

Miami-Dade College
PHI2010 Introduction to Philosophy
Course Syllabus
Spring 2008 Tuesday

Instructor: Steve Thomas
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Text: *Core Questions in Philosophy, by Elliot Sober*

Course Description: This course introduces students to philosophy by examining some of the traditional issues of several branches of philosophy: logic, philosophy of religion, epistemology, and philosophy of mind.

This course fulfills the 2,000-word requirement of the Gordon Rule.

3 Credits

Prerequisites and Co-requisites: HUM 1020

Course Grade:

There will be 4 exams worth 50 points each. (one for each section). The exams will be based on both the text and the lecture notes. There will be a short quiz worth 10 points in the first section. There will be 11 homework assignments worth 20 points each. Homework can be handed in one class session late(except for the last week) for a 10% reduction in grade. But I would highly recommend keeping on schedule. Grades will be based on a percentage basis as listed below. Students are responsible for tracking their own ongoing grade average by adding up all the points they have currently earned and dividing that total by the total possible points they can have earned.

Grading Scale:

- A: Superior achievement 90-100 %
- B: Above average 80-89 %
- C: Average 70-79 %
- D: Below average: 60-69 %
- F: Failure: Below 60 %

Attendance and Participation:

Attendance and participation in classroom discussions will be utilized in determining the final grade the student receives.

Academic Dishonesty Policy:

Cheating and/or plagiarism are not acceptable under any circumstances. An incident can result in a failing grade either for that assignment or in extreme cases for the entire course.

Incomplete Grades:

Incomplete grades are to be given only to students who have completed most of the assignments and tests but who have a serious emergency that prevents them from completing the course in the allotted time.

Make-up exams:

If prior justifiable notification of a serious conflict with a scheduled exam is made to the instructor via phone/voice mail or email or in person, then, at the instructor's discretion a make-up exam can be scheduled.

Homework Assignments:

Homework assignments involve the answering of assigned questions. They should be 2 -3 typed pages. (normal font, either single or double spaced with normal margins) The assignments should be written in the student's own words and not copied from some other source. The student should evaluate the content of their written work by putting themselves in the shoes of the instructor. Have you shown an understanding of the basic issues involved in the question as well as the various views expressed by the thinkers in the text? If you are going to miss a class, complete homework ahead of time and email it to me in Microsoft WORD.

Class Schedule and Assignments

1) LOGIC

Jan 8 – Feb 5 (no class on Jan 29)

Readings: Chapter 1 + handout

Quiz: Jan 22

Exam #1: Feb 5

Homework assignments:

H1: What are the basic requirements of a good argument? Provide examples of what you perceive to be a good argument and a bad argument. Due date: Jan 22

H2: What is a deductively valid argument? Provide an example. What is an abductively strong argument? Provide an example. What is an inductively strong argument? Provide an example. Due date: Feb 5

2) PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

Feb 5 – March 4

Readings: Chapter 2

Exam #2: March 4

Homework assignments:

H3: What is the cosmological argument? List its strong and weak points. On the whole, is it a strong argument? Justify your answer.

What is the ontological argument? List its strong and weak points. On the whole, is it a strong argument? Justify your answer.

What is the argument from design? List its strong and weak points. On the whole, is it a strong argument? Justify your answer. Due date: Feb 19

H4: What is the problem of evil? What is a theodicy? Provide an example of what you see as a strong theodicy. What are its strong and weak points? Due date: Feb 26

H5: Explain Ernest Nagel's defense of atheism. Does he have good arguments? Justify your answer. Due Date: March 4

3) THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE (EPISTEMOLOGY)

March 4 – April 1

Readings: Chapter 3

Exam #3: April 1

Homework assignments:

H6: Explain the definition of knowledge as justified true belief. Provide examples to illustrate your points. What are the strong and weak features of this definition? Due date: March 18

H7: What is the foundationalist theory of knowledge? What are its strong and weak points? What is the reliability theory of knowledge? What are its strong and weak points? Which theory do you prefer? Justify your answer. Due date: March 25

H8: What is Hume's criticism of induction? Does it have to lead to skepticism? Is there a good reply to Hume? Due date: April 1

4) PHILOSOPHY OF MIND

April 1 - 29

Readings: Chapter 4

Exam #4: April 29

Homework assignments:

H9: What is Descartes' theory of mind-body dualism? Do you think it is a strongly justified theory? What are its weaknesses and its strengths? What is the mind-body problem?

Due date: April 15

H10: What is functionalism especially with its emphasis on the computer analogy? Is it a strong alternative to Descartes' dualism? What are its strengths and weaknesses? What is the Turing Test? Explain the Chinese Room argument. Due date: April 22

H11: Are free will and determinism compatible? Discuss some of the theories discussed in the text book. What are their strengths and weaknesses? Due Date: April 29