

St. Francis Xavier University
Department of Philosophy
Course Outline
PHIL 100 Introduction to Philosophy

Instructor: Doug Al-Maini
Class Room and Time: NH 16
Office: NH 518
Office Hours:
E-mail: dalmaini@stfx.ca

This outline covers only the material that will be covered in the first semester; a separate outline will follow in semester two.

Description:

This course is intended to provide students with an introduction to the discipline of philosophy. In the history of philosophy, canonical texts stand out as having played a major role in establishing what philosophy consists in, and the study of these texts serves as an excellent entry into the field. These texts confront questions concerning metaphysics, knowledge, logic, value, ethics, art, and politics in a manner both accessible to the beginner and rewarding to the expert. Further to this, these are texts embedded within a culture and a literary tradition, and we shall try to tease out some of the defining features of its relationship to that culture and tradition. Looking into the issue of why philosophy arose to prominence with the Greeks (for example) helps to provide an answer to the question of why study philosophy today. Our authors are alive to the philosophical problems of their day, and since many of those same issues are relevant to our society now, we will look into the substantive details of how problems were posed in the context surrounding these text. This in turn will provide us with a deeper understanding of philosophy. **You must bring your copy of the texts to each class.**

Philosophy proceeds by argumentation, and you will be exposed to various characters defending positions by way of arguments; to help better understand how these arguments work, we shall devote some energy to the study of logic. Increased facility with the process of argumentation will have a direct payoff in your own essay writing, both in philosophy and other courses, and the practice of translating well-thought out arguments into an essay will be a major goal of this course.

Schedule:

Week	Topics	Readings
1	Introduction; the Nature of Justice	<i>Republic</i> bk 1 (Plato)
2	The family, social engineering, utopias (Asgn. #1 due Mon)	<i>Republic</i> bk 5
3	Platonic metaphysics and epistemology	<i>Republic</i> bk 6 & 7 (514a-518b)
4	Teleology	<i>Protrepticus</i> (Aristotle)
5	Hylomorphism (Arg. Outline #1 due Fri.)	<i>Protrepticus</i>
6	Free Will & Determinism	<i>De Fato</i> (Chrysippus & Cicero)
7	Human Nature (Asgn. #2 due Mon)	<i>Consolation</i> bk 1(Boethius)
8	Time (Arg. Outline #2 due Mon)	<i>Consolation</i> bk 5
9	The Existence and nature of God (Asgn. #3 due Fri.)	<i>Proslogion</i> (Anselm)
10	Truth (Final Essay Outline due Fri.)	<i>On Truth</i> (Anselm)
11	Hylomorphism	<i>The Principles of Nature</i> (Aquinas)
12	Four Causes (Final Essay due Fri.)	<i>The Principles of Nature</i> (Aquinas)

Required Texts:

Republic, Plato. Trans. & ed. Joe Sachs (Newburyport: Focus Publishing, 2007).

Consolation of Philosophy, Boethius. Trans. & ed. Joel Relihan (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co. 2001).

Anselm of Canterbury: The Major Works, eds. Brian Davies & G. R. Evans (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

Other required texts (*Protrepticus*, *De Fato*, *The Principles of Nature*) will be circulated as handouts.

Assignments:

Students will be required to complete three short written responses to the ideas presented in the texts, a final essay or project, and a final exam. Each response is worth 10% of the final grade. The final essay is worth 30%, the final exam is worth 30%, and participation is worth 10%. A response will consist in an answer to the questions provided below. Each response should be roughly 2 pages (~600 words) in length. A shorter response will seem superficial, and a longer response will probably lack conciseness. Responses will be evaluated according to the attached assessment form.

The final essay will give students a chance to develop a more extended (6 pages) treatment of some broad philosophical issue. **Students are obliged to keep a backup copy of each assignment they complete.**

The final exam will cover the material of the entire course, but there will be an emphasis on the thought of Thomas Aquinas and St. Anselm.

Technical Considerations for Written Assignments:

- 1) All written assignments must be typed (black ink, please) in Times New Roman font and double-spaced on pages with at most 1 inch margins. No extra line spaces between paragraphs. Indent the first line of a paragraph. Printing on both sides of a sheet of paper is quite acceptable.
- 2) Please no title pages. Also no "Works Cited" or "Bibliography" pages referring to one work; do bibliographic references in a footnote if you must. Please no enormously large-fonted things like titles, names, dates, course numbers, student numbers, phone numbers, or due dates that take up half a page of space. Your title, name, and student number at the top of the first page is quite sufficient. Please visibly number any multiple-page assignments. If for some reason you must hand in the assignment to the office, please include my name at the top of the assignment as well.
- 3) No duo-tangs, folders, binders, or paperclips. Loose sheets are acceptable, but do remember to number them.
- 4) Under no circumstances will emailed assignments be accepted. Please hand in your assignments at the start of class on the day they are due.
- 5) For help on writing humanities papers, please consult the website <http://www.princeton.edu/~jimpryor/general/writing.html>
This site gives an excellent overview on what a philosophy paper is all about and how to write it.
- 6) The final page of this outline is the evaluation form that will be used in the assessment of your writing. This evaluation form provides the clearest explanation of my requirements for an essay. Please, study it carefully before you write your work.
- 7) The late policy is a deduction of 3% per day that the assignment is handed in late. This course outline lets you know when assignments are due, and you have been given plenty of time to complete them. Consequently last minute excuses for not completing assignments on time will be met with marked skepticism, not to say cynicism.
- 8) Many of the above requirements are arbitrary demands on my part, but they really do facilitate the assessment of your work. If you do not follow these guidelines, **YOUR MARK FOR ORGANIZATION ON THE EVALUATION FORM WILL SUFFER DRASTICALLY.**
- 9) Plagiarism is completely unacceptable. If you make use of an idea that is not of your own devising, you must cite the source of that idea. Failure to properly cite sources may result from removal from the course and expulsion from the school. Students are obliged to keep a copy of their assignments.

Response Questions:

Assignment #1 (Diagnostic Exercise):

In book I, Socrates and Polemarchus engage in a sustained dialogue that provides increasingly better definitions of justice. It seems at the close of their talk that they are about to announce a definition not susceptible to previous objections, but at that point Thrasymachus forcibly takes over the discussion and moves it in a different direction.

What final definition of justice is missing from the dialogue with Polemarchus, and why would it be satisfying to both Polemarchus and Socrates?

Assignment #2

Using the values and principles found in the *Protrepticus*, evaluate and rank the worth of a life devoted to the creation of works of art.

Assignment #3

Suppose a contemporary had told Chrysippus, "Look old man, you say all things are fated. Well, it's a terrible shame, but what if all your works of philosophy are fated to be lost? Wouldn't that mean that those texts are fated to be lost whether you continue writing or not? So why not save yourself the effort and stop writing right now?" How would Chrysippus respond to this line of reasoning?

Essay Questions (Final essay due Nov. 29th):

- 1) At 457c, Socrates begins the "2nd Wave" of criticism with the introduction of legislation concerned with sexuality, abolishing families, and a devious eugenics program. The second half (466-473) of the "2nd Wave" is devoted to a discussion of how the guardians should wage war. What is the unifying theme that justifies Socrates collecting all these disparate policies under the same "wave"?
- 2) One step in modern addiction recovery programs involves people admitting that the desire for a certain substance cannot be controlled. Would Anselm accept that these people are being truthful?
- 3) In *The Consolation of Philosophy*, Boethius portrays himself as sick and philosophy is personified as a healer. What is the nature of Boethius' illness? What course of treatment does Philosophy prescribe? Is the treatment successful? By writing of this experience, Boethius obviously thought it would be relevant to others; how is it that the hallucinations of a raving medieval bureaucrat on death row can pretend to be universal in appeal?
- 4) Aristotle argues quite forcefully that the philosopher lives the happiest life possible, but most of the population are not philosophers; it seems then that Aristotle is committed to saying that the majority of the population are not living the happiest life possible. Shouldn't this mean that we should be forcing people to practice philosophy then? Would this make most people happier? If not, where's the fault in the train of thought just given?
- 5) It is common sense to distinguish between the characteristics that an object has and the existence of that object, but on the other hand, it seems we can't even imagine qualities without also imagining the object they are qualities of. Similarly, what sense does it make to talk about the existence of an object with no qualities? So a second look seems to indicate that we may not be able to distinguish as clearly as we originally thought between the existence of an object and the qualities it has. How does Aquinas solve this dilemma?
- 6) Create a work of art that allegorizes some philosophical principle or argument that you wish to develop. Your art must be amenable to being used in Socrates' ideal Republic. Include with your art work an explanation of how it illustrates the point of the principle or argument you wish to explore, plus a justification of why it would make it past the censor-board of the Republic and be commonly known by citizens. As an example, you may write a song (and record it), draw/paint a picture, or sculpt a figure or scene. All of these alternative projects also require an explication of what they mean and why they would be acceptable examples of art in the Republic. The explanation of your art MUST be at least three pages long, and it must explicate the art, not just give a summation of some philosophy. A word of warning here: this is not the time to discover whether or not you can draw. I also expect to keep all artwork handed in, unless you make a special plea to get it back. If you wish to see examples of previous art assignments handed in, I should have a few examples hanging around in my office.

EVALUATION FORM
(Late assignments will not receive comments)

Style:

Grammar: Are the sentences understandable? Are there any spelling mistakes? Is the diction clear and concise? Can the thought behind each sentence easily be grasped?

/10

Organization: Do the ideas logically follow each other, or were they haphazardly strewn together? Is there evidence of the student having constructed an argumentative outline? Is the structure of the argumentation explicitly stated and easily perceived?

/10

Content:

Thesis: Do the assignment give an answer to a question or problem put forward? Is the answer more than a simple “yes” or “no”? Is the answer insightful, being an interpretive idea itself? Is the thesis explicitly stated?

/10

Arguments: Are there arguments presented in the paper? Are the arguments interesting or banal? Do the arguments explicitly outline broad premises that act as guides to understanding and reveal the unquestioned perspectives adopted in the paper?

/30

Originality: Does the student provide input into the conceptual debates the text engages in? Is there evidence of insight on the student’s part into the topic? Are there any new ideas being explored in the assignment? Is the student able to go beyond ideas raised in class discussion?

/20

Evaluation: Does the student give a fair summation of the ideas contained in the texts used? Are passages from the text cited? Does the use of these ideas meaningfully contribute to the thesis of the essay, or is the use of material a mere addenda to the main arguments of the paper?

/20

TOTAL /100