

HONORS INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

HONS 170 - FALL 2009

Dr. Christian Coseru

4B Glebe Street, # 205

Phone: 843-953-1935; **Email:** coseruc@cofc.edu

Office hours: Mon/Wed 1:00-3:00 p.m. and by appointment

Days & Time: MW 2:00-3:15

Location: MYBK 320

What is the difference between knowledge and mere opinion? Can we be certain of anything? Are there universal criteria for distinguishing between right and wrong? Is there a universal good that can be known by all? Is there a relationship between virtue and happiness? Can we be truly free? Are ideas innate or acquired? What is the relation between reason and faith, or reason and experience? No matter what our answers to these questions, how are we to proceed? Are we essentially rational human beings? Is language transparent? What role does culture, gender, politics, science play in shaping our identities? Assuming that judgments and actions can be morally right or wrong, what aspects of actions make them so? Is it the consequence of an action, for example? Or the action itself? And, in general, what is the best way to live? What is the good life? We will examine a variety of answers to these questions through a combination of classical and modern readings from Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, Epictetus, Augustine, Boethius, Aquinas, Descartes, Locke, Hume, Kant, Wollstonecraft, Marx, Nietzsche, Sartre, and Beauvoir.

Required Text

(Available at the College Bookstore).

F. Baird & W. Kaufmann *From Plato to Derrida* (NJ: Prentice Hall, 2008)

FPD

You must bring the assigned text to class.

Tentative Reading Assignments

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| Aug 26 | Introduction: What is Philosophy? |
| Aug 31-Sep 2 | Socrates and the philosophical life. <u>Readings:</u> Plato, <i>Euthyphro</i> (FPD: 8-20); <i>Apology</i> , <i>Crito</i> (FPD: 21-46), |
| Sep 7-9 | Plato on justice, virtue, and knowledge. <u>Readings:</u> Plato, <i>The Republic</i> (FPD: 59-78; 91-124); |
| Sep 14-16 | Aristotle on ethics. <u>Readings:</u> Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> (FPD: 163-186); |
| Sep 16 | FIRST IN CLASS ESSAY EXAM (2:00-3:15 a.m.) |
| Sep 28-30 | Pleasure and Indifference. <u>Readings:</u> Epicurus, <i>Principal Doctrines</i> (FPD: 225-233); Epictetus, <i>Enchiridion</i> (FPD: 237-249); |
| | Philosophy, Faith, and Consolation. <u>Readings:</u> Augustine, <i>Confessions</i> (259-273; 291-293); Boethius, <i>The Consolation of Philosophy</i> (FPD: 294-299); |
| Oct 5-7 | An argument for the existence of God, and its refutation. <u>Readings:</u> Anselm (and Gaunilo), <i>Proslogion</i> (FPD: 300-308); |
| | Proof and Inspiration. <u>Readings:</u> Hildegard de Bingen, <i>Scivias</i> (FPD: 309-315); |
| Oct 7 | MIDTERM PAPER DUE IN CLASS |
| Oct 14 | Reason and Faith. <u>Readings:</u> Aquinas, <i>Summa</i> (FPD: 323-333; 349-356); |
| Oct 19-21 | Philosophy and Method. <u>Readings:</u> Descartes, <i>Meditations I-III</i> (FPD: 371-392); <i>Meditations IV,VI</i> (FPD: 400-404; 408-416); |
| Oct 26-28 | Sensations and Ideas. <u>Readings:</u> Locke, <i>An Essay Concerning Human Understanding</i> (FPD: 527-542); Berkeley, <i>Dialogues I</i> (FPD: 623-650). |

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| Nov 2-4 | Experience and Skepticism. <u>Readings:</u> Hume, <i>An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding</i> (FPD: 685-705); <i>Of Probability</i> (FPD: 713- 723). |
| Nov 9-11 | Reason, Morality, and Gender. <u>Readings:</u> Kant, <i>Foundations for the Metaphysics of Morals</i> (FPD: 853-874); Wollstonecraft, <i>A Vindication of the Rights of Woman</i> (FPD: 900-906); |
| Nov 11 | SECOND PAPER DUE IN CLASS |
| Nov 16-18 | Philosophy and Revolution. <u>Readings:</u> Marx, <i>Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844</i> (FPD: 986-1006); |
| | Tragedy, Self-overcoming and Nihilism. <u>Readings:</u> Nietzsche, <i>The Birth of Tragedy</i> (FPD: 1011-1021); <i>Twilight of the Idols</i> (FPD: 1023-1035); |
| Nov 23 | Language and Reality. <u>Readings:</u> Wittgenstein, <i>Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus</i> (FPD: 1097-1109); |
| Nov 30-Dec 2 | Existentialism and Sex. <u>Readings:</u> Sartre, <i>Being and Nothingness</i> (FPD: 1126-1138); Simone de Beauvoir, <i>The Second Sex</i> (FPD: 1145-1159); |
| Dec 7 | Review |
| Dec 14 | FINAL EXAM (12:00-3:00 p.m.) |

Assignments and percentages: first in class essay exam (20%), midterm paper (25%), second paper (25%), final exam (25%) participation (5%).

Attendance: It is essential that you attend classes! More than five unexcused absences will adversely affect your grade and may result in your dismissal from the class. **Also make sure you come to class on time.**

Exams policy: You must complete all assignments in order to obtain a final grade for this course. Failure to take the final exam will result in a grade of F for the entire course. Late (or early) exams will only be given if you can show that a real emergency prevents you from taking the exam on the due date.

Expectations:

- Bring your textbook to class. If you fail to do so you will not be able to follow the lecture and the discussion.
- Keep in mind that the reading assignments are tentative. Expect changes throughout the semester. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to find out how far we have gotten in the current reading assignment or whether any changes have been made to the list of readings.
- Due dates for all assignments are clearly marked in the syllabus (make sure you add them to your calendar).
- How well you do in this class will depend in large measure on how well you prepare yourself for each class. Read the entire assignment at least once, and mark any passage, concept, or idea that you have trouble understanding, and bring it up in class. Or, if you are too shy, come and see me during my office hours or email me your queries (which should be precise and to the point). Coming to class unprepared, apart from annoying your colleagues, will also adversely affect your participation grade.
- You will continuously learn new and unfamiliar concepts, ideas, and theories. It is your responsibility to construct a glossary of all the technical terms with appropriate definitions.

Special Notice. In light of current expectations about the possibility of an H1N1 epidemic this Fall semester, please do not come to class if you are not feeling well or else you risk infecting your colleagues. Notify me by email, and I will make special arrangements for you to complete your assignments, if necessary. PLEASE DO NOT INFORM ME ABOUT YOUR ILLNESS IN PERSON (EMAIL ME INSTEAD).