

Introduction to Philosophy (Phil - 020 - 20)

Instructor: Andy Sullivan

Summer 2022, July 11 - August 12

Monday - Thursday, 3:30pm - 5:25pm

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Course Description:

Philosophy is a discipline that involves higher order reflection on questions that arise when we try to make sense of our lives. There are many ways of getting a sense of what philosophy is all about, but in this course we will be taking a historical approach, surveying a number of influential texts from the history of philosophy. The course will proceed with a number of questions in mind: What exactly is philosophy, and how is philosophy distinguished from other forms of reflection? What does it mean to be a human being, and what is it that makes human beings distinctive among entities in the natural world? Are some ways of living better than others? What is justice, and why should one be just? What is the nature of moral obligation? Does history, or human life more generally, have a purpose?

The course will proceed in a chronological fashion, beginning with some influential texts from the ancient world and moving onwards up through the 20th century. We will be reading excerpts from Plato, Aristotle, Christine Korsgaard, Immanuel Kant, G.W.F. Hegel, Karl Marx, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Jean-Paul Sartre.

Texts for the Course:

A note: owning hard copies is entirely optional for our course. Although these are all great books to own, I will also provide PDFs via Canvas, and students should not feel pressured to buy them. Most of the books listed below also include far more than the shorter excerpts we will be focusing on. I have marked the texts we will be reading in full (or nearly in full) with an asterisk (*).

Plato, *The Trial and Death of Socrates*; trans. GMA Grube. (Hackett, 978-0872205543).

Plato, *Gorgias*; trans. Hamilton. (Penguin, 978-0140449044).*

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*; trans. Ross. (OUP, 978-0199213610).*

Christine Korsgaard, *The Sources of Normativity*. (CUP, 978-0521559607).

Christine Korsgaard, *Self-Constitution: Agency, Identity, and Integrity*. (OUP, 978-0199552801).

Immanuel Kant, *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays*; trans. Humphrey. (Hackett, 978-0915145478).

Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*; trans. Gregor. (CUP, 978-1107401068).*

G.W.F. Hegel, *Introduction to the Philosophy of History*; trans Rauch. (Hackett, 978-0872200562).

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Marx-Engels Reader*; ed. Tucker. (W.W. Norton & Co, 978-0393090406).

Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*; trans Kaufmann. (Vintage, 978-0394719856).

Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism is a Humanism*; trans. Macomber. (YUP, 978-0300115468).*

Assignments:

Discussion board posts:

- Students will write regular discussion board posts of around 250-300 words engaging with the materials covered in class. These discussion boards will help us prepare for discussion in class. Discussion board posts will be due on Canvas twice per week: one due on Monday nights and one due on Wednesday nights.

2 short reflection papers (3-4 pages, double-spaced)

- Students will write two short reflection papers, providing a critical summary of the materials covered in class. Prompts will be provided in Canvas via the Assignment description.
 - First due July 22
 - Second due August 4

1 formal essay (5-7 pages, double-spaced)

- Students will write a formal critical essay on a topic of their choosing; it will be expected that students meet with me well in advance of the due date to discuss potential paper topics.
 - Due August 12

Late Policy:

Unexcused late papers will be graded down a grade step (e.g. B+ to B) every 2 days after the original due date. However, I am generally happy to grant extensions if students need them. Extensions should be discussed in advance unless they are requested on the basis of sudden and unexpected emergencies.

Attendance:

Attendance is required unless students have an excuse that they have communicated to me in advance (excepting sudden emergencies). It is worth emphasizing that attending class sessions and participating will be very important, as these readings are difficult. Class sessions will play an indispensable role in grappling with this material.

Grade Breakdown:

Discussion Board Posts = 25% of the total grade

Two reflection papers: 12.5% each x 2 = 25% of the total grade

Attendance/participation: 25% of the total grade

Formal essay: 25% of the total grade