

**Introduction to Philosophy:
The Big Questions**
(non-traditional)
Spring 20XY

Instructor: Dr. Graham Clay

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Course Description:

In this course, you will learn about some of the major themes of Western philosophy with the help of some of its major figures. Topics covered will include knowledge of the external world, the existence of god(s), personal identity, the mind-body problem, the nature of free will, and the nature and demandingness of morality. Figures who will guide you in your exploration of these topics will include René Descartes, G.E. Moore, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, Emilie du Châtelet, David Hume, Blaise Pascal, Princess Elisabeth, Linda Zagzebski, Peter Singer, and J.L. Mackie. Along the way, you will learn how to better read a wide variety of philosophical works, verbally argue about philosophical matters, write philosophical essays, and use some of the basic tools of logic.

Course Goals:

By the end of this course, you should expect to have:

- Improved your ability to read philosophical texts, and especially historical texts
- Improved your ability to evaluate philosophical arguments and positions
- Improved your philosophical writing and speaking abilities
- Learned about the positions of some of the most influential Western philosophers
- Learned some of the basic tools of logic
- Become prepared to take more advanced courses in philosophy

Grading:

40% - Weekly Tasks

10% - Verbal Contributions During Class

Philosophy is a contact sport. This class is training for a life of doing philosophy, so you must engage with me and your classmates during class by asking questions, participating in breakout room activities, and interacting with your classmates. If you stay engaged and ask a question or make a comment at least once a week (or so), you will get a perfect score.

15% - Short Writing Assignments

The goal of these assignments is to get you in the habit of generating your own views about the content of the course. I will give some brief comments on your responses, but the primary objective here is to begin to spark ideas that you can

develop further in class or in your papers. The assignments will be posted, received, and manually graded on Sakai.

15% - Review Quizzes

The goal of these quizzes is to evaluate the extent to which you understood the readings in question. They are intended as simple checks of your comprehension. You should come to office hours if you are running into trouble. The quizzes will be posted, received, and automatically graded on Sakai.

60% - Papers

20% - Paper #1

This 3-5 page paper will concern the topics of Unit 1. You have some flexibility in the thesis of your paper—perhaps you would like to argue that we have reason to believe that God exists or that we cannot know there is an external world—but the structure of the paper must conform with my requirements. These requirements are that the paper has a positive argument section (we will discuss what this means), an objection section, and a response section. More information about this paper, as well as a grading rubric, will be provided in class...

20% - Paper #2

This 3-5 page paper will concern the topics of Unit 2. You have some flexibility in the thesis of your paper—perhaps you would like to argue that we are essentially human animals or that substance dualism has a fatal flaw—but the structure of the paper must conform with the requirements of the preceding paper (noted above). More information about this paper will be provided in class...

20% - Paper #3

This 3-5 page paper will concern the topics of Unit 3. You have some flexibility in the thesis of your paper—perhaps you would like to argue that compatibilism is true or that Singer's argument is invalid—but the structure of the paper must conform with the requirements of the preceding papers (noted above). More information about this paper will be provided in class...

Class Schedule

(subject to change depending on pace, class interests, etc.)

Thursday, February 4 - *Introductions, Course Details, Preliminaries*

Unit 1: The External World and God

Tuesday, February 9 - *Plato + Descartes*

Reading #1: - Excerpts from *The Republic*.
- Excerpts from *Meditations on First Philosophy*.

Short Writing Assignment #1

Thursday, February 11 - *Descartes + Hobbes*

Reading #2: - Excerpts from *Third Set of Objections and Replies*.
- Excerpts from *The Principles of Human Knowledge*.

Tuesday, February 16 - *Moore*

Reading #3: - Excerpts from "Proof of an External World."

Short Writing Assignment #2

Thursday, February 18 - *Plantinga*

Reading #4: - Excerpts from *Warrant and Proper Function*.

Review Quiz #1

Tuesday, February 23 - *Leibniz*

Reading #5: - Excerpts from *On the Ultimate Origination of Things, Theodicy, and Monadology*.

Short Writing Assignment #3

Thursday, February 25 - *du Châtelet + Hume*

Reading #6: - Excerpts from *Foundations* and *A Treatise of Human Nature*

Tuesday, March 2 - *Leibniz + Hume*

Reading #7: - Excerpts from *A Specimen of Dynamics* and *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*.

Review Quiz #2

Thursday, March 4 - *Pascal*

Reading #8: - Excerpts from *Pensées de M. Pascal sur la religion et sur quelques autres sujets*.

Paper #1

Unit 2: Personal Identity and the Mind-Body Problem

Tuesday, March 9 - *Locke*

Reading #9: - Excerpts from *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*.

- Thursday, March 11 - *Hume*
Reading #10: - Excerpts from *A Treatise Concerning Human Nature*.
- Tuesday, March 16 - *DeGrazia + Olson*
Reading #11: - Excerpts from "Human Persons" and "The Biological Approach."
Short Writing Assignment #4
- Thursday, March 18 - *Descartes*
Reading #12: - Excerpts from *Meditations*.
 - Excerpts from *Second Set of Replies*.
 - Excerpts from *Principles*.
Review Quiz #3
- Tuesday, March 23 - *Elisabeth + Arnauld*
Reading #13: - Excerpts from Elisabeth's correspondence with Descartes.
 - Excerpts from *Fourth Set of Objections and Replies*.
Short Writing Assignment #5
- Thursday, March 25 - *Rachels + Rachels*
Reading #14: - Excerpts from *Problems from Philosophy* (Chapters 6, 7)
- Tuesday, March 30 - *Hume*
Reading #15: - Excerpts from *A Treatise of Human Nature*.
Review Quiz #4
- Thursday, April 1 - *Chalmers*
Reading #16: - Excerpts from "Panpsychism and Panprotopsychism."
Paper #2
- Tuesday, April 6 - *Mid-Term Break (NO CLASS)*
Thursday, April 8 - *Mid-Term Break (NO CLASS)*
- Unit 3: Free Will and Morality**
- Tuesday, April 13 - *Van Inwagen*
Reading #17: - Excerpts from "The Incompatibility of Free Will and Determinism."
Short Writing Assignment #6
- Thursday, April 15 - *Hume*
Reading #18: - Excerpts from *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*.
- Tuesday, April 20 - *Vihvelin*
Reading #19: - Excerpts from "Compatibilism, Incompatibilism, and Impossibilism."
Short Writing Assignment #7
- Thursday, April 22 - *Rachels + Rachels*

Reading #20: - Excerpts from *Problems from Philosophy* (Chapters 8, 9).
Review Quiz #5

Tuesday, April 27 - Aristotle + Zagzebski

Reading #21: - Excerpts from *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Virtues of the Mind*.

Thursday, April 29 - Mill

Reading #22: - Excerpts from *Utilitarianism*.

Short Writing Assignment #8

Tuesday, May 4 - Mackie

Reading #23: - Excerpts *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*.

Review Quiz #6

Thursday, May 6 - Rachels + Rachels

Reading #24: - Excerpts from *Problems from Philosophy*.

Tuesday, May 11 - Singer

Reading #25: - Excerpts from "Famine, Affluence, and Morality."

Short Writing Assignment #9

Thursday, May 15 - Final Essays Due

Paper #3