

PH

FE 99

# Introduction to Philosophy (PH 10010)

Chaminade University of Honolulu  
Fall 1999, at Tripler AMC -- Building 102  
October 4 through December 16, 1999 (Tuesdays, 5:30-9:40 p.m.)  
Instructor: Robert Buss (Phone: 528-4067)

"Introduction to Philosophy" -- An examination of the role, themes, arguments, and discursive styles that characterize philosophy as an intellectual discipline. Traditional and critical theories from Western and Eastern philosophy will be considered.

**Text:** -- *Fundamentals of Philosophy* (fourth edition, 1996)  
by David Stewart and H. Gene Blocker.  
-- There will also be occasional handouts and study aids.

**Course Objectives** -- Upon successful completion of this course, the student will be able to:

1. Gain an overview of philosophy and philosophical thinking.
2. Keep basic philosophical concepts and arguments straight.
3. Express through discussion and writing an understanding of philosophical issues.
4. Improve his or her own philosophical thinking skills.

## Organization of Course and Basis for Grading

The course will be divided into nine units, explored weekly. A final exam will cover the entire range of topics. You will be expected to write five formal essays (3-5 pages) on topics identified by the instructor.

Your final grade will be determined as follows --

- Final Examination (in-class)                      40 percent of final grade
- Five Formal Essays                                      50 percent of final grade
- Class participation and attendance,              10 percent of final grade  
in-class assignments and exercises

"People would rather die than think... and most do."  
(Bertrand Russell)

"Arguments, like men, are often pretenders." (Plato)

"The philosopher's treatment of a question is like the treatment of an illness." (Ludwig Wittgenstein)

## GENERAL OUTLINE OF TOPICS

Oct. 5	<p>What is Philosophy? "Philosophy &amp; the Examined Life." The Activity, Practice and Limits of Philosophy.</p>	Part 1
Oct. 12	<p>Thinking About Thinking. Logic and Critical Thinking Skills. How To Write an Essay Using Philosophical Argumentation and Logic. (handouts)</p>	Part 2 (ch 7 optional)
Oct. 19	<p>What is Real? Metaphysics. The Mind-Body Problem. Metaphysics and Language. • Essay One Due: "Philosophy and the Examined Life."</p>	Part 3 (ch 13 optional)
Oct. 26	<p>How Do We Know? Epistemology or Theory of Knowledge. Appearance and Reality. Skepticism. Rationalism (The Quest for Certainty), Empiricism (Trust Your Senses) and Critical Philosophy (A Compromise). • Essay Two Due: "The Mind-Body Problem."</p>	Part 4 (ch 19 optional)
Nov. 2	<p>What Ought We to Do? (What is Right? What is Good?) Ethics. The Relation of Morality to Character, Consequences and Duty.</p>	Part 5 (ch 21 optional)
Nov. 9	<p>Philosophy of Religion. Arguments for God's Existence ("The God of the Philosophers"). The Problem of Evil. The Nature of Religious Language. • Essay Three Due: "Morality as Cultivation of Character."</p>	Part 6
Nov. 16	<p>Philosophy of Art. Aesthetics. Theories of Aesthetics: Expressionism, Formalism, Representation. Art and Audience, Creativity, Communication. Art and Context: The Politics of Representation.</p>	Part 7 (ch 32 optional)
Nov. 23	<p>Social and Political Philosophy. Theories of Justice and the Social <b>Contract</b>. Concepts of Equality, Liberty, Fairness, Human Rights, and Social Responsibilities. • Essay Four Due: "The Problem of Evil in Philosophy of Religion."</p>	Part 8 (ch 35 optional)
Nov. 30	<p>Eastern Thought and Theories of Human Nature. -- Confucian Philosophy of Man as a Social Being. (handouts) -- Taoist Philosophy of Nature and Environment. -- Hindu and Buddhist Philosophy of Action (karma and dharma). • Essay Five Due: "Justice as Fairness."</p>	Part 9
Dec. 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review for Final Exam.</li> <li>• No essays (new or rewrites) will be accepted after this date.</li> </ul>	
Dec. 14	<p>Final Exam (in-class). Exam will cover topics in Parts 3 through Part 8 of text.</p>	

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The five formal essays will relate to readings from your text. You should integrate information and ideas found in your reading assignments into these essays, including the introductory chapters on the area of philosophy covered by the questions. In other words, these should not be "opinion pieces," unsupported by philosophical argumentation and clarification. It is not the particular position or response that is important here, but the degree to which you examine, analyze, interpret and clarify the issues involved as well as how fairly you present opposing positions or counter-claims.

Essays are to be about three pages (double-spaced typed or clearly handwritten equivalent). Essays will be expected to include the following aspects, which will form the basis of their evaluation:

- A clearly identified thesis statement or position in response to the subject or question about which you are writing. Part of your task will be to designate the appropriate scope or focus of your essay (limit the essay to something that can be handled, meaningfully, in such a few pages.
- Support for this claim with specific evidence or examples, selected and organized to make its relation to the thesis/position as clear as possible. It is up to you to demonstrate the relevance or significance of the support for your argument here.
- Backing. Connect the claim and evidence (this is termed the warrant for your case). The warrant is generally the most controversial element in any argument. There may be alternative interpretations (than the one you are arguing) and the particular examples or case studies you use may be seen by others as irrelevant. In such cases, you should treat all potentially controversial steps in the chain of reasoning as claims in themselves and then backing them up with their own evidence and warrants.

- When appropriate, deal with opposing arguments (the formal term for this is rebuttal). Rebuttal can be broken down into three steps: present the opposing claim which you have anticipated; summarize the case in its favor; and refute the case. Beware of creating intentionally weak versions of opposing views (termed the Straw Man fallacy, page 95 of your text).

You may also concede valid opposing arguments and modify your claim accordingly. This is an important consideration in philosophical argument: qualifying claims is first a matter of taking seriously the ideas of other people. In the case of considering alternative philosophical thinking and positions, especially those of the philosophers we will be taking up in class, it is always a good idea to consider one's initial duty to be one of understanding the claim or position opposing your own. One can fairly safely assume that such views are not inherently stupid or valueless.

- Whenever necessary, identify and define key terms that are fundamental to your argument or its underlying assumptions. In some cases, you may also wish to point out alternative meanings of a term or consider whether you are using a particular term in a special sense that differs in some way from its dictionary or "common usage" meaning.

# INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

## ESSAY QUESTIONS

**Essay # 1. Philosophy and the Examined Life.** Choose one of the following questions:  
(Reading: "Socrates: In Defense of Philosophy" from *The Apology* by Plato)  
(Reading: "The Character of Philosophy" by Jay F. Rosenberg)

- a) What does Socrates mean by his claim that "the unexamined life is not worth living"? Do you agree with his suggestion that discovering your own ignorance is an important step on the road to knowledge? Discuss some of the methods that Socrates used in doing philosophy.
- b) Both Plato and Aristotle said that philosophy begins in wonder -- that wonder is "the mark of the philosopher" (Plato) and "it is owing to their wonder that men both now begin and at first began to philosophize" (Aristotle). How does this idea of the origin of philosophy relate to Jay Rosenberg's distinction between first-order and second-order activities. What is the value of such speculation?

**Essay # 2. Metaphysics: What is Real?** Choose one of the following questions:

- a) • **Appearance and Reality**  
(Reading: "The Body and the Soul" from *The Phaedo* by Plato)  
How does Plato make his case that the world we experience through the senses is appearance and not reality? What are some of the key concepts or assumptions that he is making in order to come up with his theory? Respond to this philosophical position. Do you find it convincing or not? If so, how is it superior to some alternative position? If not, does some alternative position seem, to you, to be more reasonable?
- b) • **The Mind-Body Problem**  
(Reading: "Materialism and Personal Identity" by Richard Taylor)  
How does the mind-body problem relate to the question of "personal identity?" What philosophical position do you find most convincing? Discuss your reasons for this view. Your essay should include comments on alternative philosophical positions and their metaphysical assumptions or starting points.

**Essay # 3. Ethics: What Ought We To Do?** Choose one of the following questions:

- a) • **Cultivation of Moral Character**  
(Reading: "The Good Life" from *The Nichomachean Ethics* by Aristotle and excerpts from *The Art of Living* by Epictetus)  
Both Aristotle and Epictetus argue that true happiness comes from leading a virtuous life. Do you agree that developing one's character is an essential part of moral action? Your answer should include a discussion of such key terms as ends, intellectual and moral virtues, happiness and pleasure. Be sure to point out any limitations or problems faced by this position.

- b) • **Doing One's Duty or Weighing the Consequences**  
(Reading: *Utilitarianism* by John Stuart Mill and "Moral Duty" from *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals* by Immanuel Kant)

An ongoing quarrel in ethics distinguishes between those who argue that the morality of an action depends on one's motives (that it must be willed by a moral agent because it is right) as opposed to those who argue that the morality of an action depends upon the consequences. The former refers to ethical behavior as "doing one's Duty," the latter refers to ethical behavior as "the greatest good for the greatest number." Which view do you consider to be the most relevant for us today? Or, is it possible to combine them in some way?

**Essay # 4. Philosophy of Religion.** Choose one of the following questions:

- a) • **The Problem of Evil**  
(Reading: "Human Pain" from *The Problem of Pain* by C.S. Lewis)

The "problem of evil" has been a recurring issue in the philosophy of religion. Basically, as religions struggle to deal with the meaning of life and the metaphysical assumptions that include both human and transcendental notions of reality, they come up against conditions that would appear to contradict the planned order and purpose (end) of creation. Discuss how C.S. Lewis casts the problem and whether you find his arguments convincing.

- b) • **Proofs for the Existence of God**  
(Reading: Excerpts from St. Anselm, St. Thomas Aquinas and William Paley)

What is the primary philosophical purpose of the Proofs for the Existence of God? In what way is the activity of philosophy that attempts to prove the existence of God really a continuation of certain metaphysical and/or epistemological assumptions? Take at least one argument (either the Ontological Argument or aspects of the Cosmological Arguments or the Argument from Design) and discuss how its underlying purpose is to be considered, philosophically. You may wish to contrast a particular way of thinking with the "God of faith" or consider how they are related, but be careful to avoid limiting the meaning of the proofs to that of spiritual or religious experience.

**Essay # 5. Social and Political Philosophy** Choose one of the following questions:

- a) • **The Social Contract**  
(Reading: "The State and the State of Nature" from *Concerning Civil Government* by John Locke)

John Locke sets forth a view that political societies are necessary to overcome a "state of nature" to form a social contract. Do you find such a position useful to explain key terms of political philosophy (such as equality, human rights, freedom, law and order, justice...)? Some historians have noted that the U.S. has changed its notion of social agreement fundamentally at certain key periods (such as the Civil War period or the Civil Rights Movement) and you may wish react to this observation.

- b) • **Justice as Fairness**  
(Reading: "A Theory of Justice" by John Rawls)

How does John Rawls use social contract theory to reconcile the demands of liberty, equality, and social responsibility? What does he mean by "justice as fairness?" Do you agree with his argument, or do you find another position more meaningful? In presenting your views, discuss Rawls' two principles of justice and how these work together to define his philosophy? Do you think he has effectively combined these two principles into a coherent political position?