



Bridgewater State University

Summer 2021, 3 Credits

PHIL 151 INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

Professor: TBA

Office Hours: TBA

Semester and Year: May 31th -June 25th 2021

COURSE DESCRIPTION

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 ****

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

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

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

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 31	Introduction	About philosophy and this course; main themes
June 1	Definitions	Plato's <i>Meno</i> : - defining virtue
	Attaining knowledge	Meno's Paradox - read to end of p.13
June 2	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

June 3	Knowledge and reality	Plato's <i>Republic</i> , book 5
	Knowledge and truth	<i>The Republic</i> , book 7: The Cave
June 4	The problem of universals	<i>The Republic</i> , book 6: Divided line + the sun
	– First exam questions assigned–	
June 7	Descartes – doubt	Descartes, <i>Meditations</i> – <i>Meditation 1</i>
	The cogito	<i>Meditation 2</i>
June 8	– First exam –	
June 9	God; Clear and distinct ideas	<i>Meditation 3</i>
	Error; Mind and body	<i>Meditation 4-5</i>
June 10	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 11	Induction and Causation	<i>Treatise</i> book, I part III, sections 1-4, 12-14
June 14	Identity, Substance, Doubt	<i>Treatise</i> book 1 part IV, sections 1,2,7
June 15	Analytic, synthetic; A priori	Kant's <i>Prolegomena</i> , Sections 1-21
	Intuition, Understanding, Categories	<i>Prolegomena</i> , 27-35
June 16	Kant's system	<i>Prolegomena</i> : Kant handout
	– Second exam questions assigned–	
June 17	Kant, Hume and the external world	Discussion and review
June 18	– Second Exam –	
June 21	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 22	Knowledge and Certainty	Wittgenstein: <i>On Certainty</i>
June 23	Certainty, Pragmatism Pragmatism and Knowledge 3rd exam questions assigned	Wittgenstein <i>On Certainty</i> James: <i>What Pragmatism Means.</i>
June 24	Last class: conclusions, review	
June 25	– Third exam –	

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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.