

Tentative Syllabus: P100 Introduction to Philosophy

Theme: **Appearance and Reality**

P100 M/W 12:20-1:10 WH120

Instructor: Cameron Buckner
Dept. of Philosophy, IUB
Office: 124 Sycamore Hall
E-mail: cbuckner@indiana.edu
Office Hrs: M 1:15-2:15 and by Appointment

AI: Tim Leisz
E-mail: twleisz@indiana.edu
Office: SY 0019
Office Hours: W 1:15-2:15, H 4:00-5:00

AI: Blakely Phillips
E-mail: blphil@indiana.edu
Office: SY 0019
Office Hours: Thursday 3:00-5:00

Course Description

This class provides a brief introduction to philosophy, focusing on questions about the possibility and limits of human knowledge. Some of the questions we will approach include: Can we ever know the true nature of reality? What is the relationship between the way things seem to us and the way they really are? Could we be seriously mistaken or deceived about the world? Is the nature of reality somehow determined by our minds or by our perception of it, or is the world “mind-independent,” existing whether anyone perceives it or not? And, perhaps most importantly: Can we offer serious answers to any of these questions—and if so, how?

Throughout the semester, we will approach these questions by studying the work of several important philosophers in the Western European tradition, including Plato, Descartes, Berkeley, and Kant. In studying their views and arguments, our goal is to understand and evaluate the reasons they think their positions are correct and to achieve a basic competency with the investigative and argumentative tools philosophers use to approach any issue. Central to this approach is the method of philosophical *argument*—starting from premises that most parties to a disagreement would accept and moving to significant conclusions using clear and unobjectionable reasoning. After taking this course, you should acquire a basic ability to not only evaluate the philosophical reasoning of others, but engage in some yourself.

To summarize, this course has three major aims:

- (1) To endow you with a basic familiarity of the positions of several important philosophers on the nature of human knowledge.
- (2) To develop your critical thinking abilities and to hone your ability to develop and defend well-reasoned philosophical positions both orally and in writing, and
- (3) To provide a forum in which we can take a structured approach to some of the most interesting and difficult questions about the nature and extent of human knowledge about the world and our own powers of reasoning.

Warning: This class is fun but difficult. Although the assigned readings are often brief, you will be expected to read and re-read the selections carefully, and to think deeply and critically about them. Philosophy courses in general are not the kinds of courses in which you can memorize the material and simply reproduce it on a test; rather, philosophy is about coming to see things in new ways, grappling with “the big” questions that have vexed people for millennia, and working to understand and evaluate complex arguments and positions. All of this will take a good bit of careful, critical reflection and creative energy on your part.

We will also be reading many original, historical texts which are challenging (keep a dictionary handy!). You should set aside a significant chunk of time to review the readings before the class period on which they are assigned. **DO NOT** expect to understand the readings on your first pass; you will need to read each selection several times for even basic comprehension. You should also take an active approach to engaging the text—take notes, write down objections and unanswered questions, and try to keep running summaries and outlines. On a second or third pass through the text, you will find that many of your questions and worries were predicted by the author and have been addressed elsewhere. Philosophical texts cannot be read like novels—they should be approached like a difficult conversation with the author, in which the reader is invited to explore an issue and actively challenge her or his position throughout the activity, in search of the truth.

Required Texts (available at IU bookstore):

Plato, *Phaedo*, in *Five Dialogues*, trans by G.M.A. Grube (Hackett)

Rene Descartes, *Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy*, Trans by D. A. Cress (Hackett)

George Berkeley, *Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous* (Hackett)

Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* (Hackett)

Moritz Schlick, “Positivism and Realism” (Will be made available on Oncourse)

Suggested Secondary Reading:

Philosophical Traditions 2nd ed, by Louis P. Pojman, esp CH 1 and 13-18. This is an introductory survey textbook addressed at beginners that is not as precise as the others, but will be useful if you are feeling completely lost.

Berkeley: an Interpretation by Kenneth Winkler

Descartes' Method of Doubt by Janet Broughton

Kant's Transcendental Idealism by Henry Allison

Course Requirements:

- 1) **Keep up with course readings:** All course readings are expected to be completed by the day they are listed on the schedule. Review each reading carefully several times!
- 2) **Weekly quizzes and/or homework assignments:** All homework assignments will be posted on the course page on ONCOURSE discussion sections in advance. The Oncourse electronic quizzes are designed to provide a structured approach to the difficult readings. Oncourse quizzes are due at the precise time specified, and written assignments are due at the beginning of class the day they are due. Sometimes homework will be graded with a check plus (95), check (85), check minus (75), or zero (0), and at other times we may simply check simply to see whether you have completed the assignment and will assign it a grade of 95 or 0.
- 3) **Two medium-sized papers** (paper 1 = 2-3 pages, paper 2=4-5 pages) addressing topics presented in prompts to be handed out in class. For the second paper, you must complete a pre-writing assignment (1-2 pages) stating the thesis of your paper and providing an outline of the arguments you will use to support it. Both papers will be submitted through www.turnitin.com (more information on this later).
- 4) Two in-class, closed-book, closed-notes, closed-laptop, cell phone etc. **tests** (short answer and essay question format).

- 5) **Attendance and active participation:** I have no explicit attendance policy for the lecture component of this class. If you don't attend, however, you probably won't understand the readings, won't get much out of the course, and almost certainly won't get a good grade.

One thing I will not tolerate is coming to class habitually late or leaving class in the middle of lecture. **If you plan to attend class, show up on time and stay for the duration of class.**

Note, however, that 10% of your final course grade will go towards participation in discussion sections which will be assigned at the discretion of your AI, so they may have attendance policies separate from that of the lecture sessions of the course.

A Note on Papers

Philosophy papers are not like English papers (and probably unlike any other kind of paper you written before). In writing a philosophy paper, you should focus on clarity and strive to give a rigorous exposition and defense of a just a few central points. Stylish and beautiful prose should take a backseat to careful reasoning and clarity. You should also definitely not expect to turn in a first draft and receive an 'A', as this kind of precise and technical writing is not easy. Furthermore, the questions in this class are deep and difficult, and a first draft may be required simply to get your thoughts in order.

Since this method of writing is so difficult, we will try to help you out as much as possible. You are encouraged to come into office hours (either my own or your AIs) to receive feedback on drafts before the assignment is due. We will give you a great deal of feedback on your first paper, and we will also give you feedback on a prewriting assignment for the final paper.

Late Work Policy

Papers which are turned in late will be penalized 1/3 grade per day they are late (a "B+" paper which was two days late would be reduced to a "B-"). Extensions on papers must be arranged ahead of the due date and will only be granted in exceptional circumstances. All Oncourse quizzes must be submitted before class on the Wednesday they are due (12:20). The due date for the final paper is absolutely firm, as we must have final grades in time to submit them to the registrar.

You **must** complete all papers and exams in order to receive a passing grade for this course. No incompletes will be granted without extremely pressing reasons.

Special Note on Academic Dishonesty

Indiana University takes plagiarism and other forms of cheating very seriously. If you are caught handing in work as your own that is, in fact, not your own (e.g. if you have someone else write a paper for you, or you copy off of someone's homework assignment, or use a paper on file in a fraternity, or you do not properly credit sources you have used, be they internet, print or other sources) you will receive an F for this course and will be reported to the Dean of Students. Perhaps the most classic form of plagiarism in the Internet era is the "cutting and pasting" of sentences and even full paragraphs from internet sites with neither quotation nor citation. I catch a couple of students doing this every semester, and it's not pretty. Consult the website <http://dsa.indiana.edu/Code/index1.html> for a detailed description of what constitutes plagiarism. Feel free to speak with me about how to document your sources properly.

Tentative Grade Breakdown

Weekly Oncourse quizzes: 10%

Papers: 40% (paper 1 = 15%, paper 2 pre-writing assignment 5%, paper 2 = 20%)

Tests (2): 40% (20% each)

Discussion Section Participation Grade: 10%

Grade Scale

It is very unlikely there will be any curve for this course. The grade scale is as follows:

| | | | | | |
|----------------|----|-----------|---|---------|----|
| 96.5 and above | A+ | 93.5-96.5 | A | 90-93.5 | A- |
| 86.5-90 | B+ | 83.5-86.5 | B | 80-83.5 | B- |
| 76.5-80 | C+ | 73.5-76.5 | C | 70-73.5 | C- |
| 66.5-70 | D+ | 63.5-66.5 | D | 60-63.5 | D- |

A Note about Office Hours

Office hours give you an opportunity to discuss course material and other academic matters in a one-on-one setting. You do not require an appointment for scheduled office hours—just show up. If you have questions, would like help writing papers or understanding the readings, would like to discuss an AI's comments on your homework or papers, or just want to talk about philosophy, please stop by. Office hours are free tutoring, and can help your instructors tailor the class to your questions and concerns. We're here to help, so please stop by!

Schedule of Classes and Reading Assignments

Readings (completed by that day)

I. Plato's *Phaedo*

1/7: Course Introduction, Areas of Philosophy

1/9: Introduction: Philosophy as practice for death

Phaedo, 93-107

1/14-1/16: Immortality and the imperfection of the world

pp 107-123

*** Plato 1 Quiz due on 1/16 before class

1/21: no class, MLK day

1/23-1/28: The Soul and the Forms, and the final proof of the
immortality of the soul

pp 123-end

*** Plato II Quiz due on 1/23 before class

II. Descartes' *Meditations on First Philosophy*

1/30: Background; Dreams and Doubt

Synopsis, Med 1

*** You are encouraged to write a rough draft of your first paper and turn it into myself or your AI for comments by 1/30 (this will not be graded, but it is strongly recommended)

2/4: Certainty and the *Cogito*: I think, therefore I am

Meditation 2

2/6: Mind and Body

Meditation 2, cont.

*** Rough drafts returned in class with comments, if submitted

*** Descartes 1 Quiz due 2/6 before class

2/11-2/13: A criterion for knowledge, God's existence, and
the Cartesian circle

Meditation 3

*** Final draft of first paper due at turnitin.com at the beginning of discussion sections

2/18: Error, Freedom, Knowledge Meditations 4 & 5

2/20: Instructor Absence
*** Descartes II Quiz due 2/20 before class

2/25: Mind and Body II Meditation 6

2/27: The nature and existence of the external world Med 5 & 6

3/3: *** In-class Midterm (covering Plato and Descartes)

III. Berkeley's Three Dialogues

3/5: Berkeley on the offense: the case against matter First Dialogue, pp3-35

3/10: Spring Break

3/12: Spring Break

3/17: Berkeley against matter (cont) 3-35 cont.

3/19: The Master Argument First Dialogue pp35-42
*** Berkeley I Quiz due 3/19 before class

3/24: God, Matter, and the Explanation of our Ideas Second Dialogue, pp 42-60

3/26: Berkeley on the Defense: the nature of objects Third Dialogue, pp 60-94
*** Berkeley II Quiz due on 3/26 before class

IV. Kant's Prolegomena

3/31-4/2: Kant's Questions; Crucial Distinctions Preface, Preamble (1-5)
*** Kant I Quiz due 4/2 before class

4/7-4/9: The Ideality of Space and Time 6-13, remarks 1-3
*** Kant II Quiz due 4/8 before class

4/14: Understanding as the Lawgiver for Nature: Kant and the Scope of philosophy 14-26

V. Logical Positivism

4/16: Verificationism and Metaphysics Schlick on Oncourse

4/21: Schlick's Defense of the Verifiability Principle

4/23: *** In class Test 2 (covering Berkeley, Kant, and Schlick)

4/28: *** Prewriting assignment due at turnitin.com

**** Final paper due at turnitin.com by 5:00 PM May 2nd**