PHIL 1000: Introduction to Philosophy   Fall, 2007

Lecture: TR, 11^{00}-12^{15}, Hellems 229   Web page: home.earthlink.net/~owl233
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                                                       or by appointment

What Is This Course About?

The course will introduce you to some major issues in Western philosophy, and to the reasoned, analytical approach of contemporary philosophers to those issues. Our emphasis will be on clearly formulating alternative theories and evaluating *arguments* for and against them. The course will have 4 units, discussing the following topics:

Unit 1 (Introduction, Epistemology): What is philosophy? When and why is rationality important? What is truth? Is truth absolute?

Unit 2 (Metaphysics): Is there a God? Why would God would allow evil to exist?

Unit 3 (Ethics): Are there objective values? How do we know about them? What obligations do we have to the needy? To animals? Is it good to make more people? Is equality good?

Unit 4 (Political philosophy): How should wealth be distributed in society? Where does the government's authority derive from? Do we need government?

Text

All readings are on e-reserve from the library. To access these, go to <http://libraries.colorado.edu/search/p?SEARCH=huemer> on the web. You will need your *identikey* and *password*. You may want to print everything in advance. If you don't understand how this works, see the FAQ at <http://ucblibraries.colorado.edu/circulation/ereserves/faqstudents.htm>.

Course Requirements & Grading

Reading Quizzes (1/3 of grade):
For each assigned reading, you will be asked to answer a few short-answer questions at the beginning of the class during which the reading will be discussed. You'll have about 5 minutes to do the quiz. *Note:* If you walk in after I've collected the quizzes, then you won't be allowed to take it, and so you'll get *no credit* for that quiz. ☹

Grading: You'll get full credit as long as you write answers that sound like you did the reading.

Missing quizzes: You can miss three quizzes during the semester without penalty. If you have to miss more than that, you'll have to come up with documentation of your serious medical condition that prevents you from attending class.

Tests (2/3 of grade):
There will be 4 in-class tests (multiple choice & short answer). You will be tested on your knowledge & understanding of the philosophical positions and arguments discussed in class and in the readings (not on your own opinions). The last test will cover unit 4 only; there is no cumulative final.

Paper (optional): If you don't want to take test #4 on the final exam day, you may instead write me a paper. Length: 6-8 pages. Topic: Take some idea that was defended in the readings or the lecture during the semester, and explain why you think it is wrong. Guidelines: see the Writing Guide on

my web site.

Proper attitude about grades:

a) You should be here primarily to learn, not to get a grade. b) Expect to be graded on your observable intellectual performance, not on the basis of effort or need. c) Relax. After you graduate, no one will ever look at your grades again. The grade is mainly for *you*, to let you know how much understanding you displayed.

Should You Take This Class?

- Philosophy consists mainly in *arguments* about *theoretical questions*. If that sounds fun to you, then you're in the right place. If you are seeking directly practical knowledge, or if you prefer to avoid arguing, then you've chosen the wrong class.
- Don't take the class if you are unable to regularly make it on time. Be forewarned that due to the objective nature of my tests, if you don't do the readings and come to class, you will be pretty much screwed on the tests.
- The readings don't look long, but you may have to read these articles more than once to understand them (and even then you might have trouble).
- If you love political correctness (be honest!), if you think a teacher's job is to stoke students' self-esteem, or if you think there's no truth and all beliefs are equal, then you probably shouldn't take a class from me.
- The benefit of the class is that you will learn about some fundamental issues and theories bearing on the nature of the world and our place in it. Even better, you will be familiarized, a little bit, with how to think logically about these issues.

Other Guidelines

1. To contact me: send email to the address listed above, and I will probably respond the same day. Or call between 10 a.m. and 10 p.m.; leave a message, since I screen my calls.
2. Feel free come to my office to talk about philosophy, play chess, or whatever. If you have any questions, I will do my best to answer them, but you needn't have a specific question to come.
3. During class, please do not hesitate to comment on or ask about anything we discuss. Feel free to say whatever is on your mind (that has to do with philosophy).
4. I have a web page <http://home.earthlink.net/~owl233/>, which includes some information about the class, including this syllabus & some lecture notes, among other, more interesting things.

Schedule

This shows when you should have completed each reading assignment. *Note:* Some days have more than one reading assignment. Also note test dates.

Unit 1	Introduction, Rationality & Truth
T, Aug. 28	Course requirements. What is philosophy? Rand, "Philosophy: Who Needs It"
R, Aug. 30	Nature & importance of rationality. Clifford, "The Ethics of Belief"; Feynman, "Cargo Cult Science"
T, Sept. 4	Disagreement & Irrationality. Huemer, "Why People Are Irrational about Politics", sections 1-4
R, Sept. 6	More Irrationality. Huemer, "Why People Are Irrational about Politics", sections 5-8
T, Sept. 11	Truth. Yudkowsky, "The Simple Truth"
R, Sept. 13	Relativism. Westacott, "Cognitive Relativism"
T, Sept. 18	More relativism, absolutism.
R, Sept. 20	Test #1.
Unit 2	**The Existence of God**
T, Sept. 25	The ontological argument. Anselm, *Proslogium*, ch. II
R, Sept. 27	The first cause argument. Clarke, *A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God*; and Russell, from "Why I Am Not a Christian," read just 'THE FIRST CAUSE ARGUMENT'
T, Oct. 2	Pascal's Wager. Pascal, *Pensées*
R, Oct. 4	The fine-tuning argument. Gribbin and Rees, *Cosmic Coincidences*
T, Oct. 9	More about fine tuning.
R, Oct. 11	The problem of evil. Dawkins, "God's Utility Function"
T, Oct. 16	Atheism vs. Christianity. Russell, "Why I Am Not a Christian" (the rest of it) Optional extra reading: home.sprynet.com/~owl1/biblequotes.htm
R, Oct. 18	Test #2.

Unit 3	**Ethics**
T, Oct. 23	Moral reality & moral knowledge: anti-realist theories. Huemer, *Ethical Intuitionism*, 9.1
R, Oct. 25	Moral reality & moral knowledge: intuitionism. Huemer, *Ethical Intuitionism*, 9.2-9.5
T, Oct. 30	Feeding the poor. Singer, "Rich and Poor"
R, Nov. 1	Ethics & animals. Norcross, "Puppies, Pigs, and People"
T, Nov. 6	Population ethics. Parfit, "The Repugnant Conclusion"
R, Nov. 8	More on the repugnant conclusion.
T, Nov. 13	The value (?) of equality. Huemer, "Against Egalitarianism"
R, Nov. 15	Test #3.
T, Nov. 20	*No class—Thanksgiving break*
R, Nov. 22	*No class—Thanksgiving break*
Unit 4	**Political Philosophy**
T, Nov. 27	Distributive justice: For redistribution. Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, sections 3, 11
R, Nov. 29	Distributive justice: Against redistribution. Nozick, Distributive justice (pp. 192-5, 150-3, 169-72)
T, Dec. 4	The social contract theory of government. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, excerpts

R, Dec. 6	More social contract theory + criticisms.
	     Declaration of Independence, excerpt
	     Nozick, Tale of the slave (pp. 290-2)

T, Dec. 11	Anarchy. Friedman, *The Machinery of Freedom*, chapters 28, 29, 39
R, Dec. 13	More anarchy. Friedman, *The Machinery of Freedom*, chapters 6, 7, 34
Sat, Dec. 15 10:30 a.m.	Test #4. (scheduled final exam time)