

Prof. Matthew Lockard
Southern Methodist University
May Term 2017

PHIL 1305: Introduction to Philosophy

Syllabus

This course provides an introduction to some of the most influential questions, problems, and positions in the Western philosophical tradition. In particular, we will focus on the following topics:

1. Empirical knowledge: Do our sensory experiences provide us with knowledge of an external world? Is there any way for you to know that your sense experiences are not completely deceptive?
2. God, goodness, and evil: Is there a God? Can the existence of a supremely good and powerful God be reconciled with the existence of evil?
3. Free Will, Determinism, and Moral Responsibility: Is free will consistent with a scientific understanding of nature? If not, is it possible for individuals to be morally responsible for their actions?
4. Ethics and morality: What makes an action morally right or wrong? Is it necessarily in your own best interest to live ethically? Does it always make sense to act ethically, or are there times when it is irrational to do the morally right thing?

The class will be interactive and discussion-oriented. In addition to looking at ancient and modern writings on philosophical topics, we'll be looking at contemporary discussion and dramatization of these topics online, in television, and in film.

PHIL 1301: Introduction to Philosophy satisfies Level I of the Philosophical and Religious Inquiry and Ethics pillar of the Undergraduate Curriculum.

Instructor:

Dr. Matthew Lockard is an Associate Professor of Philosophy at SMU. He arrived at SMU in 2008 after completing his Ph.D. in Philosophy at UCLA, where he won several awards for both teaching and research. At SMU, Dr. Lockard's teaching has been recognized with nominations for a Gold Mustang Outstanding Faculty Award, a President's Associates Outstanding Faculty Award, and an Altshuler Distinguished Teaching Professor Awards.

Textbook:

Introduction to Philosophy: Classical and Contemporary Readings, 6th edition. Perry, Bratman, and Fischer, eds. Oxford University Press, 2013.

Assignments:

Your grade will be determined by your participation in discussions, as well as your scores on two quizzes and a final exam. The quizzes and the final will consist of both multiple choice and short essay questions. The assignments will be weighted as follows:

Quiz #1	= 25%
Quiz #2	= 25%
Final exam	= 40%
Attendance & participation	= 10%

Office hours and contact info:

Attending office hours is a great way to work through things that you find perplexing and to bounce your ideas off others. So please come by office hours! I enjoy discussing philosophy and am eager to hear what you think of the material we're studying.

Office: Hyer Hall 209

Office hours: TBA

E-mail: mlockard@smu.edu

Tel: 214-768-4620

Miscellaneous:

The use of laptops and other electronic devices (phones, iPads, etc.) is not permitted in class. Exceptions will of course be made for students with disabilities who need to use such devices. (See next item.)

Disability Accommodations: Students needing academic accommodations for a disability must first contact the office of Disability Accommodation and Success Strategies (DASS) at 214-768-4557 to verify the disability and establish eligibility for accommodations (such as: extra time to complete assignments, permission to use a laptop for note-taking, permission to record lectures, etc.). I will be happy to accommodate any such needs, so please let me know if you need such accommodation.

Religious holidays, sporting events, & extracurricular activities: Please notify me at the beginning of the term if you know you will miss class for one of these reasons, being sure to provide documentation of your anticipated absences. We can then work out ways to accommodate you. Note, however, that given the compressed May Term schedule, we only have 10 days of instruction prior to the final exam, so with each absence you miss 10% of the class!

This course satisfies Level I of the Philosophical and Religious Inquiry and Ethics pillar of the University Curriculum. The associated Student Learning Outcome for this class is:

- Students will be able to describe and explain some of the general features and principal theoretical methods of one of the fields of philosophy, religious studies, or ethics.

Schedule: (*Tentative and subject to revision*)

Skepticism and empirical knowledge (May 18th – May 22nd)

- Rene Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy* (pp.136-160 in PBF)
- In-class viewing and discussion of selected scenes from the film *The Matrix*.
- G.E. Moore, “Proof of an External World” (BlackBoard)

Quiz on skepticism and empirical knowledge: May 23rd

Philosophy of religion (May 23rd – May 26th)

- Saint Anselm of Canterbury, “The Ontological Argument” (pp. 42-43 in PBF)
- Saint Thomas Aquinas, “The Existence of God” (pp. 44-46 in PBF)
- Bertrand Russell, “Why I am Not a Christian” (pp. 55-58 in PBF)
- In-class viewing and discussion of televised BBC interview with Russell.
- Blaise Pascal, “The Wager” (pp. 51-54 in PBF)

Quiz on philosophy of religion: May 30th

Free will and moral responsibility (May 30th – May 31st)

- Roderick Chisholm, “Human Freedom and the Self” (pp. 377-384 in PBF)
- Harry Frankfurt, “Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility” (pp. 407-413 in PBF)
- Harry Frankfurt, “Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person” (pp. 430-439 in PBF)

Ethics and morality (May 31st – June 1st)

- Plato, *The Republic* (pp. 645-681 in PBF)
- Jeremy Bentham, “The Principle of Utility” (pp. 547-559 in PBF)
- John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism* (pp. 460-476 in PBF)
- In-class viewing of Bloggingheads.TV interview of Peter Singer on utilitarianism
- Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (pp. 504-520 in PBF)

Final Exam: June 2nd