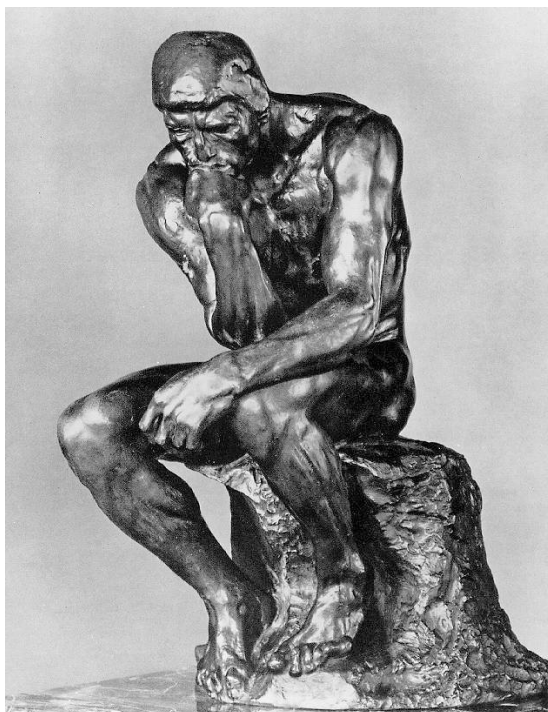


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* UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS,
BOSTON *

INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY



(Philosophy 100: Fall 2008)

Thursdays 4pm – 6.30pm, Room W/1/54

SYLLABUS

Prof. Adam Beresford

Office Hours: T/Th 1pm-3pm or *by appointment*, Wheatley 5th floor, room 8

Phone: 617 4607488. email: adam.beresford@umb.edu

Assistant student-teachers: Stephen Seaward; email: smseaward@gmail.com ; Mandy Bardsley; email: mandycapable@gmail.com

COURSE DESCRIPTION

We will look at a broad range of texts in the following areas of philosophy: (1) *the nature and point of philosophy* (2) *arguments over the existence of God* (3) *Darwin's theory of evolution* (4) *the nature of mind and consciousness* (5) *ethics and politics*. Your principal task is to read the texts carefully and understand them, so that you can talk about them and write about them

intelligently and coherently. But more generally, the aim of this course is not for you to memorise the contents of these particular texts, but to acquire a sense of what philosophy is and how it is done.

T E X T S

There is one required text: **The History of Western Philosophy, by Bertrand Russell** (any edition will do). Other articles and handouts, as well as presentations, lecture notes, and assignments, will be given to you in class or emailed to you and/or posted on my website: www.faculty.umb.edu/~adam_beresford/. At my website, select 'courses' then 'Introduction_to_Philosophy_Fall_08' for this material.

C O U R S E R E Q U I R E M E N T S

1. **Papers.** You will write three five-page-minimum papers. If you are at all unsure of what is required of you for philosophical papers, make sure you make full use of my office hours for discussing your writing in detail.
2. **Participation.** It is essential that you *read the texts carefully before each class*. It is an extremely good idea to take notes on whatever you read, and to re-read the material at least once. Philosophy articles tend to be fairly short but dense, and cannot be read in the same way as literature, or history.
4. **Attendance.** I will take attendance every class. If you miss more than two classes (for any reason) your grade will be affected adversely.
5. **Office Hours:** Make use of my office hours. Come and talk to me about things you have not understood in class, and for help with your papers. I am happy to look at drafts, and give advice before you write final versions, as well as help with planning. (If you are generally a quiet student in class, you can make up for this by talking to me in these meetings.)

Break down of the grade: First paper: 20%; Second paper: 30%; Third paper: 30%; Participation (including office hours): 10%; Attendance 10%.

A P P R O A C H A N D T E C H N I Q U E

Read the texts carefully and slowly. I expect you to be familiar with the content of the texts *before* we discuss it. Remember that these texts are often very difficult; they are also usually short — often we will only discuss twenty or pages or less in one class, and you can therefore easily read the relevant section of text more than once in a reasonable amount of preparation time, and that is what I expect. Come to class *already* familiar with the material and prepared with questions about things that you did not understand.

SCHEDULE

Week 1: Introduction. What is Philosophy?

Week 2: Plato's *Defence of Socrates*. (Philosophy as moral self-examination).

Week 3: Platos' *Euthyphro*.

Week 4: Existence of God: arguments from Aquinas, Leibniz.

Week 5: The Problem of Evil; Darwin; his theory, its philosophical implications.

Week 6: The controversy over "Intelligent Design"; more Darwinian questions.

Week 7: Equality and Democracy

Week 8: Descartes, *Meditations*.

Week 9: The Mind Body Problem

Week 10: The Mind Body problem continued

Week 11: David Hume *on Miracles*.

Week 12: Aristotle, *Ethics* Book 1.

Week 13: *Acrasia*; its reality and explanation.

Week 14: Experimental Ethics

ACADEMIC HONESTY

When it comes to writing papers, make sure everything you give me is your own work. If you quote somebody, you have to say clearly where the quote comes from. I approve of and encourage use of Internet resources for researching around this material. But please make sure that any of this material that you use in your papers gets *properly cited*. Also, don't overuse Internet material when it comes to your own writing. That is, don't cut and paste paragraphs or sentences from someone else's work. Small quotations are acceptable as long as they are properly flagged. Please take note of regulations on academic dishonesty. You can view them here:

www.umb.edu/student_affairs/programs/judicial/procedures .