



0101P115

Introduction to Philosophy

Instructor: Dr. Tiffany Traylor

Time: May 10, 2021-June 11, 2021

Contact Hours: 60 (50 minutes each)

Credits: 4

Course Description

This course is an introduction to the core complexities of philosophy. Within the course text, we will have the opportunity to analytically study present alternative perspectives; including analytic, continental, feminist, and non-Western viewpoints; alongside the historical works of major philosophers. Students will be presented with alternative views on philosophical issues and encouraged to reflect on the content to arrive at their own conclusions, which should be based on arguments in during the discussions with classmates, as well as on the discussions in your textbook. The purpose of philosophy is to encourage each person to think for himself or herself; no single source of arguments or information can take the place of personal dialogues and discussions.

Required Textbook(s)

No Text: All readings can be found online, links and/or copies of the assigned text will be provided.

Prerequisites

No prerequisites

Course Schedule

Please note that the schedule is meant to give an overview of the major concepts this course. Changes may occur in this calendar as needed to aid in the student's development.

Week 1 / Unit 1 – Introduction to Philosophical concepts and thinking / Theories of Epistemology and Metaphysics

Our lectures, assignments and discussions in this section will focus on theories of Epistemology and Metaphysics. This includes examining ideas related to acquiring knowledge, what counts as knowledge, and questioning notions of reality.

We will cover the following readings and theorist:

- **Bertrand Russel** “The Value of Philosophy” (Selected Excerpt)
- **Plato** “The Republic” (Selected Excerpts)
- **Rene’ Descartes** “Meditations I and II” (1641)
- **John Locke** “An Essay Concerning Human Understanding” (Selected Excerpts) (1689)
- **George Berkeley** “Principles of Human Knowledge” (Selected Excerpts)

Discussion 1 to be held no later than 5/16 at 11:59pm

Weekly Writing Reflection 1 due no later than 5/16 at 11:59pm

Week 2 / Unit 2: Theories of Personhood, personal identity, and consciousness

Our lectures, assignments and discussions in this section will focus on theories of personhood and personal identity. This includes important questions such as determining the criteria for personhood, understanding the importance of personhood as it pertains to legality, and examining the role of consciousness in our notions of ‘self’ or existence.

We will cover the following readings and theorist:

- **David Hume** “A Treatise of Human Nature” Book I, Part IV, Section VI (1739 -1740)
- **John Locke** “An Essay Concerning Human Understanding” (Selected Excerpts)
- **Marya Schechtman** “Personal Identity and the Past” (Selected Excerpts)
- **Descartes** “Meditations” (Selected Excerpts)
- **Daniel Dennett** “Where Am I?”
- **Ifeanyi Menkiti** “African Personhood”

Discussion 2 to be held no later than 5/23 at 11:59pm

Weekly Writing Reflection 2 due no later than 5/23 at 11:59pm

Week 3 / Unit 3 – Theories of Ethics and God

Our lectures, assignments and discussions in this section will focus on various theories of ethics from the Western Canon that are considered essential works. We will also discuss ideas related to God as it pertains to questions of ethics and notions of good and evil in our world.

We will cover the following readings and theorist:

- **Immanuel Kant** “Critique of Pure Reason” (Selected Excerpts or an overview) (1781)
- **Jeremy Bentham** “An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation”
- **John Stuart Mill** “Utilitarianism”
- **Aristotle** “Nicomachean Ethics”
- **Nietzsche** “Genealogy of Morals”
- **John Leslie (J.L) Mackie** “Problem of Evil”
- **Blaise Pascal** “The Wager”
- **James and Stuart Rachels** “Critique of Cultural Relativism”

Discussion 3 to be held no later than 5/30 at 11:59pm

Weekly Writing Reflection 3 due no later than 5/30 at 11:59pm

Week 4 / Unit 4 – Theories of Free Will and Socio-political philosophy

Our lectures, assignments and discussions in this section will focus on free will and socio-political philosophy. This includes topics of freedom beyond the philosophical notion of free will, government structures, notions of economic and distributive justice, and we will explore questions of civil disobedience and human rights.

We will cover the following readings and theorist:

- **Baron d’holbach** “Systems of Nature”
- **Walter Terence Stace** “The Problem of Free Will”
- **Thomas Hobbes** “Leviathan” (Selected Excerpts) (1651)
- **John Locke** “An Essay Concerning Human Understanding” (Selected Excerpts)
- **John Rawls** “A theory of Justice” (Selected Excerpts)
- **Garrett Hardin** “Lifeboat Ethics”
- **Richard Rorty** “Justice as Loyalty”
- **Martin Luther King, Jr.**, from "Letter from Birmingham Jail"
- **Malcolm X** Speech on civil rights/human rights

Discussion 4 to be held no later than 6/6 at 11:59pm

Writing Reflection 4 due no later than 6/6 at 11:59pm

Week 5 / Unit 5 - Applied Philosophy, Critical Thinking, and Thought Experiments

- **Note: Content for this week will be open early on the 4th, so that students have a jump start for final exam**

Our lectures, assignments and discussions in this section will focus on various issues of applied philosophy, which is loosely defined as philosophy as it relates directly to issues and questions in our daily lives. This week will also cover various questions and thought experiments to push critical thought related to applied philosophical theories but also to ideas we have covered earlier in this semester.

We will cover the following readings and theorist:

Judith Jarvis on Abortion and **David Benetar** on Anti-natalism (Personhood, ethics, existence, rights)

Thought experiment on theft of unclaimed items (ethics, ownership, socio-political)

Wertheimer on Societies without police and **Beccaria** on Criminal Justice and Capital Punishment

Michael Sandel on Human Enhancements

Discussion 5 to be held no later than 6/9 at 11:59pm – This final discussion will also be an opportunity to review for final or ask any questions.

Final Exam should be complete no later than 6/10 at 11:59pm so that professor can have sufficient time to grade and submit final grades.

Grading Policy

Evaluation	Percentage
4 Weekly written reflection	15 points each x 4 (60 points)
5 Weekly discussions	4 points each x 5 (20 points)
1 Final Exam	20 points x 1 (20 points)
Total = 100 % /100points	

Grading Scale

The instructor will use the grading system as applied by JNU:

Definition	Letter Grade	Score
Excellent	A	90~100
Good	B	80~89
Satisfactory	C	70~79
Poor	D	60~69
Failed	E	Below 60

It is important to complete all course readings, to review all power points, and to participate in class discussions. Your unit assessments, written assignments, and final exam will cover all unit materials.

Academic Integrity

As members of the Jinan University academic community, students are expected to be honest in all of their academic coursework and activities. Academic dishonesty, includes (but is not limited to) cheating on assignments or examinations; plagiarizing, i.e., misrepresenting as one's own work any work done by another; submitting the same

paper, or a substantially similar paper, to meet the requirements of more than one course without the approval and consent of the instructors concerned; or sabotaging other students' work within these general definitions. Instructors, however, determine what constitutes academic misconduct in the courses they teach. Students found guilty of academic misconduct in any portion of the academic work face penalties that range from the lowering of their course grade to awarding a grade of E for the entire course.