

PHILOSOPHY 100/ Spring 2024
Introduction to Philosophy
Prof. Ted Kinnaman

Office: Horizon 6256

Office hours: Weds., 1:00 – 2:00*; Tues., 2:00 – 3:00

(*Wednesday office hours are on Zoom. The link for these is posted on Blackboard.)

Office phone: 993-1289

Email: tkinnama@gmu.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION: In this course, we'll be reading six books by important authors in the Western philosophical tradition. The first, the *Theaetetus* by Plato, will serve as an introduction to what philosophy is all about. Plato's *Republic* and John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty* focus on the place of individual freedom in a just society. Descartes's *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Berkeley's *Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous*, and Hume's *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* take up issues about knowledge, science, and God, among other topics. You will write essays of about 2000 words, one on Plato and Mill, the other on Descartes, Berkeley, and Hume. Each will count for 40% of your semester grade. You will also have six opportunities to write shorter papers; you will need to write four of the six. Taken together, these papers will count for 20% of your grade. Prompts for all these papers will be posted on Blackboard. On Blackboard you will also find a page with resources to help you with writing papers for philosophy.

COURSE GOALS: Your goals in this course are to 1. Understand the *issues* being considered in each text we read; 2. Identify the *positions* the authors take on these issues—what they have to say; 3. Understand the *arguments* each philosopher gives for his views, that is, his reasons for holding the view; 4. Think about what *you* make of each of these philosophers. Do you agree? Disagree? Find problems with the argument? Does the philosophy you're reading seem connected to something else you know about? All this is to say that you will not only be reading philosophy, you will (I hope) also be a philosopher yourself.

CLASSROOM MEETINGS: The meetings are intended to help you better understand some of the most important passages in the assigned texts. On the syllabus below, you will see that for every day we meet, there is an assigned text to read. The lecture will be devoted to explaining that text: What question the author is addressing; what key terms mean; what the author's argument is; and what problems there are with the author's argument. Because philosophy reading is often rather difficult, I suggest that you read the text once before lecture (or at least try it), and again after lecture. When my schedule allows it, I will try to send questions to you via email, both as a guide to what we will discuss in our meetings and as an aid in understanding the reading. You will find it difficult to do well in the class without attending lecture regularly. Finally, I recommend, but do not require, that you do not use a laptop or other device during class. I assume you will be courteous and refrain from using devices for purposes not related to our course.

REQUIRED BOOKS:

1. Plato, *Theaetetus* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1992).
2. Plato, *Republic* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1992).
3. John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1978).
4. René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1993).
5. George Berkeley, *Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1979).
6. David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1998).

READING SCHEDULE:

Tues., 1/16: Introduction to course.

Thurs., 1/18: Plato, *Theaetetus*, pp. 1 - 26.

Tues., 1/23: Plato, *Theaetetus*, pp. 26 - 60.

Thurs., 1/25: Plato, *Theaetetus*, conc.

Tues., 1/30: Plato, *Republic*, Book One and Book Two [357b - 368e].

Thurs., 2/1: *Republic*, Book Two [357b - 368e]. **[Short paper on *Theaetetus* due in Blackboard by 1:00 p.m. on Friday, 2/2]**

Tues., 2/6: *Republic*, Book Three [412b - 417b] and Book Four.

Thurs., 2/8: *Republic*, Book Five [471c-480], Book Six and Book Seven [514-521b].

Tues., 2/13: *Republic*, Book Eight [555b - 561e].

Thurs., 2/15: Discussion of *Republic*, Book Eight.

Tues., 2/20: Mill, *On Liberty*, Chapters One and Two.

Thurs., 3/22: *On Liberty*, Chapter Two cont'd. and Chapter Three.

Tues., 2/27: *On Liberty*, Chapter Four.

Thurs., 2/29: *On Liberty*, Chapter Five.

March 2 - 10: Spring Break

Tues., 3/12: Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, pp. 1 - 17 (Meditation 1).

Thurs., 3/14: *Meditations*, pp. 17 - 24 (Med. 2). **[Plato/Mill paper due in Blackboard at 1:00 on Fri., 3/15]**

Tues., 3/19: *Meditations* (Med. 2 cont'd and Med. 3).

Thurs., 3/21: *Meditations*, pp. 24 - 42 (Meds. 3 and 4).

Tues., 3/26: *Meditations*, pp. 47 - 59 (Med. 6).
Thurs., 3/28: *Meditations*, pp. 47 - 59 (Med. 6).

Tue., 4/2: Berkeley, *Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous* (First Dialogue)
Thurs., 4/4: *Three Dialogues* (First Dialogue, cont'd.)

Tues., 4/9: *Three Dialogues* (Second Dialogue).
Thurs., 4/11: *Three Dialogues* (Third Dialogue).

Tues., 4/16: Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, Sections 1 – 3.
Thurs., 4/18: *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, Sections 4 - 6.

Tues., 4/25: *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, Sections 7 - 12.
Thurs., 4/27: Discussion of *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*.

LATE SUBMISSIONS: I am usually generous about accepting assignments a bit after the due date if the student has cleared this with me beforehand. If, however, you hand in an assignment late without talking to me first, you should count on being penalized in some way. If the paper is only slightly late, I may mark it down a grade; if it is very late, I will not accept it at all. Also, please be advised that if your paper is extended, you might have to wait a while to get it back; grading on-time submissions is always my top priority.

REWRITES: I am frequently asked about my policy regarding the re-writing of papers—so frequently that I think it makes sense to put it in the syllabus. Strictly speaking, I do not allow rewrites. Instead, if you are unhappy with the grade you receive on an assignment, I will count that paper for something less (how much less is entirely up to me) than its allotted 25% of the grade *if* you meet two conditions: First, you must meet with me twice to talk about writing—once to talk about the paper that didn't go well, and another to talk with me about a later paper while you're in the process of writing it. Second, your other papers must show significant improvement from the one you were unhappy with.

A NOTE ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: A general rule of thumb is, if you say something in a paper that you would not have said if you had not read Smith, even if you do not quote Smith word for word, then you need to footnote Smith. Anyone who cites or otherwise refers to the work of someone else (including, of course, an AI bot) without acknowledging this fact in a footnote will be referred to the Honor Committee.

OFFICE OF DISABILITY SERVICES: If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the ODS.
<http://ods.gmu.edu>

UNIVERSITY POLICIES: The University Catalog, <http://catalog.gmu.edu>, is the central resource for university policies affecting student, faculty, and staff conduct in university

academic affairs. Other policies are available at <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/>. All members of the university community are responsible for knowing and following established policies.