

PHL 200-002
Spring 2010
TR 8:30-9:50
EBH 112

Dr. Kristie Dotson
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INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY "On the Self, Free Will, and Morality"

Required Texts

Bowen, Jack. *A Journey through the Landscape of Philosophy: A Reader*. New York: Penguin, 2008.

Catalog Description: Theories of knowledge, values, and reality. Topics such as objectivity, relativism and cultural diversity, moral responsibility, aesthetic values, the self, existence of God, free will, minds and machines.

Course Description: This course is designed to introduce you to the questions philosopher's have historically asked about: what constitutes identity, whether we have free will, and how we ought to act. Essentially, this class is a history of philosophical ideas course. Even more this course starts preparing you to take on those same issues and to think for yourself about the best ways to answer philosophical questions.

Course Objectives: At the end of this course, students will: 1) have been introduced to several philosophically rich problems and 2) have begun reading philosophy critically.

Course Method: The course objectives will be reached through a conglomeration of lecture, group work, and exams. My view of my role as your professor is to use the text as a point of departure, so it will be imperative that you read what is assigned, but just as important that you do not miss class. The exams in this class reflect my role, so are very much based on what is done in class, rather than strictly from the text.

Course Requirements: Your performance in this class will be assessed using a percentage scale, structured as follows:

- **Class Participation:** Most every class period will include some form of group work. Your participation grade is contingent on your performance in group exercises as well as your engagement in overall class discussions. (10% of overall grade)

- **Reading Questions (RQ) and Discussion Questions (DQ):** The class text provides reading and discussion questions for each philosophical selection. At times, you will be responsible for answering review questions, discussion questions, or some combination of review and discussion questions *before* you come to class. I do not return submitted homework. I keep it for my records. (10% of overall grade).

- **Film Assessments:** During the course of this semester we will watch three movies. Each movie is aimed at helping to highlight the theories discussed in a particular topical unit (i.e. Introduction to Philosophy, The Self and Souls, and Free Will and Determinism). The purpose

of these assignments is to give students another avenue for evaluating and assessing the philosophical theories covered in class. You will need to do one film assessment writing assignment over the course of the semester. (10% of overall grade)

- **Exams:** There will be three regular exams scheduled during the term (each 15% of overall grade), and one comprehensive final exam (25% of overall grade). Students who have earned an “A” average for the first three exams and has turned in all the HW assignments may opt out of the final exam, but must attend class until the semester is completed at the final review.

Note: I reserve the right to change the structure of these assignments to stimulate greater in-class accountability. Students will be notified of any such happening well in advance.

Course Policies

- **Attendance:** It is your responsibility to be in class. I do not perform “make-up” lectures in my office to catch absent students up on material they were not in class to receive. Please take the time to get to know other students in the class with whom you can share class notes and direct inquiries concerning missed lectures. If you find yourself unable to understand certain points of a missed lecture, please feel free to arrange a meeting with me where I will answer *specific* questions about the course material.

- **Late Work:** Homework assignments are due at the end of class on the day they are due. **I do not accept late work**, although I do accept work done in advance. You may not skip class and attempt to email me work that is due—you must physically turn work in to me if you are not turning the work in early or have made a previously agreed upon arrangement with me.

- **Plagiarism:** In this class, **all** of your work is to be done only by yourself. All work is individual work. Plagiarism is presenting the work or ideas of another person as if they are one’s own. I will not consider any instances of plagiarism to be ‘accidental’ or done ‘with good will’. Examples of plagiarism include, but **are not limited to:** 1) Putting your name on group work to which you have not contributed equally; 2) Submitting work that has been purchased or given to you; 3) Turning in work that you have merely agreed with, but not thought of yourself; 4) Submitting work that was found online; and 5) Incorporating the words of an author without giving that author due credit. There is a minimum of one of two penalties for plagiarism in my class:

- 1.) You will receive a zero on the plagiarized assignment.
- 2.) You will receive a failing grade for the class and your academic dishonesty will be reported to the Dean.

Subsequently, at my discretion, I reserve the option to pursue further university action against any student who commits plagiarism. If you have further questions see the Ombudsperson’s web page <<https://www.msu.edu/unit/ombud/dishonestystud.html>>.

- **Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:** Students with disabilities should provide me with a copy of her/his VISA. I will be happy to aid in any way I can to shape assignments and instruction to meet your academic needs. If you have yet to procure a VISA, please, contact the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities to establish reasonable accommodations. For an appointment with a disability specialist, call 353-9642 (voice), 355-1293 (TTY), or visit MyProfile.rcpd.msu.edu.

- **Disruptive Behavior:** Article 2.3.5 of the Academic Freedom Report (AFR) for students at Michigan State University states: "The student's behavior in the classroom shall be conducive to the teaching and learning process for all concerned." Article 2.3.10 of the AFR states "The student has a right to scholarly relationships with faculty based on mutual trust and civility." General Student Regulation 5.02 states: "No student shall . . . interfere with the functions and services of the University (for example, but not limited to, classes . . .) such that the function or service is obstructed or disrupted. Students whose conduct adversely affects the learning environment in this classroom may be subject to disciplinary action through the Student Faculty Judiciary process.

Misc. Policy

1. Please ensure all cell-phones and noise-making-technological-devices are turned off.
2. *Do not read newspapers during the lecture.*
3. Students are welcome to visit the instructor during office hours, but in order to do so, students must bring their class notes with them.

Overall Grading Scale

4 = 100-90%
3.5 = 89-85%
3 = 84-80%
2.5 = 79-75%
2 = 74-70%
1 = 69-60%
0 = 59-0%

Tentative Reading Schedule

Week 1-4: Introduction to Philosophy

Week One:

T – 1/12: Introduction

R – 1/14: Plato, *The Allegory of the Cave* (1-6)
HW: Reading Questions (RQ) 1 & 2; Discussion Questions (DQ) 1-5

Week Two:

T – 1/19: Russell, *The Value of Philosophy* (7-11)
HW: RQ (1-4)

R – 1/21: Krishnamurti, *The Function of Education* (12-16)
HW: RQ 1-8

Week Three:

T – 1/26: Plato, *The Apology* (25-38)
HW: DQ 1-6

R – 1/28: Movie: *Dead Poet's Society*

Week Four:

T – 2/2: Movie: *Dead Poet's Society*

R – 2/4: **Exam 1**

Week 5-8: The Self and Soul

Week Five:

T – 2/9: Hume, *Of Personal Identity* (100-108)
HW: RQ 1-6
Film Assessment Due

R – 2/11: Descartes *On the Soul* (126-134)
HW: RQ 1-5

Week Six:

T – 2/16: Dennett, *Where Am I?* (108-119)
HW: RQ 1-3; DQ 1 & 2

R – 2/18: NO CLASS

Week Seven:

T – 2/23: Ryle, *The Concept of Mind: Descartes' Myth*

R – 2/25: Movie: *I, Robot*

Week Eight:

T – 3/2: Movie: *I, Robot*

R – 3/4: **Exam 2**

Spring Break – No Class 3/9 & 3/11

Week 9-12: Free Will and Determinism

Week Nine:

T – 3/16: Taylor, *Freedom and Determinism* (405-418)
HW: RQ 1-7
Film Assessment Due

R – 3/18: d'Holbach, *The Illusion of Free Will* (418-426)
HW: RQ 1-4, 6, & 7

Week Ten:

T – 3/23: Hospers, *Meaning and Free Will* (426-433)
HW: RQ 1-6

R – 3/25: Kane, *Free Will* (433-440)
HW: RQ 1-5; DQ 1 & 2

Week Eleven:

T – 3/30: NO CLASS

R – 4/1: Stace, *Free Will and Morality* (441-448)
HW: RQ 1-5; DQ 1 & 2

Week Twelve:

T – 4/6: Movie: *Minority Report*

R – 4/8: Movie: *Minority Report*

Week 13- 15: Morality**Week Thirteen:**

T – 4/13: **Exam 3**
Film Assessment Due

R – 4/15: NO CLASS

Week Fourteen:

T – 4/20: Kant, *Foundation for the Metaphysics of Morals* (594-607)
HW: RQ 1-6

R – 4/22: Finish Kant, *Foundation for the Metaphysics of Morals*

Week Fifteen:

T – 4/27: Mill, *Utilitarianism* (608-621)
HW: RQ 1-9

R – 4/29: Finish Mill, *Utilitarianism*

Final Exam, May 6, 2010, 7:45 am – 9:45 am

Have a Good Summer!!