

**Introduction to Philosophy  
(Tentative Syllabus, Spring 2018)**

PHIL 102, MW 12:00-1:15

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**Course Description**

The course will examine a selection of philosophical texts throughout history, in approaching the following topics: the nature and value of truth, the benefits and dangers of education, the nature of suffering and the nature of love, and human responses to both.

We will begin with Plato, and his dialogues *Republic*, *Gorgias*, and the *Symposium*. Plato articulates a full vision of the nature and value of truth, its relation to goodness, and the nature of human love and its proper place in life. Love of what is good and beautiful will lead one to live the best sort of life, one which is both ethical and fully knowledgeable, free from distraction and manipulation. Various forms of scientific, political, and religious upheaval at the beginning of the modern period undermine such fully articulated visions of what it means to live a good life. This new confusion leads Descartes to seek a secure foundation for knowledge in propositions which are proved deductively and therefore cannot be doubted. In the wake of the failure of what would later be termed Enlightenment projects, several philosophers offer alternative sources of meaning. Ultimately, what formed a unity in Plato and the Greeks (and various medieval thinkers)—knowledge and goodness—is divided in the modern period. In your final papers, you will be asked to critically evaluate this philosophical heritage.

**Readings**

Please purchase the following books. *No e-copies are allowed: you will be required to have the readings in class, and devices (laptops, phones, etc.) are not allowed out in class.* All are available for purchase on amazon.com and many other online book retailers.

Plato, *Gorgias*, trans. Zeyl, Hackett, 1987. ISBN 0872200167

Plato, *Symposium*, trans. Shelly. St. Augustine Press, 2002. ISBN 1587318024

Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, trans. Cress, Hackett, 1993. ISBN 0872201929

Dostoevsky, *Notes from the Underground*, trans. Garnett, Dover, 2010. ISBN 9780486270531

Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. Kaufmann, Vintage, 1974, ISBN 0394719859

Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, trans. Strachey, Norton, 1989. ISBN 0393301583

The following texts will be sent out to you, you will be required to print and bring them to class:

Plato, selections from the *Republic*

Nietzsche, selections from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, *Genealogy of Morals*

Weil, "Human Personality"

Selections from Adorno/Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*

**Assignments**

Your grade will be based on thirteen short papers (80%), participation in class discussion (10%) and a final paper (10%). All grading in class will be done with letter grades, figured on a four point scale (A=4.0, A-=3.67, B+=3.33, etc.)

### **Short Papers (80% of Final Grade)**

You will write one short paper per week. You will either be in the Monday group (and so have a paper due every Monday) or the Wednesday group (and have a paper due every Wednesday). You will both email me your paper *by 11:45 on the day it is due* AND bring a hard copy with you to class. Every class period, two students will present their papers to the class. In presenting your paper, be prepared to defend the views presented, perhaps altering or refining them in the course of the ensuing discussion.

A short paper is no longer than 2 page, double-spaced, 12 point font. These papers are meant to develop your ability to write concise and accurate prose. Skip the intro and conclusion, and write only exactly what you mean, and write it only once, in plain language.

### **Final Paper (10% of final grade)**

You will write a final paper which will involve comparing Plato with one of the modern philosophers. I will hand out sample prompts, but you are encouraged to generate your own topic. It will be due during finals, instead of a final exam.

### **Participation (10% of final grade)**

It is in your interest to come to class and participate in discussion. This will be the best way to understand the readings, to perform well on the exams and to write penetrating and insightful papers, and to come to a greater understanding of the nature of justice, goodness, and love. However, if this is not enough to motivate you, 10% of your grade also depends upon coming to class and participating.

Generally, there is an 'A' baseline for this portion of your grade. If you have perfect attendance (2 or fewer unexcused absences), you will receive an A. If you have less than perfect attendance (3 unexcused absences, for instance) but are an enthusiastic and respectful participant in class, you will also receive an A. If your attendance is sub-par, and you don't speak up in class, you will get less than an A. If you miss 6 classes or more without prior permission, you will get an 'F' in this category. I also reserve the right to bump up borderline final grades of students who perform particularly well in this category.

An "excused" absence generally means you have notified me in advance and have a good reason to miss. Do not come to class if you are sick with more than a minor cold. Just send me an email letting me know. This will not count against you.

### **PLS "Verbal Expression" Designation**

I take seriously the VE designation. Writing clearly, elegantly, and concisely is a skill that will serve you well in your academic career and throughout your life. The many short papers, and my feedback, will help you to write in a clear and precise manner. The readings, and the ensuing discussions, will increase your capacity to understand and critically evaluate complex ideas, and to articulate your criticism verbally.

### **Expectations/Engaged Academic Time**

1 Clark "unit" is actually the equivalent of 4 credit hours, but we meet for only 3 academic hours per week. For every credit hour, you should be have 3 hours/week of "engaged academic time", so for this class, that is 12 hours/week. Outside of class, you should be working about 9 hours on reading and writing.

### **Academic Integrity**

Violations of academic integrity will not be tolerated. There are many ways to violate the academic integrity, and you are responsible to know what counts as a violation of academic integrity. If you have any doubt, send me an email and I will let you know. Plagiarism can take many forms, but the most common are as follows: using another author's idea in your

paper without citation, paraphrasing someone else's work without citation, inserting phrases from another person's work without quotation marks, and extensive collaboration with other students. While discussing the ideas in your paper with other students is worthwhile and I would encourage you to do this, you must write your paper on your own. When in doubt, just add a footnote, don't worry so much about the format of it: "I got this idea from Rafe's comment in class on 3/2" is fine. Most forms of plagiarism can be avoided by simply not consulting any material for your paper except those required for the course. Do not consult sources that originate on the internet (e.g. wikipedia, blogs). For more information visit: <https://www2.clarku.edu/offices/aac/integrity.cfm>

## Schedule

Below is a schedule of the core readings. My primary method of communication with you (apart from in class) will be via email. I reserve the right to change this schedule. If there is a significant change to this schedule, I will send out the revised schedule via email.

### Tentative Schedule:

Wednesday 1/17	Introduction	
Monday 1/22	Republic VI and VII (507b-521d)	Allegory of the Cave
Wednesday 1/24	Republic VI and VII (507b-521d)	Divided line, eyes of the soul
Monday 1/29	Gorgias 447a-466b	Education, rhetoric
Wednesday 1/31	Gorgias 466b-481b;	The good life
Monday 2/5	Gorgias 481b-505c	Power
Wednesday 2/7	Gorgias 505c-527e	Justice
Monday 2/12	Symposium speech Aristophanes	Soulmates
Wednesday 2/14	Symposium speech Socrates	Love of beautiful ideas
Monday 2/19	Symposium speech Alcibiades	Love of Socrates
Wednesday 2/21	Descartes <i>Meditations</i> I-II	Starting from scratch
Monday 2/26	Descartes <i>Meditations</i> III	Existence of God
Wednesday 2/28	Descartes <i>Meditations</i> IV	Existence of everything else
*****WEEK OF 3/5 SPRING BREAK*****		
Monday 3/12	Dostoevsky <i>Notes from Underground</i>	Laws of nature and action
Wednesday 3/14	Dostoevsky <i>Notes from Underground</i>	"The most advantageous advantage"
Monday 3/19	Nietzsche sel. <i>TSZ, BGE</i>	Search for meaning
Wednesday 3/21	Nietzsche sel. <i>GM, GS</i>	Self-knowledge
Monday 3/26	Nietzsche Book III <i>GS</i>	The value of truth
Wednesday 3/28	Nietzsche Book IV <i>GS</i>	Suffering and affirmation
Monday 4/2	Freud <i>Civilization</i> chs. 1-2	Self-knowledge, revisited
Wednesday 4/4	Freud <i>Civilization</i> chs. 3-5	Love
Monday 4/9	Freud <i>Civilization</i> chs. 6-7	Death
Wednesday 4/11	Weil "Human Personality"	Love and justice
Monday 4/16	Weil "Human Personality"	Love and justice
Wednesday 4/18	Adorno & Horkheimer <i>Dialectic</i>	Enlightenment and morality
Monday 4/23	Adorno & Horkheimer <i>Dialectic</i>	The culture machine
Wednesday 3/25	TBD	
Monday 4/30	Conclusion and review	