

BARNARD COLLEGE, DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
Fall Term 2009

PHIL BC 1001-01. Introduction to Philosophy. What is Philosophy? Tu Th 9:10-10:25. Milbank tba

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Office Hours: Tu Th 10:30-12.

What makes a question *philosophical*? We try to discover what philosophy is, not by trying to define it, but by studying texts that deal with some of the questions that have worried philosophers: appearance and reality, knowledge and truth, the existence of matter, the mind-body problem, the problem of other minds, animal minds, causality, free will and determinism, space and time, the existence of God, death and the meaning of life, questions of morality and justice. 3 pts.
Prerequisites: None.

REQUIRED TEXTS. Paperbacks, to be purchased at Book Culture, 536 W 112 St.

Descartes, René. *Discourse on Method* and *Meditations*. Hackett.

Berkeley, George. *A Treatise concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*. Hackett.

Hume, David. *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*. Hackett.

NOTE. These editions of the three texts are **essential** for the course. **No other editions will do:** the class and the instructor must be “on the same page”. Additional readings will be made available, as PDF documents, in **Courseworks (CW)**.

READING ON RESERVE. Wollman Library, Barnard College.

Nagel, Thomas. *What Does It All Mean? A Very Short Introduction to Philosophy*. OUP.

Russell, Bertrand. *The Problems of Philosophy*. Dover.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS:

Paper I, due October 1: 4 pages (double-spacing), 25%. Choose one topic.

Mid-Term Examination: October 27, 9.00 a.m. – 10.25 a.m. Choose one question, 25%.

Paper II, due November 24: 4 pages (double-spacing), 25%. Choose one topic .

Final Examination: December 17, 9 a.m. – Noon. Room tba. Choose two questions, equally weighted, totalling 25%.

Paper topics will be announced normally two weeks before each due date. The Mid-Term Exam is on material covered up and including October 22. The Final Exam is mostly on material covered from October 20 to the last day of class, but will have also questions of a general nature that relate to the **whole** course.

Class discussion is expected and strongly encouraged.

IMPORTANT NOTES:

- 1. It is important that you attend class regularly, and that you always bring to class the relevant required text or reading. Note that the questions in the Mid-Term and Final examinations can be about topics introduced in class, not just about those arising from the readings.**
- 2. It is your responsibility to explain to the instructor extended absences from class. This is especially important if illness is the reason for the absences.**
- 3. The acceptance and grading of papers submitted after the due date are solely at the discretion of the instructor.**
- 4. Plagiarism, established by the instructor in a paper or in a question in an examination (Mid-term or Final), will result in a fail grade for that paper or question, and will be reported to the relevant Dean of Studies. Recall the Honor Code.**
- 5. The final examination will not be rescheduled to meet individual requests except in the case of examination timetable conflicts, examination crowding as defined by the Registrar, personal illness or serious family emergency (medical certificates or other documentation required). Note that the date of the final examination is December 17.**
- 6. It is not acceptable to visit the restroom during class, unless for medical reasons, which you must explain to the instructor. Nor is it acceptable to eat during class.**

LECTURES AND READINGS

Read through Nagel and Russell (Reserve) in your own time, and where appropriate in tandem with the topics discussed in class. In addition to Nagel, Russell and the required texts, **you are strongly advised to make full use of the “Ancillary Sources” listed at the end of the syllabus. CW = Courseworks.**

Week 1. What is a *philosophical* question? Some examples.

Weeks 2-3. Ways of knowing. Knowledge and its sources: Rationalism and Empiricism. The challenge of Skepticism.

Reading: Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, Bk. I (selections)(CW). Descartes, *Meditations* I, II.

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Weeks 4-5. Cause and effect. The principle of induction.

Reading: Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, Bk. III, v (CW). Hume, *Enquiry*, Sections 3-5, 7.

PAPER I due Thursday, October 1

Week 6. The Mind-Body Problem. Do other people have minds? Do animals?

Reading: Descartes, *Meditations* I, II (recap), *Discourse on Method*, Part V. Hume, *Enquiry*, Sec. 9.

Week 7. Do we have *free will*, or are our thoughts and actions determined? Contingency and necessity. Future contingents.

Readings: Aristotle, *On Interpretation*, Sec. 9 (CW). Spinoza, *Ethics*, excerpts (CW). Hume, *Enquiry*, Secs. 7-8.

MID-TERM EXAMINATION: Thursday, October 27, 9.a.m. – 10. 25 a.m.

Week 8 (October 29) – Week 9 (November 5). The existence of God.

Readings: St Thomas Aquinas, “The Five Ways” (CW). Descartes, *Meditations* III, V.

Week 10. Does matter exist?

Reading: Berkeley, *Treatise* (selections).

Week 11. What is Time? Do the Past and the Future exist?

Reading: St Augustine, “Time and Eternity”, *Confessions*, Bk. 11 (CW).

PAPER II due Tuesday, November 24

Week 12. Space and Motion, and a little Time.

Readings: Newton, *Principia Mathematica*, Scholium on Absolute Time, Space, and Motion (CW). Berkeley, *Treatise* (selections).

Week 13. Puzzles about Death.

Readings: Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura (On the Nature of Things)*, from Bk. III (CW). Thomas Nagel, *What does it all mean?* chap. 9, “Death” (CW, also Reserve).

Week 14. Problems in moral philosophy.

Readings: Thomas Nagel, “Moral Luck” (CW).

ANCILLARY SOURCES

These provide details on philosophers, topics, and explanations of philosophical terms.

The Philosopher's Index. The standard bibliographical tool, up-to-date comprehensive subject-and-author indices to articles, books, and anthologies. Online at the Columbia Library Web (Electronic Resources – Databases – Indexing and Abstracting).

Angeles, Peter A. ed. *The HarperCollins Dictionary of Philosophy*, 2nd ed. Butler Reference, Barnard Philosophy Dept.

Audi, Robert, ed. *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*. Butler Reference, Barnard Philosophy Dept.

Blackburn, Simon, ed. *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*. Wollman & Butler Reference.

Copleston, Frederick. *A History of Philosophy*, 9 vols. Wollman & Butler Reserve.

Craig, Edward, ed. *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 10 vols. Wollman and Butler Reference. Online, Columbia Library Web (Electronic Resources — Databases — Encyclopedias).

Edwards, Paul, ed. *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 8 vols. Wollman, Butler, Psychology Reference, Barnard Philosophy Dept.

Zalta, Edward N. ed. *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. <http://plato.stanford.edu>. Online, Columbia Library Web (Electronic Resources — Databases — Encyclopedias).