

Introduction to Philosophy (Phil. 120C): Fall 2009

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Office Hours: Monday 9am-10am; Tuesday 1:30pm-2:30pm; Wednesday 9am-10am; and by appointment.

Lectures: TR 2:35pm- 3:45pm, Main St. Campus, Comenius Hall, 305.

Course Description:

This course is an introduction to the *problems* and *methods* of philosophy. The goal is to acquaint you with some of the issues that philosophers think about, along with the *way* in which philosophers think about those issues.

Philosophy studies questions of perennial human concern: Does God exist? Does the existence of evil in the world prove that there is no God? What is the nature of knowledge? Is there a material universe independent of our thinking about it, or is reality itself somehow a produce of human thought? Could the external world be radically different than I perceive it to be? What is "right action"? Do I have any responsibility toward other human beings? Are we free? What is the relation between freedom and moral responsibility? No doubt you have already reflected upon many of these questions yourself. In this course, you will learn how to think about them in a systematic and rigorous way.

Course Objectives:

(i) Objectives related to the **subject** of Philosophy:

- To understand and clarify some 'fundamental questions' of human mind, such as the existence of God, the existence of human's freedom, skepticism about the external world, the nature of moral obligations, etc.
- To study major philosophical responses to those 'fundamental questions'.
- To understand the *complexity* of 'fundamental questions' and *diversity* of rational responses.
- To understand the relevance of 'fundamental questions' to everyday life concerns.

(ii) Objectives related to the **method** of philosophy:

- To understand some basic concepts of reasoning in philosophy, such as, 'argument', "deductive argument", 'inductive argument', 'validity', 'soundness', etc.
- To understand some basis method of reasoning in philosophy, i.e. inductive reasoning, and deductive reasoning.
- To learn how to distinguish between good and bad pieces of reasoning.

(iii) Objectives related to the **goals** of philosophy:

- To diminish the dogmatic assurance which closes our mind against speculation.
- To enrich our intellectual imagination.
- To be able to analyze statements and arguments vigorously, to understand them with sympathy, and to evaluate them fairly.
- To learn how to think and write things explicitly, clearly, and succinctly.

- To think creatively, and to be able to imagine alternatives to familiar view and situations.

Required Texts:

- *Introduction to Philosophy (Classical and Contemporary Readings)*, Edited by Michael Perry, Michael Bratman, and John Martin Fischer, Oxford University Press, Fourth or Fifth edition. ISBN: 978-0-19-516924-9.
- A copy of the book is on reserve at the Revees library.

Note: Some additional material will be posted on Blackboard. Please make sure to register in the course blackboard.

Lecture attendance:

It is not possible to perform well in the course without attending lecture regularly. We will cover substantial amounts of material in lecture not included anywhere in the readings. It is highly unlikely that you will learn this material adequately by, e.g., borrowing your friend's lecture notes. You have two class sessions you can miss with no questions asked. Beyond those two class sessions, any further missed classes without a really good excuse (involving a note from your doctor, psychiatrist, parole officer, etc.) will cost you 2% of your final grade.

Academic honesty:

Students are required to honor academic integrity. The course imposes the application of Moravian College's Academic Honesty Policy. The policy is to be found at Moravian College's *Student Handbook*.

Course requirements:

A regular final exam, scheduled for **Friday, December 18, at 8:30am**, plus a midterm (tentatively scheduled for **Thursday, October 1st**), and two short papers (600-800 words) due throughout the semester. Papers should be typed, double spaced, and spell-checked. You are responsible to submit a hard copy of your paper. In some exceptional cases, you may be allowed to submit your papers through email. If so, you must receive a confirmation email from me, otherwise, you must assume that I have not received your paper.

You will be provided with several suggested paper topics; however, you are allowed to write on a topic of your own choice as long as the topic is in the domain of the issues discussed in the class. If you decide to write on a topic of your choice, please make sure you have my approval first.

If a paper is turned in late without prior permission, the grade will be adjusted downwards by a third of a grade for each day the paper is late (e.g., A to A-, A- to B+, B+ to B, etc.). Make up midterm and final exams will be administered only under the most extraordinary of circumstances, and only in light of appropriate supporting documents.

Although the papers are rather short, you will find that they require an amount of effort far disproportionate to their length. You are required to discuss the draft of your paper with me before you submit the final version of your paper. You may also want to show a draft to your friends, roommates, or classmates so as to solicit feedback.

Important note: *All two papers, plus the midterm and the final must be completed in order to pass the course.*

Grading:

- Each paper- 20% (Total 40%)
- Midterm exam-30%
- Final exam-30%

You will be provided with a study guide for the midterm and for the final prior to the exams.

The grading scale is as follows:

Points	Grade	4-point conversion
95-100	A	4
90-95	A-	3.7
87-90	B+	3.3
84-87	B	3
80-84	B-	2.7
77-80	C+	2.3
74-77	C	2
70-74	C-	1.7
67-70	D+	1.3
64-67	D	1
60-64	D-	0.7
0-60	F	0

Tentative Lecture Schedule:

Part I: What is Philosophy?

(1) September 1:

Reading: Bertrand Russell, “The Value of Philosophy”, pp. 9-12.

Part II: Basic Concepts in Logic

(2) September 3, 8, 10:

Reading: “The basic concepts”, Ch. 1 in *A Concise Introduction to Logic*, Patrick J. Hurley. (More information on how to have access to this chapter will be posted on the Blackboard.)

Part III: God and Evil

(3) September 15, 17, 22:

Reading: Saint Anselm, “The Ontological Argument”, pp.78-80

(4) September 24, 29:

Reading: Saint Thomas Aquinas, “The Existence of God”, pp. 80-82.

Note 1: On September 24, you will receive the Study Guide for the Midterm Exam.

Note 2: On September 29, in the first half of the class, we will continue our discussion on Thomas’ argument for the existence of God, and in the second half, we will have a short review session for the midterm exam.

(5) October 1: Midterm Exam

(6) October 6:

Reading: Saint Thomas Aquinas, "The Existence of God". (Continue)

(7) October 8:

Reading: John Perry, "Dialogue on Good, Evil, and the Existence of God", pp. 133-156.

Note: On October 15, First Paper Assignment

9) October 13: Recess

(8) October 15, 20:

Reading: Continue: John Perry, "Dialogue on Good, Evil, and the Existence of God"

Part IV: Knowledge and Reality

(9) October 22, 27:

Reading: *Plato, *Thaetetus*, pp. 161-168.

* Edmund L. Gettier, *Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?* pp. 168-170.

Note 3: On October 22, first draft due.

(10) October 29, November 3, 5:

Reading: *Rene Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, pp. 171-195.

* Christopher Grau, "Bad Dreams, Evil Demons, and the Experience Machine: Philosophy and Matrix", pp.195-202.

Note 4: The due date for First Paper is October 29.

Part V: Ethics

(11) November 10, 12, 17:

Reading: Stuart Mill, "Utilitarianism", pp. 492-508.

Note 5: On November 10, Second Paper Assignment

Note 6: On November 17, first draft due.

(12) November 19, 24:

Reading: E. F. Carritt, "Criticism of Utilitarianism", pp.509-511.

(13) November 26: Thanksgiving, no classes

(14) December 1, 3:

Reading: Peter Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality", pp. 527-535.

Note 7: On December 3, you will receive the Study Guide for the final exam.

(15) December 8: Review Session for the Final

Note 8: The due date for Second Paper is December 8.

(16) Friday, December 18, at 8:30am, Comenius Hall, 305: FINAL EXAM.

Important Note: Students who wish to request accommodations in this class for a disability should contact Mr. Joe Kempfer, Assistant Director of Learning Services for Disability Support, 1307 Main Street (extension 1510).