

**COURSE INFORMATION**

Spring 2009: Basic Problems of Philosophy  
 PHIL 001; Sect.010 [MWF 11:15-12:05]: 325 Sackett  
 PHIL 001; Sect.011 [MWF 12:20-1:10]: 208 Willard

**CONTACT INFORMATION**

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**PHIL 001 — Basic Problems – Syllabus**

**I. Readings**

NAGEL	Nagel, Thomas. 1987. <i>What Does it All Mean?</i> Oxford University Press.
DESCARTES	Descartes, René. 2006. <i>Meditations, Objections, Replies.</i> Hackett Publishing.
ANSELM	Anselm. 2001. <i>Proslogion.</i> Hackett Publishing
HUME	Hume, David. 1993. <i>An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding.</i> Hackett Publishing.
SORENSEN	Sorensen, Roy. 2003. <i>A Brief History of the Paradox.</i> Oxford University Press
ANGEL	Some reading assignments are available on ANGEL, they are noted in the schedule.

<b>Course Schedule</b>		
12 Jan	Introduction	Syllabus & Getting to Know You Exercise
14 Jan	Philosophy	NAGEL, ch.1 “Introduction”, pp.3-7
16	Skepticism	NAGEL, ch.2 “How Do We Know Anything?”, pp.8-18;
19		<b>MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY — No Class</b>
21		SORENSEN, Sextus Empiricus and the Infinite Regress of Justification, pp.148-154
23		DESCARTES, Meditation 1, pp.9-13
26		DESCARTES, Hobbes’ Objection to Med. 1, Descartes Reply to Hobbes’ Objection, pp.100-101
28	<b>TEST #1</b>	<b>Philosophy, Skepticism, Meditation 1</b>
30	Rationalism & Empiricism	DESCARTES, Meditation 2, pp.13-19
2 Feb		DESCARTES, Meditation 2, pp.13-19
4		DESCARTES, Hobbes’ Objections to Meditation 2, Descartes Replies to Hobbes’ Objection, pp.101-105
6		HUME, Sec.1, pp.1-9; <i>Optional:</i> SORENSEN “Hume’s All-Consuming Ideas”, pp.252-255
9		HUME, Sec.2, pp.9-13
11		HUME, Sec.4, Part 1, pp.15-20
13		HUME, Sec.4, Part 2, pp.20-25
16		HUME, Catch-up on Reading, Review, & Summary
18	<b>TEST #2</b>	<b>Rationalism &amp; Empiricism</b>
20	Error/Freedom	NAGEL, Freedom
23		DESCARTES, Meditation 4, pp.29-35
25		DESCARTES, Meditation 4, pp.29-35
27		DESCARTES, Meditation 4, Hobbes’ Objections, Descartes’ Replies, pp.111-113
2 Mar		LEIBNIZ, “On Freedom”, pp.94-98 [see ANGEL]
4		LEIBNIZ, Sections 1– 3 and 14, pp.35-37 and 46-47 [see ANGEL]
6	<b>TEST #3</b>	Freedom and Error
9-13		<b>SPRING BREAK — No Class</b>
16	GOD	ANSELM, ch.1 and 2
18	Ontological	ANSELM, ch.2 and 3
20		DESCARTES, Meditation 5, pp.35-40
23		DESCARTES, Meditation 5, pp.35-40
25		DESCARTES, Meditation 5, Hobbes’ Objections, Descartes Replies, pp.113-114

27	Cosmological	SORENSEN, Ch.1 “Anaximander and the Riddle of Origin”, pp.10-13; Also print out ANGEL for handout on the Cosmological Argument
30	Design	Print out ANGEL for handout on the Cosmological Argument
1 April	God and Ext.	DESCARTES, Meditation 3 [first half], pp.19-23
3		DESCARTES, Meditation 3 [second half], pp.23-29
6		DESCARTES, Meditation 3, Hobbes’ Objections, Descartes’ Replies, pp.105-111
8	<b>TEST #4</b>	Proofs for the Existence of God
10	Mind-Body-Self	NAGEL, ch.3 “The Mind-Body Problem”, pp.27-37
13		DESCARTES, Meditation 6 [first part], pp.40-50
15		DESCARTES, Meditation 6 [second part], pp.40-50; see also Meditation 6, Hobbes’ Objections, Descartes Replies, pp.114-115
17		SORENSEN, “Chrysippus on People Parts”, pp.130-133
20		SORENSEN, “Chrysippus on People Parts”, pp.133-137
22		Blackburn, ‘Zombies & Mutants’ [see Angel]
24		NAGEL, “Other Minds”
27		Catch-up
29	<b>TEST #5</b>	The Mind-Body Problem
1 May	<b>REVIEW</b>	<b>REVIEW</b>
	<b>FINAL</b>	TBA

## II. Course Description and Information

This is an introductory, three-credit-hour philosophy course, taught frequently in the undergraduate philosophy programs. Students should always remember that philosophy is a demanding intellectual science that requires you to keep yourself in a constant state of critical openness. This course has several objectives, whose achievement will increase students’ ability to perceive the fundamental aim of the course which is to develop a greater capacity for critical assessment of philosophical positions.

## III. Course Objectives and Goals

### GOALS

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- To provide students a basic understanding of what philosophy is.
- To learn a standard set of philosophical definitions, thinkers, and ideas.
- To encourage critical discussion about philosophical topics.

### OBJECTIVES

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- Students will demonstrate competency and increase their critical abilities over a variety of elementary philosophical issues in tests, quizzes, and in discussion.
- On exams/quizzes, students will correctly answer questions about basic philosophical definitions.
- In the daily classroom setting, students will critically and respectfully discuss a set of elementary philosophical topics.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For more principles of an undergraduate education, see: <http://www.psu.edu/ur/2001/principles.html>

#### IV. Expectations

Typically an average course will run as follows (although there will be exceptions):

- (1) Your instructor will conduct a 30-40 minute lecture on the assigned reading, highlighting a number of central points or outlining arguments extracted from the reading. You are expected to take notes and if the lecture is unclear, *ask questions*.
- (2) The remaining 20-10 minutes will sometimes consist of a small group activity where you will be asked to discuss with your classmates some philosophical problem.

#### V. Grade Evaluation, Scale, Breakdown

Course Evaluation – Grade Percentage Breakdown	
1. Class participation, attendance, readings, and assignments	20%
2. Tests (5 tests, approximately 13% each)	65%
3. Final	15%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

##### Grading Scale

A+: 97–100%;	B–: 80	D: 61–68
A: 91–96	C+: 75–77	D–: 60
A–: 90	C: 71–74	F: 0–59
B+: 86–89	C–: 70	
B: 81–85	D+: 69	

##### 1. Class Participation, Attendance, Readings, and Assignments – 20%

(a) *Class Participation*: Well-informed and cooperative class participation is expected. The quality of your participation will be assessed by the appropriateness of your questions, replies, and comments. It is incumbent upon you as a student to assist in facilitating a healthy classroom environment by asking thoughtful questions that assist not only your learning but the learning of your fellow classmates.

(b) *Attendance at all meetings is mandatory*. It is one of the requirements of you as a student to make your attendance regular. Missing any class will not only affect a good understanding of content, but will have repercussions on your grade. If you are unable to attend a class, make every effort to excuse yourself well ahead of time by emailing or talking to your instructor.

(c) *Readings*: The syllabus provides a tentative schedule for reading assignments. Reading assignments will be confirmed in class every week. All textbooks listed below are *required* and necessary if you wish to do well in this course. They are relatively inexpensive and widely printed so you should be able to find a cheap copy in the bookstore or online (Amazon, Half.com, etc.). It is your responsibility to know the assigned reading, and to come to class having actively read the assigned texts thoroughly; this requires you to take notes in the margins of the text, underline key sentences, highlight key words or sections that you want to discuss further or have questions about. When reading, *go global*. Don't scrutinize every single detail of the text, but extract out what you think is the main point or points of the text, and *write it down* in the book or a notebook. See the "Resources" section in ANGEL for more tips on effective reading.

(d) *Assignments*: Periodically your instructor will distribute a number of questions to be worked on during class. Sometimes you will be assigned assignments to be completed via Angel. Your instructor will announce these assignments *in class*.

## 2. Tests (5 tests, approximately 13% each)

The five tests will examine the extent to which you understood the material and your ability to think critically. Typically, tests will consist of multiple-choice and short answer questions. It is advised that in preparation for tests, you should do the following: study your lecture notes, all homework, quizzes, and any study-guide your instructor distributes. Look through your reading and quickly exam passages you have highlighted and underlined. It is also helpful to collaborate with your fellow students *in preparation* for the exam. Your grade will be based on a number of different variables: (a) *clarity* (is your response well-organized and sequential?), (b) *correctness* in representation (are you articulating the philosophical problem/solution correctly?), and (c) *cogency* in response (is your answer convincing or at least well-informed?)

There will be **no make-up** examination unless you excuse yourself in advance or procure a documented excuse, and contact your instructor in a timely manner about a date to take the missed requirement.

## 3. Final Examination – 36%

The final-term examination will consist of multiple-choice and short answer questions. The exam will be a ***cumulative*** exercise; therefore it is advised that in preparation for the final exam, you study your lecture notes, mid-term exam, readings, quizzes, in-class work, and any study-guide your instructor distributes. The final exam is **NOT** during the usual class time, but on **TBA**

There will be **no make-up** examination unless you excuse yourself in advance or procure a documented excuse, and contact your instructor in a timely manner about a date to take the missed requirement.

## VI. Additional Administrative Information

### 1. Academic Misconduct

The general principles and policy relating to cheating and plagiarism, which are enforced in this class, can be found in the Penn State policy on academic misconduct. *Academic Integrity*: Academic dishonesty encompasses a wide range of activities, whether intentional or unintentional, that includes, but is not limited to: all forms of fraud, plagiarism, and any failure to cite explicitly all materials and sources used in one's work. Sanctions for these activities include, but are not limited to, failure in a course, removal from the degree program, failure in a course with an explanation in the permanent transcript of the cause for failure, suspension, and expulsion.<sup>2</sup>

Other Websites & Resources for Academic Misconduct:

PSU Academic Integrity: [www.psu.edu/ufs/policies](http://www.psu.edu/ufs/policies)

PSU ITS: [tlt.its.psu.edu/suggestions/cyberplag/cyberplagstudent.html](http://tlt.its.psu.edu/suggestions/cyberplag/cyberplagstudent.html)

Plagiarism Tutor: [www.libraries.psu.edu/instruction/infolit/andyou/mod9/plagiarism.htm](http://www.libraries.psu.edu/instruction/infolit/andyou/mod9/plagiarism.htm)

Turnitin: <http://tlt.its.psu.edu/turnitin>

PSU Teaching & Learning w/ Technology: <http://tlt.its.psu.edu/suggestions/cyberplag/>

### 2. Disability

If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the campus disability liaison as soon as possible: (name, office, telephone, email). For additional information, check the university web site: <http://www.equity.psu.edu/ods/>

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<sup>2</sup> Statement on Academic Integrity: <http://www.psu.edu/dept/ufs/policies/47-00.html#49-20> ;

### 3. *Resources to Help with Research, Writing, Documentation, and Citation*

Info Lit. Tutorial: <http://www.libraries.psu.edu/instruction/infolit/andyou/infoyou.htm>

University Learning Center: <http://php.scripts.psu.edu/dept/ulc/index.php>

Writing Center: <http://www.psu.edu/dept/cew/writingcenter/UWC/index2.htm>

### 3. *Use of Angel and email communication*

Please check regularly the webpage on the ANGEL website. An online version of this syllabus is available there, and you will be notified of any cancellation of a course meeting there. If you want to email me, please do not email me through Angel. Instead, send pertinent correspondence to [dwa132@psu.edu](mailto:dwa132@psu.edu) with an appropriate subject line (e.g. P120 Question). Sending an email with an inappropriate subject line may result in your instructor deleting your email because he thinks it is junk. Students are responsible for activity on their computer accounts so only send emails pertinent to the course.

### 4. *Drop procedures*

Students planning to drop the course during the semester should discuss their reasons with the instructor before completing the Schedule Adjustment Form (See Office Hours). Those students who simply stop attending class, for whatever reason, without officially withdrawing from the course, will receive the grade of F. If you expect a refund, be aware that the date the withdrawal form is processed by Penn State registrar's office determines the amount of refund.

### 4. *Student Guidance*

If you are in need of psychological counseling, please do not hesitate to contact Penn State's Counseling & Psychological Services (phone: 814-863-0395; website: <http://www.sa.psu.edu/caps/default.shtml>). For any problem related to your studies, university policies and procedures, do not hesitate to seek the help of the Student Affairs Services (website: <http://www.sa.psu.edu/services.shtml>), your Academic Advisor, or arrange a meeting with your instructor who will help you obtain assistance through one of the above, or another, agency.

**If you are having trouble completing course work or just having difficulty adapting to University life, do not hesitate to get help. That is what these services (and others) are for, so use them.**

### 5. *Classroom Environment*

A number of factors figure into creating a healthy classroom environment. In order to facilitate such an environment, I ask you to obey the following: (1) the use of cell phones in any capacity is prohibited (please turn ringers/buzzers off, no text-messaging during class), (2) please do not begin to "pack up" your belongings before your instructor has explicitly dismissed you, (3) please come to class rested, sleeping in class is strictly prohibited, (4) please do not do other work in class. If you are incapable of performing (1)–(4) or are disruptive in class, you will kindly be asked to leave the classroom.

### 6. *Turning in Homework*

You are required to type all homework and staple it before class. There are staplers available in the library if you do not have one.

**Elements of this syllabus are subject to modification due to unforeseen variables, catastrophic events, or because of other factors. The instructor will announce any of these changes in class.**