

Philosophy of Human Nature

2014 Spring

PHIL-1000-R03

T, W, F 9.30–10.20

TBA

Instructor: Zita Toth

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Office hours: M, T 10.30–11.30, and by appointment. Collins Hall, B11

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 being, and how body and soul are related; (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 this link or the Fordham 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. **The course password for the E-Res site is 1000-03.**

- 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
- 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. Participation includes valuable comments, paying attention to your colleagues, and completing any exercises/homeworks.
- In-class quizzes, 10% total. There will be a very short, 2-questions / 2-minute quiz at the very beginning of most classes, based on the reading for the class. There will not

be any make-up quizzes; if you are late, or have an unexcused absence, your credit for that quiz will be zero.

- Three short papers (2-3 pages each) related to the three core issues we will consider during the course. Topics and instructions will be distributed in advance. *Late assignments will not be considered.* (If you have serious reasons, please talk to me.) 30% (10% each). You need to submit each paper via the [Turnitin.com](https://www.turnitin.com) website. You will need to create a student account, and use the course ID and password. **The course ID is 7387875, the password is 1000-03.**
- Midterm exam, 15%.
- 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), 15%. Topics and a detailed prompt will be distributed later.

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, tablets, phones, and internet-enabled devices are not allowed in class. If you have any special concerns, feel free to ask after the first class.
- **Time:** Although this is a (relatively) early morning class, we will always start on time. Being late can be very disruptive and rude; please note that unexcused tardiness will negatively affect your participation grade.
- **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
Jan. 14 Jan. 17–	Russell, “ The Value of Philosophy. ” Copi–Cohen, <i>Introduction to Logic</i> (optional).	What is philosophy? Basic logical concepts
Jan. 29— Feb. 5, 7	Plato, <i>Phaedo</i> . Descartes, Second Meditation, pp. 13–19. Objections and Replies: pp. 70–71, 75–78, 101–105, 116–122, 131–138.	Being human Substance dualism
Feb. 11	Jaworski, <i>Philosophy of Mind</i> , pp. 69–79.	Objections Physicalism
Feb. 12	Jaworski, pp. 79–101.	Objections
Feb. 14	How to write a philosophy paper?	
Feb. 18	NO CLASS — MONDAY SCHEDULE	
Feb. 19	Aristotle, <i>Physics</i> , 184a10–194b15 (pp. 36–47).	Hylomorphism
Feb. 21	Aristotle, <i>On the Soul</i> , book II (pp. 80–95).	
Feb. 25	Aquinas, <i>Summa Theologiae</i> , I, q.75, a.4; q.76, a.1.	
Feb. 26		<i>Review</i>
Feb. 28	Midterm	
Mar. 4	First short paper due	
Mar. 5	Plato, <i>Meno</i> , 80d–86c (pp. 70–78).	What is knowledge?
Mar. 7	Gettier, “ Is Justified True Belief Knowledge? ”	
Mar. 11–14	Descartes, <i>Meditations</i> .	Skepticism
Mar. 18–21	NO CLASS — SPRING RECESS	
Mar. 25	Putnam, “ Brains in a Vat. ”	
Mar. 26	Aristotle, <i>Posterior Analytics</i> , book 1 (pp. 16–24); Aquinas, <i>Super Boethium De Trinitate</i> , q.5, a.2.	Scientific knowledge
Mar. 28	Hume, <i>Enquiry</i> , §4.	Induction
Apr. 1	Hempel, “ Recent Problems of Induction. ”	
Apr. 2		<i>Review</i>
Apr. 8	Second short paper due	
Apr. 4	Aquinas, <i>Summa Contra Gentiles</i> (sel.).	Faith and reason
Apr. 8	Clifford, “ The Ethics of Belief. ”	
Apr. 9	Malcolm, “ The Groundlessness of Religious Belief. ”	
Apr. 11, 15	Anselm, <i>Proslogion</i> (sel.).	Ontological argument
Apr. 16, 22	Aquinas, <i>Summa Theologiae</i> , I, q.2, a.3.	The Five Ways
Apr. 18	NO CLASS — EASTER BREAK	
Apr. 23	Mackie, <i>The Miracle of Theism</i> (sel.).	
Apr. 25	The Russell–Copleston debate (video).	
Apr. 29, 30		<i>Review</i>
Apr. 30	Third short paper due	
TBA	Final, with final paper	