, I will inform the Vice-Rector in writing, and this will remain on your file. Repeated offenses may result in your being expelled from the university. If I discover a second offence, you will receive an F for the entire course.

I have read and understood the syllabus for PHI 2010, Fall 2011. If I fail to follow the instructions given here, particularly those which relate to violations of the Academic Honor Code, I accept responsibility.

Signed:

Name (print):

