

Philosophy 1000 (section 003)

Introduction to Philosophy
 Spring semester, 2016
 Utah State University
 Charlie Huenemann, Instructor
 T/Th 12-1:15, FAV 264

Congratulations! You are in an introductory philosophy class. This is your opportunity to engage with the biggest ideas and questions a human being can ask. We'll only scratch the surface, but with any luck you'll have plenty of opportunity to dig further into the meaning of human existence in the coming years and decades of your life. While this course will not provide you with answers - on the contrary, it should only complicate matters further - it should help you to read, think, and communicate more accurately and precisely, which will make you a valuable colleague, a worthy citizen, and someone who is ready to begin leading an examined life, which (rumor has it) is the only kind worth living.¹

In terms of **learning outcomes** (as stated in the most bland and boring fashion conceivable by the geniuses behind IDEA student evaluations), this course will help you with:

- Learning fundamental principles, generalizations, or theories
- Developing skills in expressing yourself orally or in writing
- Learning to analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments, and points of view.

Contact information for the instructor: Charlie Huenemann, office Main 208, office hours 1:30-3 on T/W, but also generally available on T/W/Th, and by appointment, email charlie.huenemann@usu.edu. I'm always happy to meet with you - really, I'm a friendly and encouraging fellow who enjoys talking with students - so please feel welcome to knock on my door. I have a blog if you are interested: huenemanniac.wordpress.com. Also, on the subject of blogs, you may wish to check out usuphilosophy.com to stay abreast of local philosophical happenings.

Being prepared for class: You should come to class everyday ready to THINK, LISTEN, and TALK. Study all the readings until you feel you know them frontward, backward, and sideways. The instructor reserves the right to surprise you with questions and objections you haven't had time to think about it, and you'll be expected to deal with it. While in class, don't spit on the rare and noble privilege of learning in an American university by distracting yourself with social media. You are better than that: you are smarter, and capable of ruling your attention. *Bring the texts under discussion with you to class*; on this, see "Books," below.

¹ Yes, the great Plato said it, but isn't it obviously false? Isn't it clearly possible to have a perfectly worthwhile life even if you don't engage in philosophical reflection? Or is there some other sense of "worthwhile" that makes the claim more plausible?

You will write **short papers about every two weeks**. The first one is an answer to the question “What is philosophy?”, and it is due *almost immediately*, on Thursday, January 14th. Everyone has to do it. After that, the class will be divided into two sections, the *Athenians* and the *Spartans*, and these sections will take turns turning in short papers (six papers for each group). Then everyone will be assigned a short final paper, due on the last day, which will also be an answer to the question “What is philosophy?”. So, in all, that will be **eight short papers**. More details will be given on Canvas. The papers will be around 500 words (around two pages), and they should be turned in on Canvas. I expect you to do your utmost in making these papers technically flawless in matters of grammar and spelling.

There will also be a **midterm exam** and a **final exam**, both multiple-choice. One covers the first half of the course, and the other the second (and I’ll bet you can guess which is which). No notes or books may be used.

Grades. The papers altogether will deliver about 70% of the final grade, and the exams about 15% each. The instructor reserves the right to also factor in further considerations such as overall improvement, class participation, and how much philosophical trouble you stir up in class (which is a good thing).

Here’s what I’m thinking when I’m assigning grades to papers:

C: This is a basically *competent* paper. It covers about everything it needs to, but minimally so: it could be better written, and could include more interesting observations.

B: This paper is not only competent, but *good*. It’s well-written, on the whole - could be better - and there are some good and interesting points made in it.

A: This paper is *excellent!* Really, I couldn’t ask for anything better from a college freshman. It’s well-written, interesting, and perceptive. Wow!

D: Well, no. Sorry. I can’t even say this paper is minimally competent. If you don’t see that, we need to meet and discuss it.

F: Either this paper is not a serious attempt, or the student needs to see me to get a better idea of what these papers should be.

Cheating. In class - as in life - never try to pass off someone else’s work as your own. Don’t take something from another student or some website and put your name on it as if you did it. If you want to make use of someone else’s idea or words, fine; just find a way to give them proper credit. I’m completely intolerant of this kind of intellectual theft; it’s a cardinal sin of the academy.

Lateness in turning in work: generally there should be none, but life packs surprises, and sometimes work has to be delayed. *Be mature about this, and talk to me about it.* If you need an alternative exam time, or need some alternative exam arrangement due to disability, please let me know, and we’ll work something out.

Books: There is only *one book* you need to buy for this class, which is *Justice* by Michael Sandel (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009). All of the other readings will be made available on Canvas. They include selections from Plato, Aristotle, Sextus Empiricus, Marcus Aurelius, Anselm, Aquinas, Descartes, and Hume. You will need to have access to the readings while you are in class: so either bring your [silicon-based/steam-powered-difference-engine/otherwise-futuristic gadget] to class, or bring print-outs of the readings and mark up the margins with your [pencils/pens/goose-feather quills]. Those caught without access to the readings will be publicly shamed and then sent away to get them.

Fallible prophecy of what we will be doing, day by day:

Date	What we will discuss in class	Questions to think through for class:
1.12	Introduction, part 1	What is philosophy? Why am I taking this class? What's the point?
1.14	Introduction, part 2 First paper due (everyone): "What is philosophy?"	What is important in life? Why is it important? <i>And:</i> do I have any questions about the syllabus?
1.19	<i>Justice</i> , chapters 1 & 2	What questions do we ask when we think about <i>welfare, freedom, and virtue</i> ? What question does a utilitarian ask when trying to make a moral decision?
1.21	<i>Justice</i> , chapters 3 & 4 paper due, Athenians	What is the libertarian objection to taxes? What is "tainted consent"?
1.26	<i>Justice</i> , chapter 5	For Kant, what is the connection between autonomy (and what is that, anyway?) and being moral?
1.28	<i>Justice</i> , chapters 6 & 7 paper due, Spartans	What is the fundamental difference between Rawlsian justice and libertarianism? How does this difference affect judgments about affirmative action?
2.2	<i>Justice</i> , chapter 8	How is Aristotle's moral philosophy different from utilitarianism?
2.4	<i>Justice</i> , chapters 9 & 10 paper due, Athenians	What is "obligation beyond consent"? Any compelling examples? In the end, what is Sandel's recommendation for our society?
2.9	Plato (<i>Euthyphro, Apology</i>)	What's wrong with defining "piety" with "what all the gods love"? Why does Socrates think a just man cannot be harmed?
2.11	Plato (<i>Republic</i>) paper due, Spartans	What does Socrates have to do in order to answer Glaucon's challenges?

2.18	Plato (<i>Republic</i>), again	Why would a just person remain just, even with the ring of Gyges?
2.23	Plato (<i>Symposium</i>)	How is a <i>genuine</i> “platonic relationship” different from today’s common use of the term?
2.25	Aristotle (<i>natural philosophy</i>) paper due, Athenians	What makes you a substance? What are your four causes? Whatever happened to Empedocles’ man-faced ox-progeny?
3.1	Aristotle (<i>ethics</i>)	What is Aristotle’s strategy for happiness?
3.3	Midterm exam paper due, Spartans	
spring break: woohoo!		
3.15	Stoicism, reading	What objections would Aristotle raise to Stoicism?
3.17	Skepticism, reading paper due, Athenians	How does “suspension of belief” bring tranquillity?
3.22	Scholastics, reading 1: Hypatia and Hildegard	In your own words, how would you explain the tension between “Athens” and “Jerusalem” (from the initial quote of Tertullian)?
3.24	Scholastics, reading 2: Aquinas paper due, Spartans	“Once X is known, it could not possibly be false” - in what sense is this claim true, and in what sense is it false?
3.29	Descartes, Meditation 1	What does it take to doubt something, according to Descartes?
3.31	Descartes, Meditation 2 paper due, Athenians	Why can’t Descartes possibly be wrong about his own existence?
4.5	Descartes, Meditation 3	Why couldn’t Descartes gained his idea of God through religious instruction?
4.7	Descartes, Meditation 4 paper due, Spartans	What problem is Descartes trying to solve in this Meditation?
4.12	[Library]	
4.14	Mind-body problem paper due, Athenians	
4.19	Hume, reading 1	How does Hume account for having an idea of the “missing” shade of blue?
4.21	Hume, reading 2 paper due, Spartans	Why couldn’t a causal claim be a relation of ideas?
4.26	Hume, reading 3	What condition must be met in order for a rational

		person to believe a miracle has occurred?
4.28	Conclusion Final paper due (everyone): "What is Philosophy?"	
5.3	Final exam, 11:30-12:45 p.m.	