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Pr

INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

Ph 100

Spring 2000

Instructor: C. R. Unni, Tel (H) 941 8434; (O) 735 4879; e-mail: crunni@lava.net

General Objectives

The general objective of the course is to introduce the student to methods of reasoning found in selected treatment of philosophical topics. One of the basic philosophical skills is to distinguish those statements, which are logically true or false from those that are factually true or false. Another equally important skill is to distinguish between statements that are about ordinary non-linguistic objects such as a tree or a bird and statements that are about such talk. Thus first order discourse or talking directly about the world is to be distinguished from second order discourse, which is to talk about what is involved in talking about the world. Much of the methods used and topics treated will reflect a preference for philosophy as practiced among the English-speaking people. But concerns and approaches found in European philosophy generally and in the writings of classical Greek and medieval Christian philosophers will also be treated from the standpoint of analytic philosophy.

Specific Objectives

The more specific objectives of the course will be to provide elementary competencies in recognizing and evaluating arguments that arise in the context of the following topics, which are regarded as central to the discipline of philosophy. In following the discussions of these areas, the student will be introduced to the basic concerns of logic, ethics, aesthetics, epistemology and metaphysics, the main areas of academic philosophy.

1. Philosophy and the meaning of life
2. Proofs for the existence of God
3. The problem of evil
4. The epistemological problem
5. The problem of perception
6. The problem of body and mind
7. Freedom, determinism and responsibility
8. Ethics of duty and utilitarianism

9. Justice and equality

10. Challenges to morality

Requirements

The successful student will:

- a. Pass the ten tests based on the specific objectives.
- b. Pass a final to the satisfaction of the instructor.
- c. Participate in the class discussions on these topics.
- d. Submit homework assignments on time.
- e. Attend at least 80% of the class sessions.

Required Text

Perry and Batman, ed., *Introduction to Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999)

9. Justice and equality
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Required Text

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All the references to reading in the schedule are to this text.

Other Readings

1. Anthony Kenny, ed., *The Oxford History of Western Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994)
2. Ted Honderich, ed., *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995)
3. Simon Blackburn, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996)
4. Robert Audi, ed., *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995)
5. Nicholas Bunnin and E.P. Tsui-James, ed., *The Blackwell Companion to Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996)
6. A. C. Grayling, ed., *Philosophy: A Guide Through the Subject* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995)
7. David E. Cooper, *World Philosophies* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996)

Grading

Attendance: 10 points.

Tests Maximum 40 points.

Midterm 20 points.

Final 30 points.

- To get full points for attendance the student should be in class for 38 of the 42 meetings.
- If the student falls below 34 class meetings the attendance points will drop to 5.
- If a student arrives late (10 minutes after class starts) no attendance points will be given.
- If a student leaves before the class ends, no attendance points will be given.
- Midterm and finals will contain both a take-home and an in-class part.
- All take-home parts of tests must be submitted on time in the required format to qualify for full points.
- In the event of sickness or other emergencies, proper clearance from the advising center is to be obtained.

A=95-100; B=85-94; C=75-84; D=65-74; F=below 64

Schedule

1 1/19 Philosophy and the meaning of life

Russell

- Why the study of special sciences are to be recommended.
- The value of philosophy for its practitioner.
- Why our conception of practical men is unsound.
- The sort of knowledge that philosophy aims at.
- Uncertainty of philosophy
- Can philosophy establish certain answers to fundamental questions?
- Why the value of philosophy is in its uncertainty.
- The nature of philosophic contemplation.
- What is the value of studying philosophy?

Reading: Text, pages 9-12.

2 1/21 J.J.C. Smart

- Smart's definition of philosophy.
- How philosophy resembles science.
- The concept of nonsense and its application.
- The example of the class paradox in mathematics.
- Other paradoxes
- Philosophy as more than elimination of nonsense.
- Rational reconstruction as a project for philosophy.

Reading: Text, Pages 12-20.

3 1/24 Thomas Nagel

- What do some people mean when they say that life is absurd?
- What are the standard arguments for absurdity and how do they fail?
- How seriousness and doubt characterize the analysis of life.
- What can the sense of the absurd teach us?

Plato

- Socrates' defense of himself.
- Why he does not seek to escape his punishment

Reading: Text, Pages 20-42.

4 1/26 Test 1 (Philosophy and the meaning of life)

5 1/28 Saint Anselm

- Being and knowing
- The idea of perfection
- God as perfect being
- Ontological argument
- How is it possible to talk about things that don't exist?

Saint Thomas

- Five ways of deriving the existence of God.
- The cosmological argument

- The argument from design or the teleological argument.
- Functional and purposive explanations.

Reading: Text, Pages 45-49.

6 1/31 Pascal

- Why is it better to believe that there is a god?
- The optimist and the pessimist.

Russell

- Arguments against belief in God

Reading: Text, Pages 49-56.

7 2/2 • Logical arguments for the existence of God

- Why these arguments fail.
- Why existence is not a predicate.
- Why the believer need no proof.

8 2/4 Test 2 (Arguments for the existence of God)

9 2/7 David Hume

- The problem of evil
- Religion: Natural and Revealed.
- Defense of Natural religion.
- Skepticism of all claims of natural religion.
- Intelligence and benevolence
- Ordinary person's religion.

Reading: Text, Pages 57-91.

10 2/9 Gottfried Leibniz

- Argument against evil.
- The best possible world.

Nelson Pike

- Review of Hume's arguments.

- Critique of Hume's arguments.

Reading: Text, Pages 91-102.

11 2/11 J.L. Mackie

- To whom is the problem of evil a problem?
- What are the adequate solutions to the problem?
- What are the fallacious solutions?
- Why is the problem of evil worthy of our attention?

Reading: Text, Pages 103-110.

12 2/14 Test 3 (The problem of evil)

13 2/16 Rene Descartes

- Skepticism defined
- Descartes' objective in doing philosophy.
- The method of doubt.
- What can we be sure of?
- How can we be sure that there is an external world of objects?
- How can we be sure that there are minds other than ours in the world?

Reading: Text, Pages 116-139.

14 2/18 John Locke

- What is an idea?
- The notion of quality.
- Types of qualities.
- Simple and compound ideas.
- Primary and secondary qualities.
- Representation of ideas.

Reading: Text, Pages 139-144.

15 2/23 George Berkeley

- Descartes' problem

- Ideas and objects
- How does skepticism arise?
- What are we talking about when we talk of things in the world?
- Argument against abstract ideas.
- Argument against material objects.

Reading: Text, Pages 145-176.

David Hume

- Belief in material objects.
- Ordinary person's ways of thinking about the world.
- Skepticism: extreme and moderate.
- Reason, habit and custom.
- Our expectation that the future will be like the past.

Reading: Text, Pages 176-216.

16 2/25 Test 4 (The epistemological problem)

17 2/28 A.J. Ayer

- What is perception?
- The concept of the sense datum.
- The argument from illusion.
- What is established by the argument?

Reading: Text, Pages 217-220.

J. L. Austin

- The purpose of the argument from illusion.
- Refractions, mirages and reflections.
- Examples of illusion.
- Illusions and delusions.
- The philosophical argument.
- Critique of the argument.

Reading: Text, Pages 221-229.

18 3/1

W. C. Salmon

- The problem of induction.
- Attempted solutions.
- Inductive justification.
- Scientific inference.
- Deductivism.
- Principle of Unity of Nature.

Reading: Text, Pages 230-251.

19 3/3

G.E.M. Anscombe

- Constant conjunction and necessary connection.
- The nature of logical necessity.
- Necessary and sufficient conditions.
- Derivativeness of effects from causes.
- Causation is different from necessitation.

Reading: Text, Pages 252-262

20 3/6

Test 5 (The problem of perception)

21 3/8

Bertrand Russell

- Descartes' distinction between body and mind.
- Extension and intension.
- One cannot doubt the existence of one's own mind.
- Essence of mind as consciousness not intelligence.
- The connection between material and immaterial.
- The existence of other minds.
- The argument from analogy as a solution to how do we know that there are other minds..

Reading: Text, Pages 314-316

- Logical behaviorism
- From actual behavior to dispositions to behave.
- Logical connections between thought and action.
- Thought and action as two linguistic systems for describing the same phenomenon.

Reading: Text, Pages 316-323.

David Armstrong

- Mental concepts as brain states.
- The logical requirement for something being a mental state.
- The distinction between not being required to be a physical state and being required not to be a physical state.

Reading: Text, Pages 324-331

David Lewis

- The identity theory.
- Defending the theory against objections
- Towards a credible theory of mind.

Reading: Text, Pages 331-336.

Daniel Dennett.

- Intentional Systems
- Design stance
- Physical stance.

Reading: Text, Pages 337-349.

Paul Churchland

- Commonsense frameworks
- Ontologies of theories
- How older ways of talking about the world have yielded to newer and better ways.
- The framework of folk-psychology and the framework of neuroscience.