

PHI 2010 INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

Dr. Nicholas Power

Course Overview: The course will introduce students to philosophy. The student will become familiar with some of the subject areas, figures and works, movements and trends of philosophy. The course will provide a model and a method for approaching many difficult and controversial topics and give the student insight into our intellectual heritage and into the foundational issues of his or her chosen field of study, be it philosophy or not. What is philosophy? It begins and ends with wonder. It is the study of a certain kind of question: those questions that are both “open-ended” or unanswerable and seen to be important to us. That is, if an important question is decidable but we just haven’t all the facts yet, then it must belong to some non-philosophical (probably scientific) field or other. This explains why early scientist, such as Newton were called “natural philosophers”. Although the questions that Newton attempted to answer were considered philosophical in his day, later they became issues of scientific domains. Not everyone who does philosophy (which is everyone) makes progress at doing it. The way progress is made is by clarifying what the question is, by recognizing the criteria for good possible answers to the question, by realizing and appreciating and appreciating its importance (or ultimately its unimportance), by coming to situate that question within a whole complex of questions which define s a reflective, well-ordered and fully human life, and thus by gaining a tool, a method, or a set of skills-very powerful intellectual tools-that one can use in any and all areas of reasoning. The only prerequisite for success in this course is an open and attentive mind; there is no one expert in all the areas of life that we will discuss; and, if you make progress (as characterized above) then that progress will be recognized and rewarded.

Required Texts: Steven Cahn, Editor: *Exploring Philosophy*, (Oxford University Press, 2000)

Outline of Study:

Examination of Plato’s Theory of Forms

Plato’s Doctrine s of Immortality of the Soul; Learning as Recollection, Essentialism

Plato’s Impact of Theologians and Philosophers

Descartes Theory of the Self and its Knowledge of the World

Consequences of Dualism on Science, Religion, Common Sense

Cogito Ergo Sum; “*Method of Doubt*”; *Ontological Arguments*

Ethical Theories: Relativism/Absolutism, Rights/Responsibilities, Shame/Resentment, Reason/Sentiment-

Hobbe’s Social contract

Kant’s Categorical Imperative

Mill’s Utilitarianism

John Rawls’ “contractarian” revision

Homework and Exams: There will be two exams; a mid-term and a final. You will also have to write three short (3-4 page) response papers on assigned reading materials. Class size permitting, a group presentation on the application of ethical theories will be done during dead week

Grading Policy: Your grade for the course will be determined on the following numerical scale:

A = 91-100	Points will be distributed as follows:	
B = 81 – 90	Group Presentation	5
C = 71 – 80	Response Papers (3 @ 15 each)	45
D = 61 – 70	Mid-term Exam	25
F = 60 and below-	Final Exam	25

Class Participation: Attendance is mandatory; roll will be taken at each class meeting. More than five missed class meetings will result in a very bad headache, dizziness, bouts of depression, hair loss, and a withdrawal form. Late work is unacceptable, quizzes cannot be made up at a later date; writing assignments will be penalized 1/3 of a letter grade for each calendar day they are late. All University policies concerning **withdrawal** from the course, **plagiarism** and other forms of cheating, etc. are in full effect. Consult your *Student Handbook* for details.