

Prof. Matthew Lockard
Southern Methodist University
May Term 2014

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. Ethics and morality: What makes an action morally right or wrong? Is it in one's own best interest to live ethically? Could it be rational to follow the dictates of morality if doing so is *not* conducive to self-interest?

Our aim throughout this course will be to gain a clear conception of various philosophical problems associated with these topics; to learn some of the main positions that have been taken with respect to these problems; and to develop the ability to discuss and write about these topics clearly.

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 Tier I of the Philosophical and Religious Inquiry and Ethics pillar of the Undergraduate General Education Curriculum.

Meeting time & place:

Classroom location: TBA

Meeting times: May 15th -16th, 19-23rd, and 27th-30th, 10am to 12pm and 12:30pm to 2:30pm

Text:

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 in-class debates, as well as your scores on two in-class 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 Ms. Rebecca Marin, Director, Services for Students with Disabilities (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.

Religious holidays, sporting events, & extracurricular activities: 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 Tier 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, readings, and media:

Skepticism and empirical knowledge (May 15th – May 19th)

- 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 20th

Philosophy of religion (May 20th – May 23rd)

- Saint Anselm, “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 23rd

– No class Monday, May 26th (Memorial Day) –

Ethics and morality (May 23rd – May 29th)

- 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: May 30th