

Introduction to Philosophy

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Course Number: PHIL 210A
Semester: Spring 2008
Time: MWF 11:40-12:30
Location: Hoover 210

Philosophy Rocks?

Yes, that's right—philosophy rocks. That is to say, philosophy makes a difference in this world—it has, it does, and it will. Sometimes this has been good; sometimes this has been bad. But either way, philosophy makes a difference. One little rock at the top of a mountain can cause an avalanche down in the valley.

What is philosophy? Philosophy is thinking hard. Philosophy is thinking long. Philosophy is following through on ideas without getting distracted, and patiently trudging along where they take you. It is a long journey up steep trails, over rough terrain, and through thin air. So grab a walking stick, lace up your boots and prepare to take one step at a time. The ideas may seem like they are in the clouds or that they are small and make no difference. But join us as we see how these ideas rock your world.

'Doing' Philosophy

This course focuses on some of the greatest philosophers of recorded history. By reading primary sources (rather than secondary sources) and whole texts (rather than excerpts), we will get to engage and interact with some of the best thinkers ever. Rather than reading *about* philosophers, we're going to hit the trail and *do* philosophy ourselves. We're going to enter into that conversation that's been going on for nearly three thousand years.

What does 'doing philosophy' look like? Well, to get us up to where the conversation is taking place, we'll follow some trails marked out by some of the best philosophers in history. We'll do that by reading philosophers, reflecting on the ideas they raise, discussing those ideas, and writing about those ideas. We'll get to the mountain heights of ideas and start observing, and talking about what we see there.

From the Ancient philosophers to Medieval philosophers to Modern philosophers to Postmodern philosophers, people have been asking about the meaning of life, and now, you get to listen to some of each of these and to join that conversation.

Course Goals:

The student will be able to:

1. Understand philosophical arguments (Exposition).
2. Identify presuppositions in arguments or questions (Presuppositions).
3. Identify implications of various philosophical commitments (Implications).
4. Discover how philosophical ideas rock this world (Applications).

Required Texts:

Plato (c.429-347 B.C.), *Apology of Socrates, Crito* (in *Four Texts on Socrates*)

Bonaventure (1221-1274), *The Journey of the Mind (Soul) to God*

Descartes (1596-1650), *Meditations on First Philosophy*

Kierkegaard, (1813-1855), *Philosophical Fragments*

Levinas (1906-1995), (*On-Line Essays*)

Course Requirements:**1. Being Present (10%)**

Being present (in every way), on time and engaged in our discussion is crucial to success and participating in class will also be considered. I grant everyone 3 absences and do not put myself in the position of judging whether an absence is excused or not (so no need to notify me about absences unless it is a situation where you're in the hospital or some-such). Participation is not only speaking, but involves listening well to others.

2. Questions (10%)

Each Monday, after reading over the material for the first time, write out at least one literal question (about something that you do not understand or that you find confusing). Also, identify a key question you think is important to the *author*. Thirdly, ask a question related to the reading that *you* think is important. No late work will be accepted, but you only need to turn in 10 (which means you get three byes). Save all your work, since you will include it in a year-end portfolio.

3. Précis (10%)—A *précis* is a short (precise) interaction with the reading. The *précis* should cover the reading for the week and should be one to two pages in length (300-600 words). The *précis* is due on Wednesday of each week at the *beginning* of class. No late work will be accepted, but you only need to turn in 10 (which means you get three byes). In your *précis*:

- a) identify a key question the philosopher is asking
 - b) give a concise exposition of how the philosopher is answering that question
- Eventually, I will want you to start including the following as well:
- c) identify a presupposition that the author is making
 - d) explain an implication that follows from the presupposition

Save all your work, since you will include it in a year-end portfolio.

4. Reflections (10%)—Reflections are somewhat like journal entries that you make as you reflect on what possible applications the week's reading might have on the way that you understand the world around you, yourself and others. The reflection is approximately one page and is due every Friday. No late work will be accepted, but you only need to turn in 10 (which means you get three byes). The last reflection for each book we read should be a summary reflection for the entire work—this can be 2-3 pages.

5. Meeting with Professor—Mid-semester, instead of meeting for usual class, you will meet individually with the professor to discuss what you've learned so far and to continue the conversation. You will bring your portfolio (so far) to this meeting.

This will not be graded (except as part of your 'presence' grade). You will also meet with fellow students in lieu of the regular class sessions.

6. *Disputatio* (30%) (10% for first one, 20% for second one)—A *disputatio* is a medieval practice that means 'disputation.' Each person will be in a group that participates in a *disputatio* twice throughout the semester. This will be accompanied with an expanded précis. More information will be given on a separate handout.

7. *Final Paper and Meeting* (30%)—You will write a 5-7 page paper expanding on one of your *disputatios*. This will include identifying a question, your answer to the question (your thesis), along with objections to your thesis and replies to the objections. The paper will also demonstrate your ability to see the relationships between the presuppositions, implications and applications of your thesis. At this time you'll also present your portfolio, which will be a compilation of all the questions, précis, and reflections along with a summary reflection on each work we've read.

Evaluation

0-59=F, 60-69=D, 70-76=C, 77-79=C+, 80-82=B-, 83-86=B, 87-89=B+, 90-92=A-, 93-100=A

Plagiarism

Avoid plagiarism. Plagiarism includes the obvious cases of using another person's writing without citing them, but it also includes using someone's ideas without citing them. The consequences for plagiarism could include failing the course or even expulsion from the university, as specified in the student handbook. I look forward to reading your honest grappling with the ideas and issues raised in the course.

The Academic Resource Center (ARC)

provides all students with free writing consultation, general tutoring, academic coaching, and learning strategies (e.g., techniques to improve reading, note-taking, study, time management). The ARC hours of operation are from 1:00-10:00 p.m., Monday through Thursday, and 12:00-4:00 p.m. on Friday. Call ext. 2327 or email the_arc@georgefox.edu to schedule an appointment. Visit www.georgefox.edu/arc/ for information about ARC Consultants' areas of study, instructions for scheduling an appointment, and helpful learning tools. Call Rick Muthiah, Director of the Academic Resource Center, at ext. 2314 if you have questions