

FEB. 07 2001



PHILOSOPHY 1020  
KNOWLEDGE & REALITY  
COURSE OUTLINE



I. Text: Ed. L. Miller, *Questions That Matter*

II. Course Content & Tentative Schedule

- A. Jan.8: What is Philosophy? The class discussion will be divided into two parts: 1) Class members will be asked to give their impressions of what philosophy is. 2) The instructor will attempt to summarize these impressions and compare them with his own and those found in the first chapter of the text.
- B. Jan.15: Logic: A discipline invented by Aristotle which studies the relation of inference between propositions. The instructor will present a brief summary of the basic principles of logic and its relationship to philosophical reasoning. Class discussion will center on questions from chapter two of the text.
- C. Jan.22: The Idea of Form: The first systematic attempt to relate the world to human knowledge emerged in ancient Greece with the philosophy of Plato. His student Aristotle carried on the tradition with significant modifications. The lecture and discussion will be concerned with the relevance of the theory of forms to contemporary world views.
- D. Jan.29: Mind and Matter: This week's subject matter is the methodology and conclusions of the French philosopher, Rene Descartes. Lecture and discussion will focus on the ideal of certainty and on the nature of mind.
- E. Feb.5: Materialism: This class will examine several characterizations of the material world and its relation to human consciousness. Our central question will be whether materialism is the "common sense" view of reality? We will also consider whether Dr. Johnson indeed refuted Berkeley when he kicked a stone.
- F. Feb.12: **FIRST HOUR: A BRIEF MID-TERM EXAM.** Rationalism: In the remainder of the class period we will discuss the debate between rationalism and empiricism and then look at some of the classic rationalist theories.
- G. Mar.5: Empiricism: Some of the traditional arguments for empiricism and against rationalism will be discussed. One key question will be whether the two opposing theories might not be compatible with one another.
- H. Mar.12: Certainty: Was Kant right or did he lapse into a coma after Hume awakened him from his dogmatic slumber? Is certainty possible, or can we only be certain about trivial matters of formal definition? We'll treat these and related questions in our lecture and discussion.
- I. Mar. 19: God and the World: Can we prove the existence of God, and if so, what difference would it make? If faith is possible, what's its relation to reason? Our explorations will revolve about these and other questions. Be sure to bring your favourite arguments for and against.
- J. Mar.26: God and Evil: How can the world be so rotten and God, its creator, so good? We will discuss various responses to this question as well as whether it is a truly philosophical problem.
- K. Apr.2: Recent Schools of Philosophy: A very brief and humble introduction to some recent modes of philosophical thought. No guarantees of accuracy will be issued with the lectures, but the discussion will, hopefully, prove enlightening.
- L. Apr.9: COURSE REVIEW FOR FINAL EXAM
- M. Apr.16 (or thereabouts), FINAL EXAM
- III. Evaluation: There will be two short papers each worth 25% of the course mark, the mid-term will be worth 20% and the final 30%.
- IV. Instructor: D. Whiting  
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