

## Introductory Handout    Philosophy 1    The Nature of Philosophy

Spring, 2006    Professor Richard Arneson revised 5/18

MWF1:00-2:00 p.m. in Warren lecture Hall 2113.

TA: Nina Davis.

This course is an introduction to philosophy. We begin by examining two 17<sup>th</sup>-century works by Rene Descartes including his classic *Meditations on First Philosophy*. In this work Descartes develops an argument that addresses several fundamental philosophical issues. In the remainder of the course we consider further explorations and developments of these issues: (1) The nature of God and arguments for and against God's existence, (2) What is knowledge and how, if at all, can we achieve it? What distinguishes empirical science from other claimed routes to knowledge? (3) What is the relationship between mind and body? Exploring issues 1-3, we examine a classic 20<sup>th</sup>-century book by A. J. Ayer, *Language, Truth, and Logic*. Ayer claims that an investigation into the nature of language reveals that meaningful linguistic assertions all fall into two categories: empirical claims verifiable by observation and tautologies that tell us the meanings of words. Purported philosophical and metaphysical assertions that can be fit within neither of these categories, Ayer proclaims, are literally meaningless. We consider the prospects for a broader and less deflationary understanding of the philosophical enterprise.

COURSE TEXTS: Rene Descartes, *Discourse on Method and Meditations*; A. J. Ayer, *Language, Truth, and Logic*; Thomas Nagel, *What Does It All Mean? A Very Short Introduction to Philosophy*. Further readings will be available for downloading or viewing from the course web page. <http://philosophy.ucsd.edu/Courses/> then click on spring 2006, then Philosophy 1 You should check the course web page at least once a week for announcements, handouts, etc.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: A midterm exam (Wednesday of week 5), a short writing assignment, five to seven pages in length, topics to be assigned in class, and a regular comprehensive final examination. On your exams and the writing assignment you will be graded according to the clarity of your prose, the cogency of your arguments, and the soundness of the understanding of course materials that you exhibit. The final examination will comprehend all course materials including required readings, lectures, and handouts distributed in class.

GRADING: If you are taking the course on a PASS/NOT PASS basis, you must get (1) a C- or better on the final examination as well as (2) an overall C- average on all course work in order to achieve a PASS grade, with one exception: If you have an A- or better average on the midterm exam and writing assignment, and are enrolled on a PASS/NOT PASS basis, you need not take the final exam in order to earn a PASS grade.

The midterm exam counts for 30 per cent of your final course grade, the writing assignment for 30 per cent, and the final examination for 40 per cent.

The final exam for this course is on Thursday, June 15, from 11:30 a.m to 2:30 p.m. If you enroll in this class, you must be free to take a regular final exam at this scheduled time.

Only medical excuses certified by a note from your physician or a comparable certified excuse will be accepted for late submission of the writing assignment or absence from the midterm exam, or to justify the assignment of an Incomplete course grade.

DISCUSSION SECTION. A discussion section meeting will be set up and held once a week. If your schedule permits you to attend, we strongly advise that you do so. Participation regularly at a discussion sections is a great help to the learning process because it provides the opportunity for a structured dialogue in which your opinions on the issues can be expressed, debated, and clarified.

THE KEY TO SUCCESS in this class is to keep up with the reading steadily. The reading varies in difficulty; some of it is quite challenging. You have to put more time into philosophy reading than you might initially suppose. If you do each reading before the lecture/discussion that deals with it, you will get more out of both the reading and the lecture/discussion.

## SCHEDULE OF LECTURE/DISCUSSION TOPICS AND READINGS

### Week 1 April 3-9

Mon: Introduction and Descartes, *Discourse on Method*

Wed: Descartes, *Discourse on Method*.

Fri: Descartes, *Meditations*, "Letter of Dedication," "Preface," "Synopsis," Meditation 1.

### Week 2 April 10-16

Mon: Descartes, *Meditations*, Meditations 1 and 2.

Wed: Descartes, *Meditations*, Meditations 3 and 4.

Fri: Descartes, *Meditations*, Meditations 5 and 6.

### Week 3 April 17-23

Mon: Arguments regarding the existence of God. The argument from design. Reading: William Paley, "The Watch and the Watchmaker."

Wed: The same topic continued. Reading: R. Hambourger, "The Argument from Design."

Fri: Freud's view. Reading: A. Grunbaum, "Psychoanalysis and Theism."

### Week 4 April 24-30

Mon: The argument from evil. Reading: David Lewis, "Evil for Freedom's Sake?"

Wed: Moral and pragmatic arguments for religious belief. Reading: B. Pascal, "The Wager"; also R. Adams, "Moral Arguments for Theistic Belief."

Fri: Religious belief on the basis of faith not reason. S. Kierkegaard, "Subjectivity Is Truth."

### Week 5 May 1-7

Mon: More on Kierkegaard. Reading: R. Adams, "Kierkegaard's Arguments against Objective Reasoning in Religion."

Wed: **Midterm exam in class.**

Fri: Ayer, *Language, Truth, and Logic*, chapters 1 and 2. Also: T. Nagel, *What Does It All Mean?*, chapter 5, 38-46.

### Week 6 May 8-14

Mon: Ayer, *Language, Truth, and Logic*, chapters 3 and 4.

Wed: Ayer, *Language, Truth, and Logic*, chapters 5 and 6.

Fri: Ayer, *Language, Truth, and Logic*, chapters 7 and 8.

### Week 7 May 15-21

Mon: E. Gettier, "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?"; and T. Nagel, *What Does It All Mean?*, chapters 2-3, 8-26.

Wed: Tracking. Reading: R. Nozick, "Knowledge and Skepticism,"

Fri: Context. Reading: D. Lewis, "Elusive Knowledge"

### Week 8 May 22-28

Mon: Science and falsification. Reading: K. Popper, "Conjectures and Refutations."

Wed: Normal science, anomaly, scientific revolution. Reading: T. Kuhn, excerpt from *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. [Note: This is a long reading.]

Wed evening: Makeup class in Warren Lecture Hall 2114, 7:00-7:50 p.m. Topic: More on Kuhn on scientific revolutions. Reading: same as for Wednesday afternoon class.

Fri: The mind-body problem; behaviorism. Reading: B. F. Skinner, "The Causes of Behavior."

### Week 9 May 29-June 4

Mon: HOLIDAY. NO CLASS. Instructor will be available for email consultation Memorial Day weekend up to 8 a.m. Tuesday morning, May 30, at rarneson@san.rr.com

Wed: NO CLASS. WRITING ASSIGNMENT DUE (Please give it to Nina Davis or place it in the instructor's mail slot, 7<sup>th</sup> floor HSS opposite elevator entrance.)

Fri: NO CLASS. Instructor available for email consultation on Saturday evening June 3 and all day Sunday, June 4 at [rarneson@san.rr.com](mailto:rarneson@san.rr.com)

Week 10          June 5-11

Mon: The mind-body problem; the identity theory. Reading: J. J. C. Smart, "Sensations and Brain Processes"; also T. Nagel, *What Does It All Mean?*, chapter 4, 27-37.

Wed: Functionalism and identity theory. Reading: J. Fodor, "The Mind-Body Problem."

Wed: Makeup class, time and place to be announced. Problems for Functionalism. Reading: F. Jackson, "Epiphenomenal Qualia"; Paul Churchland, "Eliminative Materialism."

Fri: Reading: D. Chalmers, "The Puzzle of Conscious Experience,"

**FINAL EXAM: THURSDAY, JUNE 15, 11:30 a.m to 2:30 p.m. in WLH 2113.**

Arneson's office hours: Tuesdays 12-1 and Thursdays 3-4 in HSS 8057.

Arneson's email: [rarneson@ucsd.edu](mailto:rarneson@ucsd.edu) but see alternate email address for weekends surrounding week 9