

Introduction to Philosophy

ONLINE COURSE

Rutgers University

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There are a number of scholarly and personal virtues necessary for success in this or any other course:

Fidelity, or constancy of purpose in devotion to learning;

Industriousness, or always working when work is called for;

Diligence, or always working well, both as the task requires and as your abilities permit;

Perspicacity, or always learning the details of a matter instead of being merely ‘vaguely familiar’ with it;

Humility, the proper understanding of one’s own self-worth without claiming to be entitled to anything beyond that worth;

Gratitude, the acknowledgement that something transcends oneself and provides appreciable natural gifts.

ATTENTION: The policies and requirements on the version of this syllabus supersede the policies and requirements on any syllabus posted anywhere else, including a department webpage.

SUMMARY

This is a textbook-based online course. It is absolutely NECESSARY that you OWN and READ the textbook in order to succeed in this course. I have chosen our textbook very carefully. It has theoretically rich chapters that are very carefully written and should provide the diligent student with considerable insight into the nature of philosophy.

I am mainly interested in your learning of the substantial content of the course. This content includes main concepts. You cannot learn anything of substance by soaking up impressions and being vaguely familiar with topics. You must being able to define basic terminology, interpret it in terms of its pros and cons, and perhaps explain things in its terms. So, this term you will have a variety of questions to answer, ranging from defining basic terms, analyzing them rationally, comparing them critically, and explaining how they help us to understand other things. That is *real* learning.

So, if you wish to succeed in the course, you must (a) submit ALL assignments, (b) submit them on time, and (c) make sure they are of sufficient length, or longer than required.

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

In this course we will explore the significance of metaphysics, epistemology, the philosophy of mind, and ethics. Special emphasis will be placed on critical thinking skills. More specifically, students will be able to:

(a) name and identify individuals, events, themes, and issues of major importance in the history of philosophy;

(b) demonstrate a basic level of competence in differentiating the various philosophies and the significance of historical context;

(c) recognize the importance of critique and influence in the history of philosophy;

(d) develop an understanding of the use of philosophical texts and display some familiarity toward different types of argumentation; and

(e) critically analyze arguments and counter-arguments associated in philosophy.

**TEXTBOOK (REQUIRED)**

Introducing Philosophy: A Text with Integrated Readings. Robert C. Solomon et al. editors. Oxford University Press, 2016. Eleventh edition.

You MUST buy the ELEVENTH edition only, as pagination is different for other editions. You may use either print or digital copies.

All students should consider purchasing a used copy of this book online, with Amazon, Barnes and Noble and others. Once you are firmly resolved to remain in the course, you should make sure to order this book as soon as possible. It is best to arrange to have the book before the semester begins.

**Final Grades**

Your final grade will be the average of thirteen assignments, basically one each week. Each assignment will be worth 100 points.

**Assignments**

There is one ‘module’ for each week of the semester. There will be one writing assignment for each module. Each of these assignments must be uploaded to Canvas.

Your paper may be uploaded any time in the week prior to the deadline, which, for simplicity’s’ sake, will be 1 PM (afternoon) on Wednesday. I will not accept your paper at any other time or by any other means (NO EXCEPTIONS). In my experience, it is best if I do NOT violate this rule. So make sure you understand that there is a specific way you will submit your assignment, and no other.

Attention: Your work must be typed DOUBLE-SPACED.

Also, it is best to read and take notes before you type in your answers. You will receive a low grade if you simply look through the book for answers, since it will be obvious to me that you are doing so.

DISCUSSION BOARD

Every two weeks or so I may begin a discussion on the Blackboard discussion board. Participation is not mandatory. But the question(s) with which I start the discussion may be very helpful for upcoming assignments.

SCHEDULE

Week One

Introduction. Make sure you are enrolled, have email and Canvas access, and have bought or rented the textbook.

Week Two

Read pages 14-15, then 43-55. First, take notes on each pre-Socratic thinker. What does each thinker consider reality to be?

Answer these questions.

(1) What did the Ionian naturalists believe? How do they represent the Axial Age? (One page).

(2) Compare the philosopher discussed on page 49 with the thinker addressed on pages 52-54. (One page)

(3) Select one of the Pre-Socratic thinkers from the chapter and explain how they would answer the questions on page 55. (One page)

The assignment you submit should be a minimum of 3 pages long double-spaced.

Deadline for Submission to Canvas: 1 PM (afternoon), Thursday, September 10th.

Week Three

Read pages 65-87. Take detailed notes about Plato and Aristotle, then write a page about the bottom paragraph on page 81-82. Then answer review questions 2 and 5. The paper you submit should be at least 4-pages long, double-spaced.

Deadline for Submission to Canvas: 1 PM (afternoon) on Thursday, Sept. 17th.

Week Four

(II). Read pages 127-150. Write one page summarizing the ontological argument. Then two pages summarizing the five ways Aquinas offers to prove the existence of God. The first two together are known as the Cosmological argument. The third is often called the Contingency argument, or the argument from necessity. The fourth is the Perfection argument. And the last is the Design argument. Write one page on whether you think all the arguments prove the existence of one divine being, or five divine beings. Then answer review question number 1. The paper you submit should be at least 3-pages long, double-spaced.

Deadline for Submission to Canvas: 1 PM (afternoon) on Thursday, Sept. 24th.

Week Five

(IIIa.). Read pages 191-195 and 200-249.

(1). Write up to one page defending the argument on pages 249-250.

(2). What are sense-data, for Russell (192-194). One page.

(3) Describe Descartes’ project. What is it intended to achieve? What does the problem of dreaming illustrate? Outline the significance of the cogito argument. Three pages.

(4). Write 1 page about Locke’s theory on page 216-226.

(5). Write up to one page explaining Hume’s fork.

The paper you submit should be at least 6-pages long, single-spaced.

Deadline for Submission to Canvas: 1 PM (afternoon) on Thursday, Oct. 1st.

Week Six

(IIIb.). What is your life’s project? Where do you plan to be in 20 years? What kinds of knowledge would you need to have in order to achieve these goals? The paper you submit should be at least 4-pages long, single-spaced.

Deadline for Submission to Canvas: 1 PM (afternoon) on Thursday, Oct. 8th.

Week Seven

(IV). Read pages 253-277, then answer questions 2, 4 and 6.

Define all of these on one page:

correspondence theory of truth

coherence theory of truth

pragmatic theory of truth.

Then, write one page about absolutism and relativism, after looking at pages 255 and 76.

What does James mean by ‘cold storage’ on page 265? Half a page

What does Kant mean by ‘constituting’ a world? Half a page.

Answer review questions 2, 4, and 6.

The paper you submit should be at least 5-pages long, double-spaced.

Deadline for Submission to Canvas: 1 PM (afternoon) on Wednesday, Oct. 15th.

Week Eight

Read pages 323-357.

Define each of these in a long paragraph. Define them in your own words, capturing the substantive content they have in the textbook:

Dualism

Causal Interactionism

Epiphenomenalism

Behaviorism

Identity theory

Eliminative materialism

Functionalism

Answer review questions 1 and 2.

The paper you submit should be at least 4-pages long, double-spaced.

Deadline for Submission to Canvas: 1 PM (afternoon) on Thursday, Oct. 22nd.

Week Nine

Read pages 444-464.

Define each of these in a long paragraph. Define them in your own words, capturing the substantive content they have in the textbook:

Determinism

Antecedent Condition

Sufficient Cause

Hard Determinism

Indeterminism

Soft Determinism

Answer review questions 1 and 4.

The paper you submit should be at least 4-pages long, double-spaced.

Deadline for Submission to Canvas: 1 PM (afternoon) on Thursday, Oct. 29th.

Week Ten

Read pages 497-506. Answer these questions.

I. Is morality ‘relative’, as Ethical Relativism maintains? To what is it relative? Two pages.

2. Define and explain the difference between psychological egoism and ethical egoism. Does self-interest dictate that one ought to be moral a good deal of the time? Two pages.

The paper you submit should be at least 4-pages long, double-spaced.

Deadline for Submission to Canvas: 1 PM (afternoon) on Thursday, Nov. 5th.

Week Eleven

Read 522-535.

1. Explain the paragraph beginning on page 522 to 523. Half a page.

2. Explain the concept emboldened on page 529. One page.

3. Which of the virtues on page 532 are most important to you personally? Which one do you think you lack? Which do you have in abundance? One page plus.

Deadline for Submission to Canvas: 1 PM (afternoon) on Thursday, Nov. 12

Week Twelve

Read 542-555. Answer these questions.

1. Explain the paragraph from Kant’s Fundamental principles of the Metaphysics of Morals at the bottom on page 543. One page.

2. In what way is Kant’s theory deontological? One page.

3. What is the difference between categorical and hypothetical imperatives? One page.

The paper you submit should be 3-pages long, double-spaced.

Deadline for Submission to Canvas: 1 PM (afternoon) on Thursday, November 19th

Week Thirteen

Thanksgiving

Week Fourteen

Read pages 556-568.

1. Apply the happiness calculus on page 558 to an everyday experience you have had. One page.

2. How does Mill’s conception of utilitarianism differ from Bentham’s? One page.

3. Answer review question number 5. One page.

The paper you submit should be at least 3-pages long, double-spaced.

Deadline for Submission to Canvas: 1 PM (afternoon) on Thursday, December 3rd

Week Fifteen

What is your life’s project? Where do you plan to be in 20 years? Which moral theory (Kantianism, utilitarianism, ethical egoism) might help you to form and understand that project? Which virtues must you cultivate in order to do so (see page 532)? Which vices might complicate that (sloth, gluttony, avarice, lust, envy, vainglory)?

The paper you submit should be at least 3-pages long, double-spaced.

Deadline for Submission to Canvas: 1 PM (afternoon) on Thursday, Dec. 10th.

Academic Integrity Violations

The Rutgers University Academic Integrity Policy defines plagiarism as the representation of the words or ideas of another as one’s own in any academic work. Intentionally committing plagiarism is a serious offense with severe consequences. Instructors are required to report students who intentionally violate this policy to the department chairperson and to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs. The most common forms of plagiarism are:

Quoting directly or paraphrasing without acknowledging the source (this includes copying or paraphrasing material from a web site without providing a proper citation for the site)

Presenting the work of another as one’s own

Plagiarizing major portions of a written assignment

Submitting purchased materials such as term papers

The Rutgers University Academic Integrity Policy establishes levels of violations and recommends sanctions. Depending upon the severity of the case and the level of the violation, the sanctions for these violations include: a failing grade for the assignment, failure in the course, mandatory participation in a series of noncredit academic integrity workshops, academic probation, and/or suspension. (If you are in doubt as to what constitutes plagiarism or are concerned that you are misappropriating someone’s words or ideas, speak immediately with your instructor. For more information, you can also consult the University Code of Student Conduct or the Student Judicial Affairs website [http://judicialaffairs.rutgers.edu](http://judicialaffairs.rutgers.edu/).)

Policy concerning Disabilities

Rutgers abides by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments (ADAA) of 2008, and Sections 504 and 508 which mandate reasonable accommodations be provided for qualified students with disabilities and the accessibility of online information. If you have a disability and may require some type of instructional and/or examination accommodation, please contact me early in the semester so that I can provide or facilitate in providing accommodations you may need. If you have not already done so, you will need to register with the Office of Disability Services, the designated office on campus to provide services and administer exams with accommodations for students with disabilities. The Office of Disability Services is located in the Robeson Student Center. For more information on disability services at Rutgers, go to http://disabilityservices-uw.rutgers.edu/