

GREAT PHILOSOPHERS

Philosophy 125C. Section 03

Fall 2007

Mondays and Wednesdays, 9:00-10:30

Cupples II 100

Instructors

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Description

The Great Philosophers course is designed to introduce some of the most important texts in the history of western philosophy in order to discuss a wide range of central philosophical problems. We typically consider, for example, the existence of God, the justification of claims to knowledge, and the requirements of a good human life, including the demands of morality. Among the philosophers most likely to be studied are Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Hume, Kant, Marx, Nietzsche, and Wittgenstein. Our goal is not just to appreciate the genius of some great philosophers but also to grapple with the current philosophical problems that they have bequeathed to us.

In this particular section of Great Philosophers, we will be spending some significant time with each of Plato, Descartes, and Hume, and some further time with each of Sextus Empiricus, Nietzsche, G.E. Moore, and Wittgenstein. We will encounter a wide variety of philosophical problems and approaches, but we will be repeatedly coming back to problems posed by skeptics about value or about the existence of an external world.

Grading and Requirements

The following list should make clear the requirements that we think need to be met by anyone who wants to learn about some great philosophers this semester. The following list also details as specifically as we reasonably can the procedures that we will be following in assessing grades for this class. We know that most of you are here for the education and don't give a fig for your grade; for you, many of these requirements will seem obvious. But for the rest of you, what follows is your bible. Learn it well, and you will never need to ask us about "how you are doing in this class."

Participation. One hundred points are possible. The participation grade depends upon three factors: quiz scores, contributions to discussion, and attentiveness.

- (1) **Quizzes.** There will be seven unannounced quizzes during the course of the semester. Each quiz will consist of ten true-false or multiple-choice questions about the required reading for that day's class. Each question will count for two points, and the top five quiz scores will count toward the participation grade.
- (2) **Contributions.** The instructors will be adding up to 20 points to the participation grade of those who consistently make productive contributions to class. Productive contributions come in the form of questions and answers, and they are productive when they are directed at the point(s) at hand and clearly show that the reading has been done. Because some contributions are expected of

every student, these are bonus points for especially good contributors. (Quality counts for more than quantity.) Thus, while it is possible to contribute well enough to get more than 100 participation points total, it is probable that most students will get no extra points for contributions.

- (3) **Attentiveness.** The instructors reserve the right to deduct up to 100 points from the participation grade of anyone who fails to respect the educational atmosphere. Possible causes of such deductions include: arriving late or departing early (without a written excuse), leaving the room during class without a medical emergency, talking without being recognized during class, having a cellular phone or other electronic device beep or ring during class, or otherwise engaging in activities other than attending to class during class.

Three short papers. Beginning Sunday, September 9, and on each Sunday thereafter through December 9, every student will receive, by email, two or three weekly questions for essays. If you are interested in one of these questions and have the time, you should write an essay addressing the question, and submit it as an RTF file attached to an email to Jason Gardner (jsgardne@artsci.wustl.edu) before it is due, at **noon** on the **Sunday** after the question was distributed. Everyone must submit three such essays by the end of the term, and everyone is encouraged to write when they have the time and interest to write well. Each essay, worth 100 points, will be assessed in accordance with the handout distributed early in the term, with the following qualifications. First, any paper that fails to meet the length requirements (900-1200 words) is subject to a penalty at the discretion of the instructors. Second, any paper that is late will be penalized by 10 points for every 24 hours or fraction thereof.

These factors yield 400 possible points, and your total will be converted to a quality grade for the course according to a scale using the following minima:

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| A+ = 390 | A = 370 | A- = 358 | B+ = 346 | B = 330 | B- = 318 |
| C+ = 306 | C = 290 | C- = 278 | D+ = 266 | D = 250 | D- = 238 |

Pass/fail students must achieve at least 306 points to pass. In converting numerical totals to final quality grades, the instructors reserve the right to disregard a student's grade on one paper in exceptional circumstances (e.g., death in the family or severe medical difficulties) or to disregard the grade on a student's first paper if that student shows remarkable progress. We also reserve the right to adjust the above scale in order to make it more generous. As with all rights reserved, their exercise is not guaranteed.

Any student who submits any work that does not conform to the University policy on academic integrity, printed in the Course Listings, will automatically fail the course, and will be subject to University disciplinary action. Each assignment you turn in must be your own work, and it must have been written specifically for this class. This should not be difficult, as you should not be doing extra research on any of these assignments.

Texts

The following seven required texts have been ordered at Mallinckrodt:

Descartes, The Philosophical Writings of Descartes, tr. Cottingham, Stoothoff, and Murdoch, vol. 2 (Cambridge)
Hume, Enquiries, ed. Selby-Bigge, 3rd ed. (Oxford)
Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, tr. Horstmann and Norman (Cambridge)
Plato, Gorgias, trans. Zeyl (Hackett)
Plato, Meno, trans. Grube, 2nd ed. (Hackett)
Sextus Empiricus, Outlines of Scepticism, trans. Annas and Barnes (Cambridge)
Wittgenstein, On Certainty, trans. Anscombe and von Wright (Harper & Row)

In addition, we will be reading excerpts from the philosophical papers of G.E. Moore; these are available for downloading and printing from Olin Library's electronic reserve (E-Res). Once you find this course on the E-Res site, you will need the password, which is 'skeptik' (just the word, not the inverted commas).

Please take care to have these particular editions, so that we will all be using the best available translations and editions and will all be referring to the same page numbers.

Syllabus

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| Aug 29 | Introduction |
| Sept 5 | Plato, <u>Meno</u> 70a-86c |
| Sept 10 | Plato, <u>Meno</u> 86c-end |
| Sept 12 | Plato, <u>Gorgias</u> , 447a-461b |
| Sept 17 | Plato, <u>Gorgias</u> , 461b-481b |
| Sept 19 | Plato, <u>Gorgias</u> , 481b-499b |
| Sept 24 | Plato, <u>Gorgias</u> , 499b-end |
| Sept 26 | Sextus Empiricus, <u>Outlines of Scepticism</u> , Book One, chps. 1-12 & 33-34 |
| Oct 1 | Sextus Empiricus, <u>Outlines of Scepticism</u> , Book One, chp. 13, chp. 14 (§§ 35-39, 79-90, 135-140, & 145-163), & chp. 15 |
| Oct 3 | NO CLASS — Instructor out of town |
| Oct 8 | Descartes, <u>Meditation I</u> , with dedicatory letter, preface, & synopsis |
| Oct 10 | Descartes, <u>Meditation II</u> |
| Oct 15 | Descartes, <u>Meditation III</u> |
| Oct 17 | Descartes, <u>Meditation IV</u> |
| Oct 22 | Descartes, <u>Meditation V</u> |
| Oct 24 | Descartes, <u>Objections and Replies</u> at AT 214, 245-246, & 140-146 ('AT' refers to the pagination of the Adam and Tannery edition, printed in the margins.) |
| Oct 29 | Hume, <u>An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding</u> , §§1-2 (pp. 5-22) |
| Oct 31 | Hume, <u>An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding</u> , §§3-4 (pp. 23-39) |
| Nov 5 | Hume, <u>An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding</u> , §§5-6 (pp. 40-59) |
| Nov 7 | Hume, <u>An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding</u> , §7 (pp. 60-79) |

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| Nov 12 | Hume, <u>An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding</u> , §10 (pp. 109-131) |
| Nov 14 | Hume, <u>An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding</u> , §12 (pp. 149-165) |
| Nov 19 | Nietzsche, <u>Beyond Good and Evil</u> , Preface and Part One (pp. 3-24) |
| Nov 21 | NO CLASS — Thanksgiving |
| Nov 26 | Nietzsche, <u>Beyond Good and Evil</u> , Part Five (pp. 75-92) |
| Nov 28 | Moore, excerpt from "A Defence of Common Sense" (E-Res) Moore, excerpt from "Proof of an External World" (E-Res) Moore, excerpt from "Certainty" (E-Res) |
| Dec 3 | Moore, "Four Forms of Scepticism" (E-Res) |
| Dec 5 | Wittgenstein, <u>On Certainty</u> , §§ 1-299 |
| Dec 10 | Wittgenstein, <u>On Certainty</u> , §§ 300-676 |

There is no final exam for this class.