

Philosophy 1000: Philosophy of Human Nature
Fordham University
Summer 2018

CRN#/Section#	
Day Time Location	TWF

Instructor Information

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Course Description

What are we, and how do we know? Are we souls created by a supreme being? Are we just bodies? Is the “conscious mind” identical to the brain? Are you just a product of your environment? Is it possible to have knowledge with absolute certainty? Is it possible to have knowledge at all? Are humans intrinsically good? Evil? Both? Neither? This course seeks to understand (and perhaps even answer) these questions by studying some classic and contemporary philosophical writing.

Learning Objectives

- To develop critical reading and thinking skills
- To familiarize students with foundational texts in the history of thought
- To confront some of the big questions about living as a human being
- To develop academic and professional writing skills
- To practice the art of oral communication

Required texts

1. Plato. *Republic* (2nd Edition). Translated by G. M. A. Grube. Revised by C. D. C. Reeve. Hackett Publishing: 1992. Paperback.
ISBN: 978-0872201361
2. Descartes. *Meditations on First Philosophy* (2nd Edition). Translated and Edited by John Cottingham. Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy: 2017. Paperback.
ISBN: 978-1107665736
3. Ta-nehisi Coates. *Between the World and Me* (1st edition). Spiegel & Grau: 2015. Hardcover.
ISBN: 978-0812993547
4. *District 9* (2009). You are responsible for finding a way to watch this film outside of class. Cheap rental options are available on Youtube, Amazon, Google Play, and iTunes.

Additional reading assignments and course content will be made available on the course website.

Grading

Letter Grade	Numerical equivalent	Meaning of the Grade
A	94-100	Excellent. Honors-level work, outstanding.
A-	90-93	Still excellent.
B+	87-89	Very good. High Level of performance.
B	83-86	Good. Solid and above average level of performance.
B-	80-82	Good. Still above average.
C+	77-79	Average level of performance.
C	73-76	Satisfactory. Acceptable level of performance.
C-	70-72	Minimally acceptable.
D	65-69	Passing, but unsatisfactory. Below average performance.
F	<65	Failure. Inferior performance.

Standards for Distinguishing between Excellent, Good, Average and Poor:

- Professionalism: Papers should demonstrate good grammar as well as good spelling. They should also be copy-edited to reduce or eliminate typos.
- Writing Quality: Writing should be clear and exhibit good structure. Paragraphs should be cohesive and build towards a complete essay with a substantial thesis (as opposed to a string of disconnected thoughts).
- Accuracy and Understanding: Papers should be able accurately to re-create an argument or a position. They should find the relevant issues and argument(s) worthy of analysis.
- Argument: Papers should argue for or against a position rather than merely exchange opinions. Is the argument for or against a position constructed persuasively within the confines of the paper? (Note: I am not looking for your argument to be true — there is no need to guess my opinion. What I want to see is *persuasion*.)

Grade Breakdown

Paper: 20%

Exam 1: 20%

Exam 2: 20%

Final exam: 20%

Quizzes: 20%

Total: 100%

Paper

You will write one paper for this class. We will discuss writing strategies in class and evaluate writing samples. You will receive a detailed prompt at the time the paper is assigned. It is worth noting here, however, that writing mechanics *matter*. Spelling, punctuation, grammar, etc. are an essential part of written communication. If you struggle with mechanics, seek help with proofreading at the campus writing center.

Exams

There will be three exams in this course. The first two will come at the conclusion of roughly 3-week units of material. Then there will be a break from exams so you can focus on writing your paper. The final exam will only cover material from June 14 onward. Exams consist of short answer (a few sentences) and essay questions (a few pages). See our course schedule below for exam dates.

Quizzes

I give relatively frequent short (about 5 minutes to complete) and easy (just summary, no interpretation) in-class pop quizzes on the reading assignments. These quizzes will be easy if you do the reading. I drop the two lowest quiz grades for the semester. If you miss a quiz due to *unexcused* lateness or absence, you receive a zero for that quiz.

Plagiarism:

The course rule for plagiarism is simple: plagiarizers will receive an "F" for the entire course.

From Fordham's student handbook:

Violations of Academic Integrity:

A. Plagiarism: Plagiarism occurs when individuals attempt to present as their own what has come from another source. Plagiarism takes place whether such theft is accidental or deliberate. Examples of plagiarism include but are not limited to:

- Failing to acknowledge the ideas of another person, whether or not such ideas are paraphrased, from whatever source including oral, print, broadcast or computer-mediated communication.
- Attempting to rewrite borrowed material by simply dropping a word here and there, substituting a few words for others, or moving around words or sentences.
- Failing to place quotation marks around borrowed material in the approved style. It is no defense to claim that one has "forgotten" to do so.
- Presenting as one's own an assignment, paper or computer program partially or wholly prepared by another person, whether by another student, friend, or by a business or on-line service that sells or distributes such papers and programs.

Some advice on plagiarism and paraphrasing from Joe Williams and Larry McEnerney, "Writing in College," in *Engaging the Humanities at the University of Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 206-207.

Here is a simple test for inadvertent plagiarism: be conscious of where your eyes are as you put words on paper or on a screen. If your eyes are on your source at the same moment your fingers are flying across the keyboard, you risk doing something that weeks, months, even years later could result in your public humiliation. Whenever you use a source extensively, compare your page with the original. If you think someone could run her finger along your sentences and find synonyms or synonymous phrases for words in the original in roughly the same order, try again. You are least likely to plagiarize inadvertently if as you write, you keep your eyes not on your source, but on the screen or on your own page, and you report what your source has to say after those words have filtered through your own understanding of

them.

Class policies

- “A friend is one before whom I may think aloud” –Emerson

My fundamental policy in this class is to have a class environment of mutual respect where we help one another achieve our course objectives. The course policies in this section are designed to help achieve that environment.

Correspondence

- Email is the best way to reach me. I will reply to all emails within one business day.
- Class announcements and other information about the course readings, schedule changes, due dates, etc. will all happen through Fordham email and our course website. It is your responsibility to check your Fordham email daily and have access to the course website.
- General tip for emailing college professors: always error on the side of formality. You would be amazed how many emails I get that begin with “Hey” or no greeting at all. Email is a form of professional communication and has different rules than texting. When emailing a professor or TA or generally *anyone* other than your close friends and family, begin the email with “Dear Professor...,” and end it with “Sincerely...” or “Best...”.

Electronic Devices

- Laptops and tablets are permitted for course readings and note-taking. I reserve the right to ask you to close your laptop if it is becoming an obvious distraction.
- Silence your phone. Don’t look at it.

Food and Drink

- If it requires utensils or smells, don’t bring it.

Attendance

- A general note: success in this course highly depends on regular attendance. You will not receive points for simply showing up, but doing well on quizzes, exams, and the paper will be exceedingly difficult if you frequently miss class.
- Per the student handbook: if you miss more than 6 classes you fail the course
- My policy: I allow each student 2 unexcused absences, no questions asked. For each subsequent unexcused absence you will lose a full percentage point from your final grade.
- Excused absences: If you miss class for a medical reason or some serious reason, you must provide me with verifying documentation.
- In the case of both excused and unexcused absences, it is the student’s responsibility to inquire after any material they may have missed. Office hours is an appropriate place to do this; an email reading “Hey professor what did I miss?” is not.

Late work policy

- Late work will be penalized one full letter grade per day late.
- Extensions are granted at the instructor’s discretion.
- Requests for extensions must be made well in advance of the deadline.
- When requesting an extension I expect you to provide a rationale and a concrete plan for finishing the work.

Required Readings & Viewings

- You should complete the assigned reading or viewing on the course schedule *before* class meets.
- Reading philosophy is often slow and difficult work. You will not likely be able to read these texts as quickly or as fluently as you can read other texts. Allow yourself ample time, look up words you don’t understand, and assume that most texts will require re-reading.
- My personal advice is to complete the reading before class and write down questions you have or things you don’t understand. After class, go back and review the reading once more.

Disability Statement:

Fordham University, in compliance with state and federal laws and regulations, does not discriminate on the basis of disability in administration of its education related programs and activities. We have an institutional commitment to provide equal educational opportunities for disabled students who are otherwise qualified. Students seeking services should meet with Disability Services staff for an initial intake meeting to develop an accommodation plan directly with the student in accordance with Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. For more information please visit: https://www.fordham.edu/info/20174/disability_services

Course Schedule (subject to change at discretion of instructor)

May 29		Introduction, review syllabus (no reading) Plato, <i>Republic</i> Book 1 (whole chapter) Plato, <i>Republic</i> Book 2: 357a-368b
May 30		Plato, <i>Republic</i> Book 2: 368c-383c Plato, <i>Republic</i> Book 4 (whole chapter) Plato, <i>Republic</i> Book 5: 473a-480a; Book 6: 503b-511e
May 31		Plato, <i>Republic</i> Book 7: 514a-520d Emerson, “Self-Reliance” Review

June 5		Exam 1
June 6		Descartes, <i>Meditations</i> : First and Second Meditation Descartes, <i>Meditations</i> : Third Meditation Descartes, <i>Meditations</i> : Sixth Meditation
June 7		McWeeny, “Princess Elisabeth and the Mind-Body Problem” Ryle, “Descartes’ Myth”
June 12		Chalmers, “Consciousness and its place in nature”: pp. 27-46 Review
June 13		Exam 2
June 14		Aquinas, “The Five Ways” Genesis 22: 1-19 (“The Binding of Isaac”) Augustine, (selected excerpts on faith and reason) Zagzebski, “Self-trust and the Diversity of Religions”
June 19		Sartre, <i>Being and Nothingness</i> : 86-116 Paper Assigned; In-class writing tutorial
June 20		Sartre, “Existentialism is a Humanism” Review
June 21		Coates, <i>Between the World and Me</i> (whole book)
June 26		Mencius: 1A7 (King Xuan and the ox); 2A6 (The child at the well); 6A10 (the beggar refusing food) Xunzi: “Human Nature is Bad”
June 27		Arendt, <i>Eichmann in Jerusalem</i> : “An Expert on the Jewish Question” <i>District 9</i>
June 28		Final exam

