

Philosophy 100 - Introductory Philosophy – 2012-13

Professor: William Sweet

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Office Hours: M 1.00-3.30; Tu 10-11; F 9.15-11 and by arrangement

Information on the course, on assignments and examinations, etc., will be periodically posted on the course web page: <http://www.stfx.ca/people/wsweet/phill00-2012.html>

The objectives of this course are to provide students with an opportunity to develop critical thinking and clear expression and to introduce them to the history of Western philosophy and to some of the traditional problems of philosophy.

Course outline

I. The Basics

- traditional divisions of philosophy
- timeline of philosophers – and some historical context
- Some basic philosophical terms and basic logic
 - Arguments and statements; Truth and falsity; consistency; validity and soundness; direct and indirect proofs, including *reductio ad absurdum*.

II. Socrates and Plato

- General remarks on ethical relativism and ethical objectivism
- Plato: *Apology*
- The nature of justice and of the good (from the *Euthyphro* and *Republic*)
- Plato's 'divided line' and allegory of the cave (*Republic*)

III. Aristotle, Aquinas, and Anselm

- Aristotle: virtue and the good life (*Nicomachean Ethics*)
- Aristotle: the four causes (*Physics*)
- Aquinas: the five ways (*Summa theologiae*)
- Anselm: the ontological argument (*Proslogion*)

IV. Descartes

- Logic: Deductive reasoning
- *Meditations* The problem of appearance and reality; The origin of knowledge in reason; The nature of the (human) self, the relation of the mind and the body, cause and effect, and the existence of god/God

V. Hume

- Logic: Inductive reasoning
- *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* The origin of our knowledge in experience; Induction; The nature of the (human) self, cause and effect, and the existence of miracles. The problem of induction/Inductive reasoning

VI. Issues in Recent and Contemporary Philosophy

The texts we shall use are:

PLATO, *Great Dialogues of Plato*, trans. W.H.D. Rouse; ed. Eric H. Warmington and Philip G. Rouse (New York: New American Library, 1999).
Rene DESCARTES, *Discourse on Method* and *Meditations on First Philosophy*, trans. Donald A. Cress, 4th ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998)
David HUME, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Eric Steinberg, 2nd ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993)
and copied notes (especially for classes on logic – e.g., ‘The Logic Booklet’)

Students should also have a good dictionary available. They might also consult: *Philosophy Pages* (from Garth Kemerling): <http://www.philosophypages.com/>

Method of the course and the role of the student:

The class will have a 'lecture and discussion' format. The professor will introduce a topic with a summary of the relevant arguments or a commentary on a text. This will be followed by questions and discussion of the material by the class as a whole (e.g., points of clarification or criticism and of comparison; comments on the relations between or among different issues).

Students are expected to have prepared the readings before class, to attend all of the classes and to participate in discussion. In conformity with University regulations, students who have more than 3 unjustified absences in a term may be reported to their Dean.

It is essential in studying philosophy that students be prepared to ask and answer questions in class.

Laptops and other technologies

Laptops and similar technologies are **not permitted** unless you have my prior, explicit permission. Unauthorized use or related activities will result in being asked to leave the classroom.

Students with disabilities

Students who believe they may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to contact the Centre for Accessible Learning [Bloomfield Centre room 421; (902) 867-5349] as soon as possible to ensure that accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion.

Email and office policy

I can respond to short messages through email, and I try to check e-mail once a day. **I do not, however, provide grades or answers about course content by email.** Students should make use of my office hours and ask questions in class. Urgent requests (e.g., to meet) are best made by telephone. If I am not in when you call, please call later or drop by.

Writing to a course instructor is not the same as writing to a friend. For example, if you send me an e-mail message, please mention the specific topic of your message in the "subject" line. Use proper English. Begin the communication with an appropriate salutation, e.g., "Dear Dr. Sweet" (A poorly written and misspelled message reflects badly on the author.) Sign the communication with your name and the course in which you are enrolled.

Policy on plagiarism and academic dishonesty

St. Francis Xavier University values academic integrity. **All forms of academic dishonesty (including plagiarism) are unacceptable and will be sanctioned.** For the university policy on plagiarism, please visit http://www.sites.stfx.ca/registrar_s_office/academic_integrity

Evaluation

Attendance, class notes, and **weekly** (1st term) quizzes (15%); October quiz (10%); Mid Year examination (20%); written assignment (early March - 15%); final examination (40%)

Writing Centre

Students are encouraged to take advantage of the resources of the Writing Centre, particularly with regard to organizing study time, writing papers, preparing for examinations, etc. For more information, please see <http://sites.stfx.ca/writingcentre/>