

## Introductory Handout Philosophy 1

Spring, 2007

Teaching Assistant: Tarun Menon.

## The Nature of Philosophy

Professor Richard Arneson

Lectures MWF 11:00-11:50 a.m. in Warren Lecture Hall 2207.

The final exam for this course takes place on Monday, June 11, 11:30 a.m to 2:30 p.m. If you enroll in this class, be sure this required final exam fits into your schedule.

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 from the course web page—

<http://philosophy.ucsd.edu/Courses> then look for spring 2007 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, on topics to be assigned in class, and a regular comprehensive final examination. On the exams and 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 requires readings, lectures, and handouts distributed in class.

Grading: If you are taking the class on a PASS/NOTPASS basis, you must get (1) a C minus or better on the final exam as well as (2) an overall average C minus grade on all course work in order to achieve a PASS grade, with one exception: If you have an A minus 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 course grade, the writing assignment for 30 per cent, and the final examination for 40 per cent.

DISCUSSION SESSION. 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 discussion section 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 will have to put more time into reading philosophy material than you might initially suppose. If you do the reading before the lecture/discussion that deals with it, you will get more out of the reading and the lecture/discussion.

## Schedule of Readings and Lecture/Discussion Topics

Week 1. April 2-8

Mon: Introduction and Descartes, *Discourse on Method*

Wed: Descartes, *Discourse on Method*.

Fri: Descartes, *Meditations, Letter of Dedication,* "Preface," "Synopsis," Meditation 1. [Note: There will be a guest lecturer for this class, Professor Gila Sher.]

Week 2. April 9-15

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

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

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

Week 3 April 16-22

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 23-29

Mon: The argument from evil. Reading: D. 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." [Note: This class will probably have to be rescheduled.]

Week 5. April 30-May 6

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: Nagel, *What Does It All Mean?*, chapter 5, pp. 38-46.

Week 6 . May 7-13

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 14-20

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

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

Fri: Context. D. Lewis, "Elusive Knowledge." [Note—there will be a guest lecturer for this class, Mr. Tarun Menon.]

Week 8 . May 21-27

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.]

Fri: More Kuhn--the same subject continued. Reading: same as for Wednesday.

Week 9 . May 28-June 3

Mon: HOLIDAY. NO CLASS.

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

Fri: 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 5, 27-37.

Week 10. June 4-10

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

Wed: Problems for Functionalism. Reading: F. Jackson, "Epiphenomenal Qualia"; P. Churchland, "Eliminative Materialism."

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

Arneson's office hours: Tuesdays 2-3 and Thursdays 1-2 in HSS 8057.

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