



PH100-03-1: Introduction to Philosophy

MWF 1:30–2:20pm Henry 227 Office: Henry 206-C
Instructor: Carl M. Johnson Office Hours: By appointment
Email: carl.johnson@adjunct.chaminade.edu

Course Description:

A study of the nature of philosophical thought and methods by examining actual examples from a selection of classical Greek, medieval Christian, and modern European philosophers. Students will develop an understanding of the ways in which western culture functions.

This course will begin with the questions of Descartes and look at the responses of David Hume before going back to ancient Greece to find the roots of their philosophical thinking in Plato and its expansion into a Christian synthesis by Boethius. Finally, we will read a variety of more recent writings to see how philosophers today perceive the issues. Throughout the course, in addition to gaining a basic understanding of the history of the issues, students will learn how to read and understand complicated texts, analyze arguments closely, concisely summarize issues, write papers that express their own opinions and analyses, and conduct a philosophical investigation with their peers.

Course Objectives:

- Come away with an appreciation for the history of the philosophy.
- Attain an understand of the basic positions in major philosophical disputes.
- Improve ability to work out thoughts clearly in a group discussion.
- Gain competence at directing a group inquiry.
- Sharpen ability to express their thoughts in writing.
- Become better able to read complex primary and secondary texts.
- Increase discernment of the difference between weak and strong arguments.
- Learn to pursue wisdom in everyday life.

Course Texts:

Descartes, René. *Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy* (Fourth Ed.).

Translated by Donald A. Cress. Hackett, 1998. ISBN-10: 0-87220-420-0.

Hume, David. *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (Second Ed.). Hackett, 1993.

ISBN-10: 0-87220-229-1.

Plato. *Republic*. Translated by C.D.C. Reeve. Hackett, 2004. ISBN-10: 978-0-87220-736-3.

Boethius. *Consolation of Philosophy*. Translated by Joel C. Relihan. Hackett, 2001. ISBN-10: 0-87220-583-5.

Assessment:

Vocabulary quizzes (10%)

The instructor will periodically give a short vocabulary quiz to test whether students have mastered the terms covered in the readings and lectures.

Reading response questions (10%)

Before each lecture class, students will do the assigned reading then write a question or questions inspired by the reading and turn it in at the beginning of class. These questions will be recorded and used as the basis for class discussion (see below). Questions clearly unrelated to the reading will be rejected and returned to the student.

Discussion leading (10%)

Each week one class period will be devoted to discussion of the topics from the preceding readings and lectures. For each discussion, some students will be designated as discussion leaders. Each discussion leader will use questions previously submitted as reading responses to craft an group inquiry that will delve deeper into the topic. At the end of the discussion, other students will anonymously evaluate the performance of their discussion leader.

Discussion response (10%)

Following a class discussion, students will write a short summary of what their group discussed and the conclusions they reached through the discussion process.

Summaries (5% each, 10% total)

Students must write two summaries during the course. Summaries should be around two pages long (300 to 600 words). Summaries will be given an overall grade on the basis of mastery of content, style, and grammar/usage. The initial summary will cover Descartes' *Meditations* One and Two. It is due **Friday, Sept. 7**. The second summary will cover any part of Descartes' philosophy and is due **Fri., Sept. 21**.

Argumentative papers (15% each, 30% total)

Students must write three argumentative papers. Papers should be around 5 pages (1,200 to 2,000 words). Papers will be given an overall grade on the basis of strength of argument/originality, mastery of content, structure/coherence, style, and grammar/usage. Papers will cover Hume (due **Fri., Oct. 12**) and Plato (**Fri., Nov. 9**).

Final Paper (20% total)

The final paper will be a culminating paper in which students synthesize all of the material in the course. Students are responsible for creating their own topic for the final paper. Final papers should be more than 7 pages (1,800 words) and under 20 pages at most.

Final paper topic proposals are in due in class on the last day of the course, **Fri., Dec. 7**. Final papers are due on **Tues., Dec. 11** in place of a final exam.

Lateness Policy:

Assignments must be turned in by the start of class on the due date. Reading response questions and discussion responses are meant to measure class participation and so will not be accepted after the class in which they are due. Failure to turn in a summary or paper on time will result in a five percent penalty per day with a maximum penalty of fifteen percent. If you know ahead of time that you will need to miss a class due to work, sports, illness, or some other extracurricular activity, you may email an assignment in order to meet the deadline or be excused from a class discussion. In general, exceptions to the lateness policy are possible only with a doctor's note detailing serious illness. In the event of a serious family emergency, please discuss the situation with the instructor over the phone.

Returns and Revisions Policy:

After being graded, the summaries and papers will be returned to students with comments on the strengths and weakness of the writing. Following the return of the summary or paper, students have one week to revise their papers to have it re-graded. The score recorded in the gradebook will be the average of the initial and final grade a paper receives.

Disability Statement:

I am happy to accommodate any students with disabilities. It is the student's responsibility to self-identify with the Director of Personal Counseling in order to receive accommodations. Only those students with appropriate documentation will receive services. Contact the Director of Personal Counseling at (808) 739-4603 or email: <jyasuhar@chaminade.edu>.

Academic Dishonesty Policy:

Academic dishonesty, including but not limited to plagiarism, will not be tolerated.

The instructor is not hesitant about **failing** any student suspected of engaging in academic dishonesty. Failure to properly quote and cite sources used in a paper is one of the many forms of academic dishonesty. All materials turned in by students must reflect their own work and not that of any other person. Simple guidelines to follow are **if you read it cite it** and **quote don't paraphrase**.

Course Motto:

"I learned in my college days
that one cannot imagine anything so strange or so little believable
that it had not been said by one of the philosophers."

Course Schedule

Entries marked with a ※ will be made available online.

August

- M 27 *First class*
W 29 René Descartes,
Meditations One & Two
F 31 Class discussion

September

- M 3 **Labor Day**
W 5 *Meditations Three & Five*
F 7 Class discussion,
Initial summary due

- M 10 ※ James Cutsinger
W 12 *Meditations Four & Six*
F 14 Class discussion

M 17 David Hume, *Enquiry
Concerning Human
Understanding* §4, §5-1
W 19 *Enquiry* §8
F 21 Class discussion,
Descartes summary due

- M 24 *Enquiry* §10
W 26 *Enquiry* §11
F 28 Class discussion

October

- M 1 ※ Marilyn McCord
Adams
W 3 *Enquiry* §12
F 5 Class discussion

- M 8 **Columbus Day**
W 10 ※ Plato, *Euthyphro*
F 12 Class discussion,
Hume paper due

- M 15 Plato, *Republic*, Book I
W 17 *Republic* II
F 19 Class discussion

- M 22 *Republic* IV
W 24 *Republic* V 472–VI 503
F 26 Class discussion

- M 29 *Republic* X
W 31 *Republic* VI 504–VII 521

November

- F 2 Class discussion

M 5 Boethius, *Consolation of
Philosophy*, Book I
W 7 *Consolation* II
F 9 Class discussion,
Plato paper due

M 12 **Veteran's Day**
W 14 *Consolation* III
F 16 Class discussion

- M 19 *Consolation* IV
W 21 Class discussion
F 23 **Thanksgiving**

- M 26 *Consolation* V
W 28 ※ Pierre Hadot
F 30 Class discussion,
Boethius paper due

December

- M 2 ※ Richard Rorty
W 5 ※ Bertrand Russell
F 7 *Last class*

- Tu 11 **Final paper due**