

PHIL 110. Philosophical Texts that Changed the World: An Introduction to Philosophy through Great Works

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Caldwell Hall 107C

Office Hours: M/T/W/R/F 1:00-1:30 PM (and by appointment)

UNC-Chapel Hill

Summer Session I 2019

Caldwell Hall 208

M/T/W/R/F 11:30 AM-1:00 PM

Course Description

What is the meaning of life? Does God exist? Should we seize the means of production? In this course, we will explore these and other fundamental philosophical questions by reading some of the greatest and most influential works ever written: the Bible, Plato's *Republic*, Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, Descartes' *Meditations*, the Declaration of Independence, Marx and Engels' *Communist Manifesto*, and others.

Content Warning: In this course, we will discuss controversial and sensitive topics which affect many students personally. Please let me know if you have questions or concerns about any element of the course.

Course Objectives

- Understand and evaluate important philosophical ideas
 - Understand and evaluate views on specific philosophical topics
- Understand, analyze, and critically engage philosophical texts
 - Reconstruct, offer objections to, and defend philosophical arguments
- Construct arguments for philosophical views and defend them against objections

Course Requirements

Participation	10%	
Reading Quizzes	20%	
First Short Essay (600-900 words ≈ 2-3 pp.)	15%	Due Thurs., May 23, 11:59 PM
Second Short Essay (900-1200 words ≈ 3-4 pp.)	20%	Due Fri., June 7, 11:59 PM
Final Essay* (1500-2400 words ≈ 5-8 pp.)	35%	Due Wed., June 19, 11:59 PM

***The final essay replaces a final exam. There will be no final exam.**

Reading Quizzes: Every day (except the first day of class), class will begin with a short reading quiz. The purpose of these quizzes is to make sure that you are completing reading assignments before class. Your lowest quiz grade will be dropped.

Essays: The purpose of the essays is to test your ability to (i) understand and evaluate course readings, (ii) reconstruct and defend philosophical arguments and ideas laid out in course readings, (iii) refine your own philosophical arguments, ideas, and objections, and (iv) write clear, well-written, well-organized, and well-argued philosophical papers.

Essays will be graded anonymously. For this reason, **they should be submitted in a PDF format with your PID as the file name.** They should also be double-spaced and written in 12-point Times New Roman with 1-inch margins. **Essays which are not formatted and submitted correctly will be docked half a letter grade.**

Essays which exceed or do not meet the assigned word count requirements will be docked one letter grade. I am happy to consider word count extension requests.

Essays will be docked one letter grade for each day late that they are submitted. I am happy to consider extension requests.

Participation and Respect

Attendance: You are permitted one unexcused absence. Unexcused absences beyond the first will result in a lower participation grade.

Reading: Before each class session, you should actively, carefully, and critically read the required materials for that session so that you can come to class ready to discuss those materials.

Forum posts: By 10:00 AM before each class session (besides the first), you should submit a forum post to Sakai reflecting upon the upcoming class session’s readings. The purpose of these forum posts is to guide our conversations in class and to prepare you for those conversations. Forum posts will not be individually graded, but your forum posts will affect your participation grade. You may skip one forum post without penalty; skipped forum posts beyond the first will result in a lower participation grade.

Discussion: Especially because our class is so small, most of our class sessions should be much more like conversations than lectures. You are expected to participate in that conversation by offering comments, asking questions, and so on. (In general, the less I talk, the more rewarding and less boring our class sessions will be.) There may also be opportunities for extra credit for students who volunteer for in-class presentations. During class, **the use of laptops is not allowed without special permission.** Discussion of course materials (and other related materials) outside of class is not required but is strongly encouraged, especially if you are uncomfortable contributing to in-class discussion. Examples of such discussion include discussing course materials with me during office hours.

Respect: You are expected to treat all your fellow students with respect regardless of the opinions they express in class or their religion, sex, ethnicity, and so on. One important philosophical skill which we will train in this course is that of taking views seriously which we think are incorrect—or even abhorrent—whether they are expressed in course materials or by other members of the class. (I myself will often play devil’s advocate in class and temporarily defend views which I think are incorrect.) Taking a view seriously means “steelmanning” it rather than “strawmanning” it: considering and evaluating the strongest version of it rather than the weakest version. It also means fostering an environment of curiosity and respect so that all members of the class can freely express their views.

Course Materials

No textbook is required for this course. Course materials may all be found on Sakai.

Grading Scale

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	F
94+	90-93	87-89	84-86	80-83	77-79	74-76	70-73	67-69	64-66	60-63	59-

Honor Code

As always, you are expected to abide by [the Honor Code](#) and to refrain from academic dishonesty, including plagiarism. Among other things, plagiarism includes the *intentional or unintentional* representation of someone else's work or ideas as your own, improper citation of sources, close paraphrase of someone else's work or ideas without proper citation, and copying of your own previously submitted work. If you are unsure whether something counts as plagiarism, please ask me. (Consider also reviewing [UNC's plagiarism tutorial](#).) Remember that it is your responsibility to make sure that you understand the Honor Code so that you may abide by it.

Office Hours and Accessibility

I am happy to meet with you during my scheduled office hours or by appointment to talk about course materials and assignments, philosophy in general, or anything else. No appointment is necessary to meet with me during office hours. I am also happy to arrange accommodations for students with accessibility issues. Please contact the Accessibility Office (or me) if you need special accommodations.

Course Schedule

Wednesday, May 15: The Bible and the Qur'an

Syllabus

Genesis 1-3; Genesis 12.1-3, 15.1-6, 18.1-15, 22.1-19; Exodus 20.1-17; Job 1-3, 38-42; Ecclesiastes 1-4.8, 12; Matthew 5-7; John 1.1-18; 1 Corinthians 13

Qur'an 1 (*Al-Fatihah* ["The Opener"]), 16 (*An-Nahl* ["The Bee"])

Thursday, May 16: The Four Books of Confucianism

***Analects* 1.3, 12; 2.3; 3.17; 4.10, 12-13, 15-16, 18-20, 25; 5.12; 6.18, 20, 22, 29; 7.6, 30; 8.2, 9; 9.18-19, 29; 11.22; 12.2, 17, 19; 13.3, 5-6, 18; 14.13, 30; 15.9, 16, 24, 29, 37; 16.5; 19.11, 21**

***Mencius* 1A1, 1B8, 2A6, 3B2, 4A10, 4A11, 4A17, 4A27, 4B6, 4B8, 4B28, 6A2, 6A3, 6A6, 6A15, 7A1, 7A7, 7A26, 7B5, 7B16, 7B31**

Great Learning I

***Doctrine of the Mean* 1-5, 7**

Friday, May 17: Sacred Hindu and Buddhist Texts

[Selections from the *Bhagavad Gita*](#)

Khuddakapatha

[Mulamadhyamakakarika](#)

Monday, May 20: Plato's Republic

[Republic 357a-369a, 427d-445e \(pp. 36-46, 112-135\)](#)

Tuesday, May 21: Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics

***Nicomachean Ethics* I.I-V, VII-VIII; II.I-VII (pp. 2-6, 8-13, 21-32)**

Wednesday, May 22: Diogenes Laertius' Lives and Opinions of the Eminent Philosophers

***Lives*, "Diogenes" 20-21, 23-24, 27, 37, 41, 44, 46, 49, 53-54, 58, 60, 63-65, 68, 70-72, 74, 78**

***Lives*, "Epicurus" 37-41, 54, 63, 65, 76 (second half), 78, 81-82, 117-133, 135, 138-141, 143-144, 146, 148-150, 152**

Optional: *Lives*, "Diogenes" 29, 40, 48, 50-52, 55-57, 62, 69, 73, 75-77, 79

Optional: *Lives*, "Epicurus" 22, 35-36, 45, 64, 66-73, 77, 79-80, 134, 136-137, 142, 145, 147, 151, 153-154

Thursday, May 23: Marcus Aurelius' Meditations

[Meditations I.1, 3, 5, 12, 15-17; II.1, 4-5, 7-8, 11, 15; III.5, 8-9, 17; IV.2-3, 6-8, 15, 18-19, 24, 28, 33-35, 38, 40-41, 43; V.1-3, 6, 10-11, 20-21, 24-25, 30; VI.1-3, 5-7, 10-11, 17, 20, 26, 29-30, 38, 44, 47, 49, 51, 53; VII.1, 7-10, 12, 14-15, 24, 28, 40, 42; VIII.2-3, 7, 12, 17-18, 21, 26, 31, 41, 50-51, 55-56; IX.4, 14, 16-18, 24, 30, 37, 40; X.4, 14, 17-18, 25; XI.4, 13, 30; XII.3, 8-10, 13, 21-22](#)

FIRST SHORT ESSAY DUE AT 11:59 PM

Friday, May 24: Augustine's Confessions

[Selections from Confessions](#)

[Monday, May 27: No Class]

Tuesday, May 28: Aquinas' Summa Theologiae

Summa I.Q2

[Edward Feser, "So you think you understand the cosmological argument?"](#)

[Interview with Edward Feser, 10:45-17:00](#)

Wednesday, May 29: Descartes' Meditations

[Selections from Meditations](#)

Thursday, May 30: Hobbes' Leviathan

Leviathan I.13-14; II.17-18

Friday, May 31: Locke's Second Treatise

Treatise I-II, VII-IX

Declaration of Independence

Optional: Thomas Hutchinson, *Strictures upon the Declaration*

Monday, June 3: Classics of the Scottish Enlightenment

Hume's Treatise II.3.3; III.1.1

Wealth of Nations I.1-2

Tuesday, June 4: Kant's Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals

[Selections from the Groundwork](#)

Wednesday, June 5: Classics of Utilitarianism

Selections from *Utilitarianism*

Selections from *On Liberty*

[Anarchical Fallacies, “A Critical Examination of the Declaration of Rights,” Preliminary Observations through Article II, Sentence 1 \(until “whatever disposition they have to observe them”\); pp. 496-502\)](#)

Optional: [Selections from *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*](#)

Thursday, June 6: Burke

[Selections from *Reflections on the Revolution in France*](#)

Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen

[Optional: Isaiah Berlin, “The Second Onslaught: Joseph de Maistre and Open Obscurantism”](#)

Friday, June 7: Marx and Engels’ Communist Manifesto

[Communist Manifesto, Sections I-II](#)

[“The Principles of Communism”](#)

[SECOND SHORT ESSAY DUE AT 11:59PM](#)

Monday, June 10: Classics of Scientific Modernism

[Selections from *Course of Positive Philosophy, I-II; IV*](#)

[Selections from *Origin of Species, Introduction; I-IV; XIV*](#)

Civilization and Its Discontents I

[Outline of *The Elephant in the Brain*](#)

Tuesday, June 11: Nietzsche’s On the Genealogy of Morality

“Good and Evil,” “Good and Bad”

Wednesday, June 12: Classics of Existentialism

[Selections from “Existentialism Is a Humanism”](#)

[Myth of Sisyphus 3-10, 119-123 \(pp. 1-4, 23-24\)](#)

Optional: Fyodor Dostoevsky, “The Grand Inquisitor”

Thursday, June 13: Hayek

[Selections from *The Road to Serfdom*](#)

Selections from “The Use of Knowledge in Society”

Optional: “I, Pencil”

Friday, June 14: Texts from Movements for Social Justice

Betty Friedan, “The Problem That Has No Name”

Marilyn Frye, “Oppression”

Martin Luther King, Jr., Letter from Birmingham Jail

Optional: [Selections from *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*](#)

Monday, June 17: Classics of Dystopian Fiction

1984 I.1; II.8; III.2-3, 6

***Brave New World*, Chapters 1 and 17**

*Wednesday, June 19, **11:30 AM-2:30 PM**: Conclusion*

NOTE: Although there will be no in-class final exam, the university requires us to meet during our scheduled final exam session. There is no assigned reading for this class session; instead of discussing assigned readings, we will take this time to reflect upon everything we have discussed in the course.

FINAL ESSAY DUE AT 11:59 PM