

# Philosophy of Human Nature

2012 Fall

PHIL-1000-R03

T, W, F 8.30–9.20, Keating Hall 114

**Instructor:** Zita Toth

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**Office hours:** M 10-12, F 12.30-1.30, and by appointment. Collins Hall B07

## 1 Course description and objectives

The course is an introduction to the most important philosophical problems related to human nature. The course is centered around three main topics: (1) What is to be a human, and how body and soul relate to each other; (2) What is knowledge, and whether we can know anything; (3) The problem of religious belief. We will consider various basic philosophical approaches to these questions, together with the context in which they arose.

There are four main objectives of this course:

1. To acquire the basic logical skills necessary for understanding a philosophical argument. As an introduction to philosophy course, the course will start with a short logic tutorial to help students to familiarize themselves with elementary logic, the most common argument structures, and possible fallacies.
2. To acquire a basic familiarity with the most important philosophical theories concerning the topic of the course, both in their historical and contemporary manifestations. However, since philosophy as a discipline is more than two thousand years old, we will be far from comprehensive.
3. To be able to apply the logical skills in the evaluation of philosophical theories in general. Reading philosophical texts can be very hard at first. During the course, students will practice how to grasp the main thesis of a given text, as well as its main argument, its premises and assumptions. This way, philosophical texts (but not

only philosophical texts) become meaningful, comparable to one another, and easier to evaluate.

4. To be able to develop a thesis in a well-argued manner. Students will be asked to construct arguments for a thesis, and to formulate and respond to possible objections. Thus, towards the end of the course students will be ready to develop a solid philosophy paper in which they can state their own opinion, argue for it, and defend it against possible objections. Students will be encouraged to state their ideas clearly, and argue for them in a convincing way, both in writing and in class discussion. This is the basis of not only philosophy writing, but good academic writing in general.

## 2 Required texts

All titles are available in the university bookstore. Please do get the required editions, as we will often be referring to page numbers. (Also, the Descartes book contains some material that might be omitted from other editions with the same title.) A number of required readings will be posted on E-Res (available through the library website). Students are expected to have read these and to bring a printed copy of them to class on the day for which they were assigned.

- Plato, *Five Dialogues: Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Meno, Phaedo*. Second Edition. Tr. G.M.A. Grube, Rev. J.M. Cooper. Indianapolis: Hackett, 2002. ISBN: 978-0872206335
- Plato, *Theaetetus*. Any edition.
- Aristotle, *Introductory Readings*. Tr. T. Irwin and G. Fine. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1996. ISBN: 978-0872203402
- René Descartes, *Meditations, Objections, and Replies*. Ed. and tr. Roger Ariew and Donald Cress. Indianapolis: Hackett, 2006. ISBN: 978-0872207981

## 3 Course requirements and grading

- Attendance and participation, 10%. Attendance is required, and participation in class discussions is expected and strongly encouraged. Each unexcused absence will negatively affect the participation grade, and six or more of them will automatically result in failure of the class. Please note that reading the required texts is absolutely mandatory for this class. Reading philosophical texts can be quite hard; study questions will usually be distributed in advance to guide you in the reading.
- Three short papers (2-3 pages each) related to the three core issues we will consider during the course. Topics and guiding questions will be distributed in advance. Please

note: late assignments will **not** be considered. (If you have serious reasons, please talk to me.) 30% (10% each). Papers might be submitted electronically (in .pdf, .doc, .pages, or .rtf format), or in hard copy on the day when they are due.

- Midterm exam, 20%.
- Final exam, 20%. The midterm and final exams will consist of a series of short questions, focused on the readings and on class discussion.
- Final paper (5 pages), 20%. The paper must interact with at least two secondary sources (these will be provided to students), and should be either a detailed analysis and evaluation of an aspect of a theory discussed in class, or a comparison/contrast of two thinkers discussed in class with respect to a specific issue or topic. Students must receive approval for their topic at least three weeks before the due date.

## 4 Other policies

- **Plagiarism:** According to the University's Academic Policy, "Plagiarism occurs when individuals attempt to present as their own what has come from another source. Plagiarism takes place whether such theft is accidental or deliberate." Plagiarism in any assignment will result in 0 credit for that assignment. Two cases of plagiarism results in failure of the course.
- **Laptops:** Laptops, phones, and internet-enabled devices are not allowed in class. If you have any special concerns, feel free to ask after the first class.
- **Disabilities:** According to the Student Handbook, "Fordham University will make reasonable accommodations and provide auxiliary aids and services to assist otherwise qualified persons in achieving access to its programs, services and facilities in accordance with Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990." If you believe that you have a disability that may negatively impact your performance in this course, please make an appointment to speak with someone at the Office of Disability Services (O'Hare Hall, Lower Level, 718-817-0655), and bring me a letter from that office in the first two weeks of the semester. For more information, please see the Student Handbook.

## 5 Tentative schedule

DATE	ASSIGNMENT	TOPIC
Aug. 29	Russell, "The Value of Philosophy." Hurley, <i>A Concise Introduction to Logic</i> (sel.).	What is philosophy? Basic logical concepts
Sep. 18	Plato, <i>Sophist</i> , 216a–221c; Aristotle, <i>Posterior Analytics</i> , book 2 (pp. 24–30).	Definition
Sep. 19, 21	Plato, <i>Phaedo</i> .	Being human
Sep. 25	Descartes, Second Meditation, pp. 13–19.	Substance dualism
Sep. 26	Objections and Replies: pp. 70–71, 75–78, 101–105, 116–122, 131–138.	
Sep. 28	Jaworski, <i>Philosophy of Mind</i> , pp. 69–79.	Physicalism
Oct. 2	Jaworski, pp. 79–101.	
Oct. 3	Aristotle, <i>Physics</i> , 184a10–194b15 (pp. 36–47).	Hylomorphism
Oct. 5	Aristotle, <i>On the Soul</i> , book II (pp. 80–95).	
Oct. 9	Aquinas, <i>Summa Theologiae</i> , I, q.75, a.4; q.76, a.1.	
Oct. 10		<i>Review</i>
<b>Oct. 12</b>	<b>Midterm</b>	
<b>Oct. 16</b>	<b>First short paper due</b>	
Oct. 16	Plato, <i>Meno</i> , 80d–86c (pp. 70–78).	What is knowledge?
Oct. 17, 19	Plato, <i>Theaetetus</i> .	
Oct. 23	Gettier, "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?"	
Oct. 24, 26	Descartes, <i>Meditations</i> .	Skepticism
Oct. 30	Malcolm, "Do I Know I Am Awake?"	
Oct. 31	Putnam, "Brains in a Vat."	
Nov. 2	Aristotle, <i>Posterior Analytics</i> , book 1 (pp. 16–24); Aquinas, <i>Super Boethium De Trinitate</i> , q.5, a.2.	Scientific knowledge
Nov. 6	NO CLASS – ELECTION DAY	
Nov. 7	Hume, <i>Enquiry</i> , §4.	Induction
Nov. 9	Hempel, "Recent Problems of Induction."	
Nov. 13		<i>Review</i>
<b>Nov. 20</b>	<b>Second short paper due</b>	
Nov. 14	Aquinas, <i>Summa Contra Gentiles</i> (sel.).	Knowledge and faith
Nov. 16	Clifford, "The Ethics of Belief."	
Nov. 20	Malcolm, "The Groundlessness of Religious Belief."	
Nov. 21, 23	NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING RECESS	
Nov. 27, 28	Aquinas, <i>Summa Theologiae</i> , I, q.2, a.3.	The Five Ways
Nov. 30	McCabe, "Creation."	
Dec. 4	Mackie, <i>The Miracle of Theism</i> (sel.).	
Dec. 7		<i>Review</i>
<b>Dec. 10</b>	<b>Third short paper due</b>	
<b>Dec. 20</b>	<b>Final, with final paper</b>	