

PHIL 1: Introduction to Philosophy, Winter 2013
Instructor: Eric Campbell
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MWF Solis 109 1 – 2
Office Hours: W 2 - 4 Roma Café

SYLLABUS

Important Dates

- Short Exam (15%) Date: 1/25 (Week 3)
- Midterm exam (35%) Date: 2/11 (Week 6)
- Final Exam or Final Paper (50%) Date/Due: 3/22 at 11:30 a.m.

Those interested may write a final paper rather than taking a final exam. This option is realistically only for people who take a keen interest in one of the topics and/or plan to pursue further study in philosophy. This option will require some further reading, to be settled on once you have let me know what topic you want to write on. In order to choose this option, **you must let me know that you plan to choose it by the end of week 8 at the latest**, at which point we will meet to discuss your topic and further readings. By the beginning of week 10 (at the very latest), you will send me a one-page outline or summary of what your thesis is and how you plan to argue for it, and will meet with me later that week so I can help you with your strategy.

One advantage of choosing this option is that you will in effect not be responsible for any of the post-midterm readings that aren't relevant to your paper. Another advantage is that you will get to explore an issue that interests you, with help from me. But you will of course be responsible for writing a paper, which is for most people very much harder (though hopefully much more rewarding) than taking an exam. I expect the paper to be between 2,000 and 3,000 words unless you can convince me that it needs to be longer. Let me be very clear that I strongly discourage anyone from choosing this option because they think it will be easier than taking the exam. It won't be.

Course Description

This class is an introduction to Western philosophy. In the introductory spirit, we will cover a lot of territory without going into depth in any area. Every topic we'll cover is actively investigated by many philosophers (but not only philosophers) working today. Most of these questions have interested philosophers for literally thousands of years, going back to Plato and beyond. You should come away from the course with an appreciation of a wide range of views on many of the most important and interesting topics in modern philosophy, and the primary strengths and weaknesses of these views. The course is meant to be interesting and informative in its own right, and is also well-suited for those who want to know which if any philosophical topics they would like to study in more depth.

Electronics

Laptops are not allowed in class. Seriously. I know it's lame for those of you who would really only take notes on them if I allowed them, but experience has shown me that no matter how much I insist that laptops are only to be used for note-taking, the vast majority of people cannot

(or do not) resist using them in naughty ways, and this distracts other students as well. At any rate, I think it's very easy to get too focused on taking detailed notes. I want you to come to class having carefully done the readings, ready to listen, think about what I'm saying and ask questions. You should take notes when reading, and I am perfectly happy for you to take notes when I'm talking, but what is most important in lecture is that you're paying attention and thinking. The notes you take should be limited to main ideas and/or things not in the readings. It should take only a few minutes to transfer them to your computers after class. Also, **no texting or any electronic gadgetry whatever**. If you expect to receive a vitally important message while in class, sit in the back and leave the class to take the call or message. Nobody's perfect; I'll give you a friendly reminder/warning the first time you use these electronic devices. The second time, I'll ask you to withdraw from the class.

Lectures and Attendance

I am not taking a grade for attendance, but I consider it an informal requirement. Unless you are very talented and studious, you will do quite badly if you don't come to lecture. Lectures are not just me telling you what is in the readings, but focusing and expanding on certain aspects of them, and sometimes critiquing them too. I'll want you to know about what I'm doing in lecture, even if you are able to understand the readings without my help. Since there is no discussion section in this class, I also plan to spend some lecture time on questions and discussion, so please be ready to ask questions if you don't understand or disagree with something in the reading. I will take quite a different approach toward someone who is having trouble in the class despite showing up regularly and participating vs. someone who I barely recognize when they come to me after an exam gnashing their teeth.

If you require special accommodations of any sort, please let me know on the first day of class.

Reading

I am assigning a single book called *Thinking It Through* by Kwame Anthony Appiah. The readings are all in contemporary English and written in a clear, well-organized style, but they are also dense and introduce a lot of terminology you won't be familiar with. Spend **at least** an hour carefully reading the material before **each lecture**, without distractions. The readings for each lecture will be short (normally less than 20 pages), but you will need to read carefully and perhaps read them twice.¹ I hear you scoff—but seriously. It will also be crucial to read **before** the lectures, since I will often take some aspects of the reading for granted in order to discuss or expand upon the more difficult or important aspects. The readings will be somewhat hard for most of you. Don't get discouraged! I promise that **if** you consistently read them carefully at least once before lecture, and then come to lecture ready to pay attention and ask questions, you will leave the course with a much better understanding of philosophy, and with at least a pretty good grade too. That's a big if though!

¹ Some students might want to read the entire chapter before I start lecturing on the material for that chapter. That is a great idea, but even if you do this, I recommend reading the material for each lecture within a day prior to the lecture. Having it fresh in your mind will make the lectures more helpful.

The reading schedule below is subject to change, though I will make an effort not to change the exam dates. I will announce any changes in lecture and also via email.

Week 1: Mind

M: Introductory lecture
W: "Introduction" **and** Sections 1.1 - 1.3
F: 1.4 - 1.7

Week 2: Finish Mind, Start Knowledge

M: 1.8 - 1.13
W: 2.1 – 2.3
F: 2.4 – 2.7

Week 3: Finish Knowledge and Short Exam

M: MLK Holiday
W: 2.8 – 2.10
F: Short Exam and Discussion

Week 4: Language

M: 3.1 – 3.5
W: 3.6 – 3.09
F: 3.10 – 3.14

Week 5: Science

M: 4.1 – 4.4
W: 4.5 – 4.9
F: 4.10 – 4.14

Week 6: Midterm and Morality

M: Midterm Exam
W: 5.1 – 5.4
F: 5.5 - 5.8

Week 7: Morality and Politics

M: Presidents' Day
W: 5.9 – 5.13
F: 6.1 – 6.4

Week 8: Politics and Law

M: 6.5 – 6.10

W: 6.11 – 6.17
F: 7.1 – 7.4

Week 9: Law and Metaphysics

M: 7.5 – 7.7
W: 7.8 – 7.11
F: 8.1 – 8.6

Week 10: Metaphysics and Philosophy

M: 8.7 – 8.13
W: 9.1 – 9.6
F: 9.7 – 9.13