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PHL 101.01: Introduction to Philosophy

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Phil 101 Introduction to Philosophy

MWF 9:10-10:00

Professor: Armond Duwell

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Office hours: 3-4 MW, 10-11F

Textbooks (required):

Perry, Bratman, Fischer (2013). *Introduction to Philosophy: Classical and Contemporary Readings, Sixth Edition*. Oxford University Press.

Introduction:

Philosophy is one of the oldest and most encompassing disciplines there is. In this course we will introduce some of the most important, engaging, and challenging problems that have ever been considered: proofs of the existence of God, the nature of knowledge, whether knowledge is possible, the mind-body problem, the problem of consciousness, the problem of personal identity, and whether I am free or determined. We will examine historically important texts and also influential recent texts on these problems. Finally, students will be introduced to philosophical methodology, which focuses on critical examination and argument.

Course Goals: Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

1. Students will be able to articulate alternative views relating to the problems we study.
2. Students will be able to articulate the main arguments mustered for and against different positions.
3. Students will be able raise their own criticisms of different positions consistent with philosophical methodology.

Grading:

20% homework, 40% midterms, 40% final exam

Homework: Regular homework is assigned. At the end of each selection we read there are a list of study questions. I will ask you to turn in answers to some of those questions before we discuss the selection in class. Your homework must be typed, article read identified, and question responses clearly numbered. You are expected to turn in a hard copy of your assignment at the beginning of class when it is due. You can always turn in homework early in my mailbox in LA101 if you are unable to attend class. There will be a lot of short homework assignments for the class. The assignments are meant to ensure that you engage the readings before you come to class and make regular progress on the

material. One learns best by engaging material in it in multiple ways, listening, reading, discussing and writing, and engaging it multiple times. I will allow two homeworks to be dropped during the course of the semester. Assignments are graded in two ways. One way is just by turning them in. After your two dropped homeworks, you will be penalized 5% per missed assignment up to 10% of your grade. Second, you are graded by the content of your homework. I will be checking two assignments over the course of the semester. They will each count as 5% of your grade. I will grade one of the first homework assignments to give you feedback. You will not know which homework I will grade next. Late assignments will not be accepted unless there are good reasons for allowing them to be late, and poor time management skills are not a good reason.

Homework grading criteria:

A range: Readings are very well understood. The answers are well-articulated and accurate. The assignment is written in complete sentences, grammatically correct, and written clearly.

B range: There are a few minor problems with the answers given. The assignment is written in complete sentences, grammatically correct, and written clearly.

C range: There are either several minor problems or one major one with the answers given. The assignment is written in complete sentences, grammatically correct, and written clearly.

D range: There is several major problems with the answers. The assigned material was read, but not well understood.

F range: The material was probably not read, and/or the answers are irrelevant.

There will be two midterm exams. One will be on September 30th. Another will be on November 4th. The exams will be primarily short answer questions taken from the study questions from the homework. One of the best ways to study for the exam is to update your answers to homework questions after we discuss them in class. If you do this on a regular basis, studying for the exam will be relatively easy. Make up exams will be given only in the case of extreme circumstances, i.e. illness, family death, etc. **Proof of extreme circumstances is required in order for me to schedule a make up exam.** For those of you that work, please make arrangements now so there will be no conflict of interest on exam dates.

The final exam will be on Thursday December 12th at 8:00. As with the midterms, it will consist largely of homework questions. I expect you to take the exam with the class. You will not be allowed to take the final early because it makes for convenient travel arrangements. Again, make up exams will be given only in the case of extreme circumstances, i.e. illness, family death, etc. **Proof of extreme circumstances is required in order for me to schedule a make up exam.** For those of you that work, please make arrangements now so there will be no conflict of interest on exam dates.

An invitation: I understand that you have complicated lives that can interfere with your studies. If you foresee some difficulties given the dates indicated for exams, etc., please come talk to me about it. Or if unexpected problems arise, please come talk to me about it. I am highly motivated to find solutions to student difficulties when students are forthright about their problems and come to me **in advance** to discuss them with me. When foreseeable problems are neglected until they become an actual problem, I will not be flexible with my policies in this syllabus. When in doubt, please don't hesitate to talk to me about a problem.

Classroom courtesy: Please turn off cell phones when you come into class. If you have to leave early, please indicate that to me before class begins, and let me know why you must leave early.

Special Needs: Students with disabilities will receive reasonable modifications in this course. Your responsibilities are to request them from me with sufficient advance notice, and to be prepared to provide verification of disability and its impact from Disability Services. Please speak with me after class or during my office hours to discuss the details. For more information, visit the Disability Services for Students website at www.umt.edu/dss/

Academic Misconduct: You are strictly held to the University of Montana Student Conduct Code (<http://life.umt.edu/vpsa/documents/StudentConductCode1.pdf>). Work on assignments is expected to be your own. That said, you can feel free to discuss your answers to homework with other students. That said, you may not write homework up together, and you certainly may not copy or plagiarize other students' assignments. If you copy or plagiarize it will receive a zero. You may fail the class altogether depending on the circumstances. Also, I will report the case to the Dean. All exams are closed-notes and closed-books: you may not consult anything but your own mind in order to answer questions on the exam. You may not use cell-phones, or any electronic devices to aid you, nor fellow students, nor fellow students' answers on exams, etc. You will receive a zero if you cheat on an exam. Your conduct will also be reported to the Dean.

Tentative Schedule: Below is a list of readings to be read in chronological order. Numbers refer to chapters in your textbook. This is a first time I'm teaching the class, so I don't have a sense of how long it will take to cover certain topics. So, reading assignments will be given at the end of each class. If you miss class, you can find the reading assignments on Moodle. If I feel it is taking too long to cover a topic, I might skip some readings for the sake of covering a variety of different kinds of philosophical problems.

GENERAL PHILOSOPHY

Russell, "The Value of Philosophy"
Plato, "Apology: Defense of Socrates"
Logical Toolkit

RELIGION

Saint Anselm, "The Ontological Argument"

Saint Thomas Aquinas, "The Existence of God"

William Paley, "Natural Theology"

Blaise Pascal, "The Wager"

John Perry, "A Dialogue on Good, Evil, and the Existence of God"

KNOWLEDGE

Edmund L. Gettier, "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?"

René Descartes, "Meditations on First Philosophy"

Christopher Grau, "Bad Dreams, Evil Demons, and the Experience Machine: Philosophy and *The Matrix*"

Robert Nozick, "Excerpt from *Philosophical Explanations*"

MINDS AND IDENTITY

Gilbert Ryle, "Descartes's Myth"

Paul M. Churchland, "Eliminative Materialism"

Frank Jackson, "What Mary Didn't Know"

Daniel Dennett, "Where Am I?"

John Perry, "A Dialogue on Personal Identity and Immortality"

FREEDOM

Roderick M. Chisholm, "Human Freedom and the Self"

Peter van Inwagen, "The Powers of Rational Beings: Freedom of the Will"

David Hume, "Of Liberty and Necessity"

Harry G. Frankfurt, "Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility"

Harry G. Frankfurt, "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person"

If we manage to get through all of these articles, I'll invite suggestions from the class about what topics one would like to return to, or what new topics they would like to discuss.