

# Bridgewater State University

Summer 2020, 3 Credits

## PHIL 151 INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

Professor: TBA

Office Hours: TBA

Semester and Year: May 25<sup>th</sup> -June 19<sup>th</sup> 2020

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

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What can we know? How can we know it? This course is an introduction to philosophy through seminal questions concerning knowledge. We will investigate such questions as how we acquire knowledge, the ability to articulate our knowledge, the relation between theoretical and practical knowledge, and especially the relation between external reality and what we can know of it. We will explore these issues through the writings of major figures in the history of Western philosophy, such as Plato, Descartes, Hume, Kant, Wittgenstein, and Moore.

### REQUIRED TEXTS

**\*\* All texts are posted on the course site \*\***

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Plato, *Meno*, and *The Republic* (selections).

René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*.

David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Book 1(selections).

William James, *What Pragmatism Means* (excerpt).

Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics* (selections).

G. E. Moore, *A Defence of Common Sense*, and *A Proof of the External World*.

Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* and *On Certainty* (selections).

### COURSE REQUIREMENTS

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Exam 1: 25%    Exam 2: 25%    Exam 3: 25%    Reading Questions: 15%    Participation: 10%

10 reading questions are due during the semester.

We will have 3 exams. A list of possible exam questions will be given in class on the dates specified below, and exams will be taken in class a few days later on the specified dates (see dates below). Your participation grade is calculated based on classroom attendance and discussion contributions. All work for this course should be your own independent work. Plagiarism will not be tolerated; if you are unsure about how to avoid it, please ask me.

### Grading Scale

|         |                                    |
|---------|------------------------------------|
| 90-100: | A (90-92: A-, 93-100: A)           |
| 80-89:  | B (80-82: B-, 83-86: B, 87-89: B+) |
| 70-79:  | C (70-72: C-, 73-76: C, 77-79: C+) |
| 60-69:  | D (60-62: D-, 63-66: D, 67-69: D+) |
| 00-59:  | F                                  |

### CLASSROOM CONDUCT

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A large part of the course will be dedicated to discussion; therefore, it is important that we maintain a courteous atmosphere in class. Attendance is crucial. Do not be late for class.

**No computer, tablet, or cell phone use are allowed in class.**

### SCHEDULE

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Dates are approximate; class announcements override syllabus.

**Readings should be done by the class for which they are listed. All the readings are posted on our course website.**

|        |                       |   |
|--------|-----------------------|---|
| May 25 | Introduction          | About philosophy and this course; main themes                   |
| May 26 | Definitions           | Plato's <i>Meno</i> : - defining virtue                         |
|        | Attaining knowledge   | Meno's Paradox - read to end of p.13                            |
| May 27 | Types of knowledge    | <i>Meno</i> p.14-end; Strawson, <i>Analysis and Metaphysics</i> |
|        | Knowledge and belief  | JTB; Wittgenstein <i>Phil Investigations</i> 65-75              |
| May 28 | Knowledge and reality | Plato's <i>Republic</i> , book 5                                |
|        | Knowledge and truth   | <i>The Republic</i> , book 7: The Cave                          |

|         |  |  |
|---------|--|--|
| May 29  | The problem of universals                | <i>The Republic</i> , book 6: Divided line + the sun                     |
|         | <b>– First exam questions assigned–</b>  |  |
| June 1  | Descartes – doubt                        | Descartes, <i>Meditations</i> – <i>Meditation 1</i>                      |
|         | The cogito                               | <i>Meditation 2</i>  |
| June 2  | <b>– First exam –</b>                    |  |
| June 3  | God; Clear and distinct ideas            | <i>Meditation 3</i>  |
|         | Error; Mind and body                     | <i>Meditation 4-5</i>  |
| June 4  | Descartes’s Conclusions                  | <i>Meditation 6</i>  |
|         | Hume’s Empiricism                        | Hume’s <i>Treatise</i> , book 1 part I, sections 1-7; Part II, section 6 |
| June 5  | Induction and Causation                  | <i>Treatise</i> book, I part III, sections 1-4, 12-14                    |
| June 8  | Identity, Substance, Doubt               | <i>Treatise</i> book 1 part IV, sections 1,2,7                           |
| June 9  | Analytic, synthetic; A priori            | Kant’s <i>Prolegomena</i> , Sections 1-21                                |
|         | Intuition, Understanding, Categories     | <i>Prolegomena</i> , 27-35   |
| June 10 | Kant’s system                            | <i>Prolegomena</i> : Kant handout  |
|         | <b>– Second exam questions assigned–</b> |  |
| June 11 | Kant, Hume and the external world        | Discussion and review  |
| June 12 | <b>– Second Exam –</b>                   |  |
| June 15 | Skepticism vs. common sense              | G.E. Moore: <i>A Defence of Common Sense</i>                             |
|         | The External World                       | Moore: <i>A Proof of the External World</i>                              |
| June 16 | Knowledge and Certainty                  | Wittgenstein: <i>On Certainty</i>  |
| June 17 | Certainty, Pragmatism                    | Wittgenstein <i>On Certainty</i>   |

**3<sup>rd</sup> exam questions assigned**

June 18 Last class: conclusions, review

June 19 – **Third exam** –

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

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Students completing this course will have learned:

1. How to think abstractly and concretely not only about matters that preoccupy philosophers but also about fundamental issues in other disciplines and practices.
2. How to produce a cogent argument and how to express it with maximum perspicuity, both in writing and orally.
3. How to anticipate and even welcome objections to one's views, how to apply the principle of charity to others' opinions, and how to address objections and competing views effectively and respectfully in one's writing.
4. How to read, analyze, and articulate arguments and viewpoints in primary philosophical texts, both historical and contemporary.
5. How to develop and defend one's own position with respect to problems that have occupied both historical and contemporary philosophers.