Philosophy 1000 – Human Nature

Course Description

The theme of this course is the nature of human beings, i.e., the nature of being human. Our main question is: what is it to be human? To address this question, we must ask other questions such as, “what kind of thing are we?”, “what motivates us?”, “who are we?”, “how does one stand in relation to others?” and more. To address these questions we will study philosophical works of the past and present that focus on ideas of selfhood, freedom, purpose, community, and the existence of God.

Objectives:

To become better acquainted with the discipline of philosophy specifically as it deals with questions regarding human nature and the human condition. In part, the aim is to develop skills in reading, describing, interpreting, and critically evaluating philosophical works. In addition, students will learn to articulate, defend, and revise their own philosophical views through conceptual analysis and discourse. Students should gain an appreciation of the complexity of human nature through attentive reading, writing, self-reflection, and conversation with others.

Required Reading Materials:


All other reading materials will be posted on Blackboard as PDFs or links to webpages. All PDFs should be printed and brought to class on the day the reading is to be discussed. (Same goes for the readings out of our books.)

Instructor: Sara Pope  
(e-mail: s pope6@fordham.edu)  
Meetings: T/W/Th, 6-9p; Location TBA  
Office Location:  
Office Hours:

Breakdown of Final Grade (with due-dates)  
(Assignments are graded on an independent scale, and weighted accordingly)

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading Reflections</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group Project</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper 1 (due 6/13)</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<td>Paper 2 (due 5/1)</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam (5/8)</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Writing Center Ex. Credit</td>
<td>2%</td>
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Grading Scale (By %)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-100</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-93</td>
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<td>B+</td>
<td>87-90</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-87</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-83</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77-80</td>
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<td>C</td>
<td>73-77</td>
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<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67-70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>60-67</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Below 60%</td>
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[below a 60% is a failure (F) for the course]
**Graded Work**

**Participation** Full credit will be given for paying attention and contributing to class discussions and activities regularly. Excessive lateness/absence, talking during lectures, sleeping in class, illicit use of electronic devices in class, etc., will result in reduced credit.

**Reading Reflections** Five (5) reading reflections (350-500 words each) will be due over the course (must submit at least 1 reflection each week). Summarize an idea/argument from the reading and provide your thoughts on the matter. Must be done prior to the class lecture/discussion. Detailed instructions will be given (also see last page for more information.)

**Presentations** Each student will give a 5-7 minute presentation in class during the semester. Describe an idea or two from the reading, present your thoughts about it, and pose 2-3 discussion questions. (Must sign-up for this - can sign up anytime via e-mail or before leaving class). Further detailed instructions will be given. (Also see last page for more information.)

**Group Project** As a class, we will work to condense Plato's *Phaedo* and present it as a new dialogue, in our own words. (Some work outside of class will be required.)

**Papers 1 & 2** Prompts for these will be given out in due time.

**Final Exam** In class, long answer.

**Course Policies**

1 – **Attendance** Show up. Excessive absences will be noticed and will negatively affect your participation grade.

2 – **Lateness** Avoid being late. Habitual lateness will be noticed and will negatively affect your participation grade.

3 – **Late Work** Barring accommodations and extenuating circumstances (judged on a case by case basis), late work will not be accepted.

4 – **Turning in Assignments** All assignments must be submitted in class as a hardcopy on the day they are due, and must also be submitted on Blackboard on that day.

5 – **Academic Integrity** Plagiarism will NOT be tolerated. Copying another’s work and passing it off as your own will result in a zero for the assignment, and may result in failure of the course. See the Fordham University Undergraduate Handbook for policy details.

6 – **Disabilities and Accommodation** Students with disabilities have the right to seek and attain accommodations, and I am happy to provide these. All accommodations must be requested through the Office of Disability Services (ODS). If you are in need of accommodation, do contact the ODS ASAP: https://www.fordham.edu/info/20174/disability_services

7 – **Electronic Devices** Barring accommodations, laptops and tablets may only be used for accessing course readings as necessary. (Please see me.)

8 – **Contacting Me** I will respond to e-mails within 24 hours. I encourage you to walk-in during office hours or make appointments to discuss questions and/or concerns you have about the class, your grades, etc.

**General Tips for Succeeding in this Class**

**Reading.**

Read assignments twice (at least). Take notes while reading the second time, especially if you are in the process of forming discussion questions and/or writing a reflection. Try to summarize the text as you read, paragraph by paragraph. When coming across unfamiliar words, look them up. Take advantage of the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy @ https://plato.stanford.edu (and always cite as you use it!)

**Writing.**

“To read without writing is to sleep”

-St. Jerome

Take time to write as you read. Write down your thoughts and questions – do you agree or disagree with a claim? Is there an idea or a concept that is confusing or vague? Can you think of counter examples to what is being claimed?
**Class Schedule**

**Orientation** (Reading on Blackboard)

**T 5/28:** Read *Being Logical* p.55-69, (§6-10); p.86-88 (§19); 103-112 (§1-7)
AND Intro. to The Human Condition (Blackboard)

**The Stoics** (Reading on Blackboard)

**W 5/29:** Read *The Stoics Reader*

**Plato**

**Th 5/30:** Read: Introduction (page ix-x)
AND *Euthyphro*

**T 6/4:** Read *Apology*

**W 6/5:** Read *Meno*

**Th 6/6:** Read *Phaedo* *Paper 1 instructions given*

**T 6/11:** Group Project - Condensing the *Phaedo*

**Aristotle** (Reading on Blackboard)

**W 6/12:** *Nicomachean Ethics* *(Phaedo presentation!)*

**Aquinas** (Readings on Blackboard)

**Th 6/13:** Intro to “The Mystery of Existence” AND Question 2, Article 3 (Blackboard); Question 6 (Paper 1 due)

**Descartes**

**T 6/18:** Discourse on Method (parts 1, 2, 4) AND Meditation I, II, III (pg76-81), V (pg88-92)

**Individuals & Society** (Readings on Blackboard)


**Th 6/20:** Emerson “Self-Reliance”
(Paper 2 Instructions Given)

**T 6/25:** Beauvoir *The Second Sex*, Introduction

**W 6/26:** Nietzsche selections

**Final**

**Th 6/27:** LAST DAY OF CLASS! Paper 2 due, and final in-class exam.

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**Important Dates:**

June 11<sup>th</sup>: Group project work day
June 12<sup>th</sup>: Group project presentation
June 13<sup>th</sup>: Paper 1 due
June 27<sup>th</sup>: Paper 2 due & final exam in-class

All graded material will be returned within one week of being handed in. Grades will **not** be available on BB. (Must contact me for complete grade updates.)

This syllabus may change. All changes will be announced ahead of time both in class and via Blackboard/e-mail.

Important announcements regarding readings and assignments will be delivered via Blackboard. All Blackboard announcements will be automatically e-mailed as well. Keeping up with announcements is part of class participation.
**Details for Graded Work**

**Reading reflections:**
Graded 1-4 points each according to level of engagement with the text.

4 = Excellent // 3 = Satisfactory
2 = Unsatisfactory // 1 = Unacceptable

**Paper 1 and Paper 2:**

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<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Possible Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mechanics</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Style &amp; Structure</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarity &amp; Depth</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accuracy</td>
<td>7</td>
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**Group Project: Abridging The Phaedo**

The class as a whole will work to abridge the *Phaedo* dialogue such that it can be re-enacted in under 30 minutes. Volunteers will be needed to play the parts of each speaker in the dialogue. Work outside of class over the weekend will be required. Each student will be responsible for individually producing a general synopsis/outline of the entire dialogue, and collectively the class will create a screen play. The synopsis should read like a plot of a story - not just a reiteration of who said what, but a narrative description that moves progressively towards the final “scene” of Socrates’s death. Then, as a group in class on Tuesday June 11, we will split into groups to devise a dialogue, with different sections assigned to different groups. You will want to bring a laptop if you have it, or some other writing device. Each group should create a “google doc” where their section of dialogue will be developed and group-edited.

**Writing Center Extra Credit**

A 2% bonus will be added to your final course grade by taking a draft of either a reading reflection or a paper to the writing center before submitting it to me. In order to get the extra credit, you must provide proof of having been at the writing center (ask the tutor for a stamp), *and* you must write a brief (3-5 sentence) reflection of how the session went (answer the questions: was the tutor helpful? what advice did you get? how do you plan to improve based on the advice given?). This is a one time only extra credit opportunity, and it is the only extra credit that will be offered in the class.

**Presentations**

Selected dates will be available for students to sign up to present on the reading for that day. A brief paper of 250-500 words should be read to the class (to be submitted to me as a hard copy in class and on Blackboard). Take an idea or two from the reading that you would like to talk about and articulate two or three questions to prompt class discussion. Each student will present once. No more than two presenters will be allowed per class. These will be graded from 1-7 points on a level of analysis and overall engagement:

7 = Excellent 6 = Good
5 = Fair 4 = Unsatisfactory/Subpar
3 = Incomplete 2 = Minimally complete
1 = Unacceptable

**Overall grade distribution**

- Final Exam
- Paper 1
- Paper 2
- Reading Reflections
- Group Work
- Presentation
- Participation