
COLL/PHL: 100

Knowledge and Reality

Overview

The term 'philosophy' literally means 'the love of wisdom.' Philosophy, in other words, is the love of using one's mind well for the purpose of living well. A central aspect of this endeavor is the attempt to offer a rational account of the world and our place in it. Philosophers use a variety of methods to arrive at such accounts, including arguments, questions, analysis, interpretation, and description. The focus of our course is two fundamental questions: What is the world ultimately like? What can we know about it? Topics we will consider include the nature and scope of knowledge, skepticism, feminist perspectives on knowledge, the existence of God, the problem of evil, the mind/body problem, free will, and the nature of gender and race. If issues like these keep you up at night, then this course is for you! If not, this course will still give you the opportunity to think about some really interesting ideas and improve your reading, writing, speaking, and thinking skills. Completion of this course satisfies the COLL 100 requirement of the College Curriculum.

Learning Expectations

1. Students will learn to read, interpret, and criticize philosophical texts.
2. Students will learn to construct and support arguments based on a variety of sources.
3. Students will learn to communicate information effectively using media beyond the written word, e.g., digital, oral, and multi-media expression.
4. Students will demonstrate digital literacy.

Fall 2017

The College of William & Mary

Instructor: Aaron Griffith

E-Mail: amgriffith@wm.edu

Office: 138 James Blair Hall

Office Hours: 1:00-2:00pm TTh

Classroom and Time:

- 2:00pm – 3:20pm TTh 223 James Blair Hall or
 - 3:30-4:50pm TTh 221 James Blair Hall
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Materials

The following book is required for this course:

- *Introduction to Philosophy: Classical and Contemporary Readings*. Ed. Perry, Bratman, and Fischer. 7th Edition. Oxford (2015).

Grading Scale

- A: 90-100 (90-92.9: A-, 93-100: A)
- B: 80-89 (80-82.9: B-, 83-85.9: B, 86-89: B+)
- C: 70-79 (70-72.9: C-, 73-75.9: C, 76-79: C+)
- D: 60-69 (60-62.9: D-, 63-65.9: D, 66-69: D+)
- F: 0-59

Requirements

1. Regular attendance and preparation (5%)
2. Summary (10%)
3. Critique (15%)
4. Argument (20%)
5. Final exam (20%)
6. Final group project (30%)

Schedule

The following schedule is may be *amended* during the semester. All readings are from the Bratman, Perry, and Fischer book unless indicated by "PDF." All PDF readings can be found on the course Black Board page under "PDF Readings."

Week 1: Introduction

Thursday 8/31: Introduction, Exercises, Syllabus

Week 2: Knowledge

Tuesday 9/5: Introduction to Epistemology; René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Meditations I, II, III 157-168

Thursday 9/7: René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Meditations V and VI, 172-181

Friday 9/8 Add/Drop

Ends

Week 3: Knowledge

Tuesday 9/12: Christopher Grau, "Bad Dreams, Evil Demons, and the Experience Machine: Philosophy and *The Matrix*," 181-188

Thursday 9/14: Richard Feldman, "Reasonable Religious Disagreement" PDF **Summary Due**

Week 4: Knowledge

Tuesday 9/19: Peter van Inwagen, "We're Right. They're Wrong." PDF

Thursday 9/21: Charles Mills, "White Ignorance," PDF

Week 5: Knowledge/Reality

Tuesday 9/26: Miranda Fricker, "Epistemic Injustice Précis," PDF; Miranda Fricker, "Testimonial Injustice," PDF

Thursday 9/28: St. Anselm, "The Ontological Argument," 40-42

Week 6: Reality

Tuesday 10/3: Avicenna (Ibn Sinā), "Proof of the Necessary of Existence," PDF; St. Aquinas, "The Existence of God," 42-45

Thursday 10/5: Averroes, "The Argument from Design," PDF

Week 7: Reality

Tuesday 10/10: Meghan Sullivan, Trent Dougherty, and Sam Newlands, "Roundtable Discussion on the Problem of Evil" (Video); William Rowe, "The Problem of Evil and Some Varieties of Atheism" PDF

Thursday 10/12: Marilyn McCord Adams, "Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God," 115-122
Critique Due

Week 8: Reality

Tuesday 10/17: **Fall Break**

Thursday 10/19: Stewart Sutherland, "Horrendous Evils and the Goodness of God," 123-130

Week 9: Reality

Tuesday 10/24: Brie Gertler, "In Defense of Mind-Body Dualism," PDF

Thursday 10/26: David Armstrong, "The Nature of the Mind," 279-286

Week 10: Reality

Tuesday 10/31: Frank Jackson, "What Mary Didn't Know," 291-294

Thursday 11/2: Peter van Inwagen, "The Powers of Rational Beings: Freedom of the Will," 395-406

Week 11: Reality

Tuesday 11/7: Harry Frankfurt, "Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility," 417-423

Thursday 11/9: Susan Wolf, "Sanity and the Metaphysics of Responsibility," 459-469

Argument Due

Week 12: Reality

Tuesday 11/14: Sally Haslanger, "Gender and Race: (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them to Be?" PDF

Thursday 11/16: Allysa Ney and Allan Hazlett, "The Metaphysics of Race," PDF

Draft of Annotated Bibliography and Video Script Due

Week 13: Reality

Tuesday 11/21: TBA

Thursday 11/23: **Thanksgiving Break**

Week 14:

Tuesday 11/28: Linda Alcoff, "Racism and Visible Race," 699-707

Thursday 11/30: Peer Feedback Day

Week 15

Tuesday 12/5: **Final Group Video Project Due (including final annotated bibliography and video script)**

Thursday 12/7: Review

Final Exam

Monday, December 11: 2:00-5:00pm (2-3:20 class)

Wednesday, December 13: 2:00-5:00pm (3:30-4:50 class)

Of Special Note

Attendance

Attendance is *mandatory*. Attendance will be taken at arbitrary points during the semester. You get 3 free documented absences during the semester. For each documented absence after your 3rd you will lose 1% off of your final grade. Please be on time to class. But if you are late to class, please enter the room quietly and unobtrusively. Absences may be excused for the following reasons only: (a) a serious medical issue (i.e., one requiring hospitalization or confinement in the infirmary), (b) a family emergency (i.e., death or emergency hospitalization of an immediate family member), (c) conflicting University-related events, (d) religious observances, or (e) jury duty.

Missed Tests

Make up or alternative tests will not be granted without documented proof of either (a) a serious medical issue (i.e., one requiring hospitalization or confinement in the infirmary), (b) a family emergency (i.e., death or emergency hospitalization of an immediate family member), (c) conflicting University-related events, (d) religious observances, or (e) jury duty. If you miss a test and do not have documented proof of these cases, you will receive a 0 (zero) as your score. (Alternate tests should be scheduled ahead of time for reasons (c) through (e).)

Papers

Papers will be marked down 1/3 of a letter grade for each day they are late. I am happy to help you get an early start on your written assignments. You are responsible for backing up texts composed on a computer, and failures of software or hardware are not acceptable reasons for a late assignment. I highly recommend using Dropbox to back up your files: <http://www.dropbox.com/>

If you do not understand why you received the grade you did, please come see me. Under no conditions will your grade be lowered if you do come see me to discuss a grade you received. *However, if you do want clarification you must submit to me in writing your question or concern before we meet in person.*

I also encourage you to take advantage of the writing resources on campus. The *Writing Resources Center* in Swem Library offers free feedback on your written work, including help with drafting, organizing, and editing your assignments. Find the writing center online at <http://www.wm.edu/as/wrc/>.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a serious matter and will be handled by the appropriate authorities. According to official William & Mary policy, plagiarism is “the presentation, with intent to deceive, or with disregard for proper scholarly procedures of a significant scope, of any information, ideas or phrasing of another as if they were one’s own without giving appropriate credit to the original source” (Section IV, C: Honor Code Violations). Turning in any work which is not your own and

not properly acknowledged as such will result in a recommendation for failure in the course and subject you to further action by the university. Please review the university policy on academic dishonesty and speak to me if you have questions. See:

https://www.wm.edu/offices/deanofstudents/services/studentconduct/studenthandbook/honor_system/section_VI/index.php

Class Behavior

You are responsible for being prepared for each class session, which means having carefully read the assignment for each day of class and thought of questions you would like to discuss. You are responsible for all material covered in both lecture and the required readings.

I ask that all members of the class conduct themselves in a respectful manner. Respect for others takes a number of forms in this class, and in academic life generally. In the first place, it means that we need to be sensitive to how our behavior in class affects others. For example, I ask that students be conscientious about how your use of technology affects others in class. Take conversations and phone calls outside. Please do not text, chat online, or surf the net in class. If your behavior becomes problematic or disruptive, I will ask you to leave. I ask that you have intellectual respect for others, as well. This means that if you disagree with a position that someone holds, you should assume that the person is at least as smart as you are, and that the person probably has good reasons for thinking as he or she does. Your job is to be a good listener and exchange ideas, not to attack and degrade others.

Students with Disabilities

It is the policy of The College of William & Mary to accommodate students with disabilities and qualifying diagnosed conditions in accordance with federal and state laws. Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a learning, psychiatric, physical, or chronic health diagnosis should contact me privately to discuss your specific needs. Students will also need to contact Student Accessibility Services staff at 757-221-2509 or at sas@wm.edu to determine if accommodations are warranted and to obtain an official letter of accommodation. For more information, please see www.wm.edu/sas.

Additional Resources

Not all resources (especially those online) are created equal! You will not need to read or research any other material than the required readings to succeed in this course. However, you may be interested in pursuing our topics further. In addition to the optional readings I will provide on our course website, I recommend two websites in particular:

The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: www.plato.stanford.edu/

The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: www.iep.utm.edu/

Philosophy Compass: [http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/\(ISSN\)1747-9991](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/(ISSN)1747-9991)