

# Introduction to Philosophy

PHIL 100, Fall 2008

M/W 9:00–9:50, LCD001

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Office: 1420 University Hall

Office Hours: Mondays 10-12, and by appointment.

TAs: TBA

Course Reference Number: 12868

## Course Description

This course serves as an introduction to philosophy. It has two aims. First, it will introduce you to a number of topics—the existence of God, skepticism, and free will—that have attracted serious attention from great philosophers. Familiarity with these topics will serve as an excellent introduction to the questions that philosophers worry about.

The second goal of the course is to teach you how to *do* philosophy. The questions we will consider will be difficult ones. They are not only hard to answer, but in many cases hard to formulate properly. Philosophers thus place a premium on clear and precise thinking. Learning how to write philosophically will develop skills useful in any academic context. The best way to learn these skills is to engage with well-written philosophical texts; the assignments for this course will help you to do just that.

## Texts

- Nils CH. Rahut, ed., *Readings on the Ultimate Questions*, 2nd ed.
- Dostoyevsky *Notes from Underground*, (Dover press edition)
- Course Packet

All three texts will be available at the University bookstore.

## Assignments

- *Citation assignment*: a review of proper citation practices and the penalties for plagiarism. Must be completed before you can receive credit for any written assignments. Worth 4% of your final grade.
- *Weekly Quizzes*: Short weekly quizzes, on both the reading and lecture, will be given in section. Quizzes are each worth 3% of your final grade, for a total of 36%. In practice, this means that you can miss two quizzes without penalty. If you take more than 12 quizzes, the highest 12 grades will count towards your final grade.
- *Papers*: Three 1,000-1,500 word (4-6 page) papers each worth 20% of your final grade.

More detail on each assignment will be provided as the semester progresses.

## Additional Policies

- All writing assignments are mandatory. If you have any assignments not completed at the end of the term, you will receive an F for the course.
- Missed quizzes cannot be made up. The only exceptions to this policy will be those required by university regulation or state law, or for documented medical emergencies. If you know in advance that you will have to miss a quiz (for example, for a religious holiday), please let me know as soon as possible; if you must miss a quiz for a medical emergency, please contact me to schedule a makeup as soon as possible.
- Under some circumstances, extensions on written assignments may be granted. Arrangements for an extension must be made with me at least two days prior to an assignment's due date. Late assignments turned in absent such arrangements will be downgraded by 1/3 of a letter grade per day.
- Should a due date conflict with a religious holiday you observe, you should notify me of the date by the tenth day of the term. We will make every reasonable effort to honor the request.
- Students with disabilities who require accommodations for access and participation in this course must be registered with the Office of Disability Services (ODS). Please contact ODS at 312-413-2183 (voice) or 312-413-0123 (TTY). If you have a disability, please notify me and the appropriate administrative offices at the beginning of the semester so that we can make accommodations for you. We will be happy to do so.

# Tentative Schedule of Lecture and Readings

Topic One: The Existence of God

**Week 1** *Introduction & The Problem of Evil*

8/25 *Optional: Kant "What is Enlightenment?" [RUQ]*

8/27 Mackie "Evil and Omnipotence" [RUQ]

**Week 2** *The Problem of Evil*

9/1 *No class: Labor Day*

9/3 Mackie, cont'd.

Swinburne "Why God Allows Evil" [RUQ]

**Week 3** *The Cosmological and Design Argument*

9/8 Aquinas "The Five Ways" [RUQ]

Taylor "The Cosmological Argument" [RUQ]

9/10 Paley "The Argument from Design" [CP]

**Week 4** *Design and Pascal*

9/15 Coyne "The Faith that Dare Not Speak Its Name" [CP]

9/17 Pascal "The Wager" [CP]

**Week 5** *Belief without Evidence?*

Clifford "The Ethics of Belief" [RUQ]

James "The Will to Believe" [RUQ]

9/24 *First paper assigned*

**Week 6** *The Euthyphro Argument*

Rachels "Must God's Commands Conform to Moral Standards?" [RUQ]

10/3 *First paper due*

Topic Two: Skepticism

**Week 7** *Cartesian Skepticism*

Descartes, Meditations 1 & 2 [RUQ]

**Week 8** *Responses to Cartesian Skepticism*

Russell, excerpt from *Problems of Philosophy* [CP]

Moore "Proof of an External World" [RUQ]

**Week 9** *Skepticism about Induction*

Hume *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, II, IV, VII [CP]

Kahane and Tidman “The Problem of Induction—Old and New” [RUQ]

10/22 *Second paper assigned*

**Week 10** *Responses to Skepticism about Induction*

Kahane and Tidman, cont’d.

Hospers “A Pragmatic Solution to the Problem of Induction” [RUQ]

10/31 *Second Paper due*

Topic Three: Free Will

**Week 11** *The Threat of Determinism*

Milgram “Behavioral Study of Obedience” [CP]

van Inwagen “The Incompatibility of Free Will and Determinism” [RUQ]

**Week 12** *Agent causation and Compatibilism*

Chisholm “Human Freedom and the Self” [RUQ]

Stace “Compatibilism” [RUQ]

**Week 13** *Compatibilism, cont’d*

Frankfurt “Alternative Possibilities and Moral Responsibility” [RUQ]

11/19 *Third Paper assigned*

**Week 14** *Worries about Compatibilism*

*No assignment: Philosophical Movie Week*

**Week 15** *More Worries about Compatibilism*

Dostoyevsky Part I (especially Chs VII-IX)

Schopenhauer “Essay on the Freedom of the Will” [RUQ]

12/5 *Third paper due*