

PHIL 201: Introduction to Philosophy

Fall 2014

MWF, James Blair Hall, room 201
Section 06: 12-12:50pm
Section 03: 1-1:50pm

Syllabus

Instructor

Chad Vance
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Office Hours: MW 2-3:30pm
(and by appointment)
James Blair Hall, room 126

What Is This Class About?

This is a course in philosophy, designed to give you a basic understanding of the sorts of things that contemporary philosophers are thinking about. At the same time, the course should give you some of the tools that you will need in order to think critically, better argue for what you believe, have a deeper understanding of the world, and how to live rightly in it. The course is divided into three units:

Unit One: Knowledge and Human Nature: We'll begin this course by asking some of the most fundamental philosophical questions about ourselves and our relation to the world, such as: Are we dreaming right now? How would we know if we weren't? Can we trust our senses? Do we continue to exist over time? (and if so, how?) What is my mind? Do human beings have souls?

Unit One: God, Freedom, and Evil: We will then examine some of the reasons for believing that God exists, and this difficult issue: If God exists, and God is good, then why is there so much bad stuff in the world? Some have answered this question by blaming humanity's abuse of its freedom. We will conclude by asking, Do humans have free will? and, If it turned out that we are not in control of our futures, would it still make sense to praise or blame us for our actions?

Unit Three: Morality and Living Rightly: In the final unit of the course, we will turn to the topic of ethics. We will begin by looking at some of the major views about the nature and source of morality (i.e., good and bad, right and wrong). We will then look at some specific moral issues. In particular, we will discuss whether it is morally permissible to eat animals and ignore world hunger.

Required Text

Ben Dupré. *50 Philosophy Ideas You Really Need To Know*. Quercus Publishing, 2009; ISBN: 9781847241498 (or, if you prefer, you may purchase the ebook version)

Many of the required readings will be provided as pdf files, which you can access under "Assigned Readings" on our course website, found here:

<http://rintintin.colorado.edu/~vancecd/phil201/phil201.html>

Course Requirements

1. *Exams (40%)*. You will take a mid-term exam (20%) and a final exam (20%).
2. *Papers (30%)*. You will write two papers. The first (10%) will be a short diagnostic paper, 600-900 words (i.e., 2 - 3 pages), and the second (20%) will be a longer paper, 1200-1800 words in length (i.e., 4 - 6 pages). *Topics and more info: TBA.*
3. *Class Debate (10%)*. You will participate in an in-class debate. *More info: TBA.*
4. *Quizzes (10%)*. You will take a total of 11 short reading quizzes. Your lowest quiz score will be dropped; i.e., your 10 best scores will constitute your quiz grade (1% each).
5. *Participation (10%)*. A portion of your grade will depend on your ability to come to class (on time and prepared), participate in class discussion, and refrain from being disruptive, falling asleep, sending text messages, or surfing the internet.

Course Policies

Academic Integrity

All students of the College of William & Mary are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity honor code policy of this institution. Violations of this policy include: cheating, plagiarism, aid of academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, and stealing. All incidents of academic misconduct shall be reported to the Honor Council. More information about the honor code can be found at:

wm.edu/offices/deanofstudents/services/studentconduct/honorcodeandstudentconduct/honorcode/index.php

NOTE: *Students who are found to be in violation of the honor code will be subject to both academic sanctions from the faculty member (i.e., you will automatically receive an F for the course) as well as non-academic sanctions (which include academic probation, suspension, or expulsion).*

Student Conduct

Students and faculty each have a responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to the code of conduct may be subject to discipline. More information at:

wm.edu/offices/deanofstudents/services/studentconduct/studenthandbook/student_code_of_conduct/index.php

Disability Services

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit to me a letter from Disability Services in a timely manner so that your needs may be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities. More information at: Campus Center (room 109), 757-221-2510, or wm.edu/offices/deanofstudents/services/disabilityservices/.

Religious Observances

Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to reasonably and fairly deal with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments, or required attendance. Please let me know by the end of the drop/add period about any such conflicts, so that we can resolve them. More information at:

wm.edu/about/administration/provost/forfacstaff/holidays/religiousguidelines/index.php.

Discrimination and Harassment

The College of William & Mary policies on Discrimination and Sexual Harassment and Amorous Relationships apply to all students, staff, and faculty. Any student, staff, or faculty member who believes s/he has been the subject of sexual harassment and/or discrimination based upon race, sex, gender, national origin, sexual orientation, political belief, disability, veteran status, age, or any other category protected by the Commonwealth or by federal law should contact the Office of Compliance and Policy on the first floor of James Blair Hall. More information about discrimination and harassment can be found at:

http://www.wm.edu/offices/compliance/topics/discrimination_overview/index.php#policies

http://www.wm.edu/offices/compliance/policies/sexual_harass/index.php

Course Schedule

Below is a schedule of the topics that we will cover, along with a list of the reading(s) which you should complete before each class meeting. Please note the **paper due dates**, **debate days**, and **exam dates** in bold.

Unit One		Knowledge and Human Nature
Week 1		
Wed 8/27	Syllabus/Intro/Logic	• Idea 27: Forms of Argument
Fri 8/29	The Veil of Perception	• Idea 03: The Veil Of Perception • Locke, "On Secondary Qualities"
Week 2		
Mon 9/1	External World Skepticism	• Idea 04: Cogito Ergo Sum • Descartes, "Meditations on First Philosophy" • Idea 01: The Brain In a Vat
Wed 9/3	A Reply To Skepticism	• Moore, "Proof of an External World"
Fri 9/5	The Problem of Induction	• Hume, "An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding" (excerpt)
Week 3		
Mon 9/8	Personal Identity	• Idea 10: The Ship of Theseus
Wed 9/10	Personal Identity	• Perry, "A Dialogue on Personal Identity and Immortality" (read only nights 1-2)
Fri 9/12	No new topics	No new readings
Week 4		
Mon 9/15	The Mind-Body Problem	• Idea 07: The Mind-Body Problem • Review: Descartes, "Meditation 2"
Wed 9/17	Strange Minds	• Idea 09: The Turing Test • Searle, "The Chinese Room" • Block, "The China Brain"
Fri 9/19	Mental Properties	• Idea 08: What Is It Like To Be A Bat? • Jackson, "The Qualia Problem" • Nagel, "What Is It Like To Be A Bat?"
Week 5		
Mon 9/22	No new topics	No new readings
Wed 9/24	Review: Unit One Exam	No new readings
Fri 9/26	UNIT ONE EXAM	No new readings
Unit Two		God, Freedom, and Evil
Week 6		
Mon 9/29	Pascal's Wager	• Idea 43: Faith and Reason • Pascal, "The Wager"
Wed 10/1	The Cosmological Argument	• Idea 39: The Cosmological Argument • Clarke, "The Cosmological Argument"
Fri 10/3	The Cosmological Argument	No new readings
Week 7		
Mon 10/6	DEBATE: The Problem of Evil	No new readings
Wed 10/8	The Problem of Evil	• Idea 41: The Problem of Evil • Rowe, "The Problem of Evil and Some Varieties of Atheism" *
Fri 10/10	The Problem of Evil	• Idea 42: The Freewill Defence

* Read only the introduction and section I. Stop when you get to section II on page 338.

Week 8		
Wed 10/15	DEBATE: Free Will	No new readings
Fri 10/17	Free Will	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holbach, "The Illusion of Free Will"
Week 9		
Mon 10/20	Free Will	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frankfurt, "Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility" • Van Inwagen, "Freedom of the Will"
Wed 10/22	Moral Luck	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Idea 23: Is It Bad To Be Unlucky? • Nagel, "Moral Luck"
Fri 10/24	No new topics	No new readings
Unit Three	Morality and Living Rightly	
Week 10		
Mon 10/27	Ethical Relativism & Nihilism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Idea 13: One Man's Meat... • Rachels, "The Challenge of Cultural Relativism"
Wed 10/29	Divine Commands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Idea 14: The Divine Command Theory • Plato "Euthyphro"
Fri 10/31	No new topics DUE: Paper #1	No new readings
Week 11		
Mon 11/3	Utilitarianism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Idea 16: Ends and Means • Mill, "Utilitarianism"
Wed 11/5	Objections to Utilitarianism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Idea 17: The Experience Machine • Rachels, "Debate Over Utilitarianism"
Fri 11/7	Deontology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Idea 18: The Categorical Imperative • Dupré, "Prima Facie Duties" • Ross, "What Makes Right Actions Right?"
Week 12		
Mon 11/10	The Trolley Problem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greene, "Moral Dilemmas and 'The Trolley Problem'"
Wed 11/12	No new topics	No new readings
Fri 11/14	DEBATE: Famine Relief	No new readings
Week 13		
Mon 11/17	Famine Relief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Idea 49: Lifeboat Earth • Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality"
Wed 11/19	No new topics	No new readings
Fri 11/21	No new topics	No new readings
Week 14		
Mon 11/24	DEBATE: Animal Rights	No new readings
Week 15		
Mon 12/1	Animal Rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Idea 26: Do Animals Have Rights? • Norcross, "Puppies, Pigs, and People"
Wed 12/3	No new topics	No new readings
Fri 12/5	Review: Final Exam DUE: Paper #2	No new readings
Mon 12/8	Final Exam: 2pm – 5pm	Section 03 (1pm class)
Mon 12/15	Final Exam: 9am – 12pm	Section 06 (noon class)