

# Introduction to Philosophy

This class provides an overview of some interesting and important issues in philosophy. It mixes ancient, early modern, and contemporary readings. Each class will contain lectures about the material, in addition to class discussions.

The goal of the course is to foster two types of philosophical thinking: critical thinking and reflective thinking. The former concerns the methods of rigorous argument, and will focus on skepticism and epistemology: how do we know? What methods are used in knowing? We shall focus on some classical works which provide an introduction to argument and rigorous thinking.

The latter concerns ethical and cultural thinking about human beings place in the world, the status of moral and ethical beliefs, as well as the role of culture and history in shaping our current views. The hope is that students can learn both compassion, empathy, and rigorous thinking by analyzing moral arguments, as well as ethnographic, historical and anthropological studies of other cultures and times which can help us understand and evaluate our own desires and beliefs more objectively.

This class requires a lot of reading, some of which is very difficult. I expect you understand the basic arguments and points being made by the authors. Attending lecture is therefore essential!

For each reading assignment, I suggest you try to do the following three things:

1. Write down the overall structure and conclusion of the reading. This shouldn't be full of details, but should be a mere sketch or outline of what you read. This will help you remember what the reading was about!
2. Locate one or two main arguments and briefly write down their premises and conclusions. Then think about the following questions: Is the argument convincing? Why or why not? How would you evaluate the argument?
3. Write down all the terms you don't understand and look up their definitions. Write down any confusions and questions you have about the reading, and bring them to class so that we might discuss them and dispel any confusion.

## Grades

### Scale (all assignments)

96-100 = A, 92-95 = A-, 88-91 = B+, 84-88 = B, 80-83 = B-, 76-79 = C+, 72-75 = C, 66-71 = C-, 62-65 = D+, 55-61 = D, 0-54 = F

### Daily Vocabulary and Attendance (40%)

Each class member is required to write out 4 definitions of words or concepts for each class. Try to pick the most interesting, most obscure, and most important words or concepts. For example:

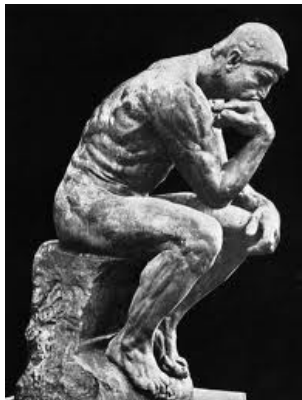
*Epistemology: the study of knowledge.*

These must be typed up, or written very neatly, and turned in at the beginning of every class. It will serve both as a homework grade and a record of attendance. I will drop your 2 lowest scores, thus no turning in late.

Finally, I will draw some of your exam questions from your collective vocabulary. I encourage all of you to start your own vocabulary journal, with all the definitions of words or concepts you don't know and/or which might be important.

### Exams (60%)

Over the course of the term I will give out 3 exams. These exams will test knowledge of the readings, no trick questions, just comprehension of concepts and vocabulary. All exams will be cumulative and may contain concepts and vocabulary from any reading discussed so far. Some questions will be drawn from various students' Daily Vocabulary assignments. Each exam will consist of multiple choice scantron questions. There may sometimes be short passages from the readings about which you must answer questions. The third and final exam will be given during the final examination period, but will be no longer.



## Required Reading Materials

- Donald C. Abel (2012) *Fifty Readings in Philosophy*: **FR**

## Plagiarism

Academic dishonesty of any type, including plagiarism, is unacceptable at ETSU. Plagiarism is the representation of another person's work, words or ideas as your own. The cost of plagiarising starts with failing the course and may result in stiffer penalties.

If in any doubt about what constitutes plagiarism, students should consult the ETSU Student Handbook for a fuller, more specific discussion of academic integrity standards.

## Disability services

Any student who may need a particular type of accommodation based on a disability should make an appointment to see me during my office hours. A Faculty Accommodation Form from Disability Services authorizing your accommodations is

# **SCHEDULE OF CLASSES AND READINGS**

*(subject to change)*

## **Introduction**

*Monday 8/27/12*

Fallacy scavenger hunt.

## **UNIT 1: DEFINING PHILOSOPHY**

## **What is Philosophy?**

*Wednesday 8/29/12*

Readings to be discussed:

- **FR** Chapter 1, pp.1-4
- **FR** Chapter 1.2, Bertrand Russell – *The Value of Philosophy*, pp.25-30

## **What is Philosophy?**

*Friday 8/31/12*

Readings to be discussed:

- **FR** Chapter 1.2, Bertrand Russell – *The Value of Philosophy*, pp.25-30

**\*\*\*\* MONDAY 9/3/12: NO CLASS \*\*\*\***

## UNIT 2: GOD AND EVIL

### **Introduction to Philosophy of Religion, and Hume on Natural Religion 1**

Wednesday 9/5/12

Readings to be discussed:

- **FR** Chapter 2.5, David Hume – *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, pp.46-54

### **Hume on Natural Religion 2**

Friday 9/7/12

Readings to be discussed:

- **FR** Chapter 2.5, David Hume – *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, pp.46-54

### **Hume on Natural Religion 3**

Monday 9/10/12

Readings to be discussed:

- **FR** Chapter 2.5, David Hume – *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, pp.46-54

### **Paley on Natural Theology 1**

Wednesday 9/12/12

Readings to be discussed:

- **FR** Chapter 2.6, William Paley – *Natural Theology*, pp.55-62

### **Paley on Natural Theology 2**

Friday 9/14/12

Readings to be discussed:

- **FR** Chapter 2.6, William Paley – *Natural Theology*, pp.55-62

### **Richard Dawkins on Evolution 1**

Monday 9/17/12

Readings to be discussed:

- **FR** Chapters 2.7, Richard Dawkins – *The Blind Watchmaker*, pp.63-73

### **Richard Dawkins on Evolution 2**

Wednesday 9/19/12

Readings to be discussed:

- **FR** Chapters 2.7, Richard Dawkins – *The Blind Watchmaker*, pp.63-73

## **Richard Dawkins on Evolution 2**

*Friday 9/21/12*

Readings to be discussed:

- **FR** Chapters 2.7, Richard Dawkins – *The Blind Watchmaker*, pp.63-73

## **Mackie on Evil 1**

*Monday 9/24/12*

Readings to be discussed:

- **FR** Chapter 2.9, J.L. Mackie – *Evil and Omnipotence*, pp.85-96

## **Mackie on Evil 2**

*Wednesday 9/26/12*

Readings to be discussed:

- **FR** Chapter 2.9, J.L. Mackie – *Evil and Omnipotence*, pp.85-96

## **Mackie on Evil 3**

*Friday 9/28/12*

- **FR** Chapter 2.9, J.L. Mackie – *Evil and Omnipotence*, pp.85-96

## **Exam 1 Review**

*Monday 10/1/12*

- **Prepare questions you have about concepts, vocabulary, and readings**

## **EXAM 1**

*Wednesday 10/3/12*

- **IN CLASS EXAM!**

## **UNIT 2: KNOWLEDGE**

### **Introduction to Epistemology**

*Friday 10/5/12*

- No readings due! This will be an introductory lecture to Unit 2

### **Plato on Knowledge 1**

*Monday 10/8/12*

Readings to be discussed:

- **FR** Chapter 3.13, Plato – *Republic*, pp.133-143

## **Plato on Knowledge 2**

*Wednesday 10/10/12*

Readings to be discussed:

- **FR** Chapter 3.13, Plato – *Republic*, pp.133-143

**\*\*\*\*FRIDAY 10/12/12 NO CLASS\*\*\*\***

## **Plato on Knowledge 3**

*Monday 10/15/12*

Readings to be discussed:

- **FR** Chapter 3.13, Plato – *Republic*, pp.133-143

## **Plato on Knowledge 4**

*Wednesday 10/17/12*

Readings to be discussed:

- **Online Reading** Plato – Theaetetus, <http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/theatu.html>

## **Plato on Knowledge 5**

*Friday 10/19/12*

Readings to be discussed:

- **Online Reading** Plato – Theaetetus, <http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/theatu.html>

## **Plato on Knowledge 6**

*Monday 10/22/12*

Readings to be discussed:

- **Online Reading**, Plato – Theaetetus, <http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/theatu.html>

## **Plato on Knowledge 7**

*Wednesday 10/24/12*

Readings to be discussed:

- **Online Reading**, Plato – Theaetetus, <http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/theatu.html>

## **Descartes on Knowledge and Scepticism 1**

*Friday 10/26/12*

- **FR** Chapter 3.14, Rene Descartes – *Meditations on First Philosophy*, pp.144-154

## **Descartes on Knowledge and Scepticism 2**

Monday 10/29/12

Readings to be discussed:

- **FR** Chapter 3.14, Rene Descartes – *Meditations on First Philosophy*, pp.144-154

## **Descartes on Knowledge and Scepticism 3**

Wednesday 10/31/12

Readings to be discussed:

- **FR** Chapter 3.14, Rene Descartes – *Meditations on First Philosophy*, pp.144-154

**\*\*\*\*FRIDAY 11/2/12 NO CLASS\*\*\*\***

## **Jaggar on Knowledge 1**

Monday 11/5/12

Readings to be discussed:

- **FR** Chapter 3.18, Alison Jaggar – *Love and Knowledge*, pp.188-198

## **Jaggar on Knowledge 2**

Wednesday 11/7/12

Readings to be discussed:

- **FR** Chapter 3.18, Alison Jaggar – *Love and Knowledge*, pp.188-198.

## **Jaggar on Knowledge 3**

Friday 11/9/12

Readings to be discussed:

- **FR** Chapter 3.18, Alison Jaggar – *Love and Knowledge*, pp.188-198.

## **Exam 2 Review**

Monday 11/12/12

- **Prepare questions you have about concepts, vocabulary, and readings**

## **EXAM 2**

Wednesday 11/14/12

- **IN CLASS EXAM!**

**\*\*\*\*FRIDAY 11/16/12 NO CLASS\*\*\*\***

## UNIT 3: ETHICS

### **Introduction to Ethics**

Monday 11/19/12

- No readings due! This will be an introductory lecture to Unit 3

### **Mill on Utilitarianism 1**

Wednesday 11/21/12

Readings to be discussed:

- **FR** Chapter 6.35, J.S. Mill – *Utilitarianism*, pp.358-366

**\*\*\*FRIDAY 11/23/12 NO CLASS\*\*\***

### **Mill on Utilitarianism 2**

Monday 11/26/12

Readings to be discussed:

- **FR R** Chapter 6.35, J.S. Mill – *Utilitarianism*, pp.358-366

### **Mill on Utilitarianism 3**

Wednesday 11/28/12

Readings to be discussed:

- **FR** Chapter 6.35, J.S. Mill – *Utilitarianism*, pp.358-366

### **Singer on Famine and Affluence**

Friday 11/30/12

Readings to be discussed:

- **Online Reading** Peter Singer – *Famine, Affluence, and Morality*  
<http://www.utilitarian.net/singer/by/1972----.htm>

### **Rachels on Relativism 1**

Monday 12/3/12

Readings to be discussed:

- **FR** Chapter 6.39, James Rachels and Stuart Rachels – *The Challenge of Cultural Relativism*, pp.397-409



## **Rachels on Relativism 2**

*Wednesday 12/5/12*

Readings to be discussed:

- **FR** Chapter 6.39, James Rachels and Stuart Rachels – *The Challenge of Cultural Relativism*, pp.397-409

## **Rachels on Relativism 3, and EXAM 3 Review**

*Friday 12/7/12*

Readings to be discussed:

- **FR** Chapter 6.39, James Rachels and Stuart Rachels – *The Challenge of Cultural Relativism*, pp.397-409
- **Prepare questions you have about concepts, vocabulary, and readings**

## **EXAM 3 (Final Exam) for 003**

**Wednesday, December 12 8:00 a.m -10:00 a.m.**