

St. Francis Xavier University
Department of Philosophy
Course Outline

PHIL 100 Introduction to Philosophy II

Instructor: Doug Al-Maini

Class Room and Time: Coady 159, M1:15, W12:15, F11:15

Office: NH 717

Office Hours: see online schedule

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Course Description:

A continuation of the first semester's introduction to the field of philosophy. We shall examine classic texts from the modern period forward that draw together deep insights into recurring philosophical topics such as human nature, metaphysics, knowledge, logic, value, art, ethics, and politics. The course aims to continue the work done at familiarizing the student with logical ways of thinking, appreciating the value of philosophical enquiry in their own lives, and providing a basic understanding of some fundamental philosophical questions (and answers). Most of our texts were chosen in order to emphasize the on-going nature of the philosophical project: philosophy is a grand discussion about all aspects of reality that you are invited to join in. All of the texts used in this course have an ability to marry literary distinctiveness with profundity, and we shall investigate how both of these aspects work together.

Assignments:

Students will be required to complete two short written responses to the ideas presented in the texts, a final essay, and a final exam. Students will also be required to fill out and hand in argument outlines form for each of the written responses; failure to do so will result in a loss of 10% from their grade on the first response. Each response will be worth 15% of the final grade. The final essay will be worth 30%. The final exam will be worth 30%. Students will also be evaluated on their participation in the class (10%).

A response will consist in an answer to the question provided for the texts that we study. We shall be looking for slightly longer analyses than in the first semester, and each response should be roughly 3 pages (900 words) in length. Any shorter and your response will seem superficial; any longer and I might question the conciseness of your response.

The final essay will be a response to one of the essay questions provided, should be roughly 6 pages in length (1800 words), and will be due on the last day of class.

Schedule:

Week	Topic	Readings
1 Jan 4	Epistemology, Certainty	Descartes, <i>Meditations</i> 1-3
2 Jan 11	Dualism and the Proof for God	Descartes, <i>Meditations</i> 4-6
3 Jan 18	Perception	Berkeley, <i>Dialogues</i> , 1st Dialogue
4 Jan 25	Idealism	Berkeley, <i>Dialogues</i> 2nd Dialogue
5 Feb 1	Atomism	Leibniz, <i>Monadology</i> (1-45)
6 Feb 8	Perception, Possible Worlds, Identity	Leibniz, <i>Monadology</i> (46-90)
7 Feb 15	Skepticism, Enlightenment	Kant, <i>What is Enlightenment?</i>
8 Feb 22	Political Philosophy	Kant, <i>Cosmopolitanism</i>
9 Mar 8	Philosophy of History	Marx, <i>Communist Manifesto</i> , Intro, Ch. 1-2
10 Mar 15	Class Warfare	Marx, <i>Communist Manifesto</i> , Ch. 3-4.
11 Mar 22	Ontology	Peirce, <i>On a New List of Categories</i>
12 Mar 29	Phenomenology	Merleau-Ponty, <i>Preface to the Phenomenology of Perception</i>
13 Apr. 5	Review	

Response Questions:**#1: due Feb. 15 (Argument Outline due Feb. 1)**

Give a Berkeleyan-influenced assessment of Descartes' distinction between mental and physical stuff.

#2: due Mar. 8 (Argument Outline due Feb. 22)

Are there simple substances? In answering this question, students must make reference to the philosophical work of Leibniz.

Final Essay Questions: due last day of classes (Argument Outline due Mar. 29th).

- 1) Both Kant and Marx offer us a programmatic view of history that ends in a form of perpetual peace. Champion the view opposed to this position, and explain why the arguments employed by Kant and Marx don't work.
- 2) Explain how a person cannot be both a Marxian Communist and a Kantian Cosmopolitan.
- 3) How would Peirce categorize Leibniz' monad? Does the monad easily fit into Peirce's ontological system?
- 4) Are colours real, or are they just constructs of our mind? In answering this question, you must make reference to the philosophies of Descartes, Berkeley, and Leibniz.

Technical Considerations for Written Assignments:

- 1) All written assignments must be typed (black ink, please) and double-spaced in Times New Roman font 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 handout, "The Logic of Essays".
- 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 skepticism.
- 7) 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.**
- 8) 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.

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?

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Organization: Do the ideas logically follow each other, or were they haphazardly strewn together? Do the ideas flow from each other, with explicit premises deductively producing conclusions? Are the arguments connected at all, showing a chain of reasoning?

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Content:

Argument Outline: Are proper arguments as laid out in the handout used? Are the arguments valid? Is there a variety of argument types? Are they readable?

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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?

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

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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?

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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?

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