

PHI 101
INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY
Spring 2008

1. Contact Information:

NAME: Professor Douglas W. Portmore, Ph.D.

OFFICE: Coor 3362

E-MAIL: douglas.portmore@asu.edu (Please put "PHI101" in the subject line. Also, if you want to talk philosophy, please come see me in office hours or schedule an appointment rather than emailing me. Email is an inefficient means of conducting a philosophical conversation. Because of this, I am willing to answer by email only very brief and specific questions about the philosophical material covered in the course.)

OFFICE HOURS: 11:00 AM – 12:00 PM on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and other days and times by appointment.

2. Teaching Assistant: Peter Marchetto (peter.marchetto@asu.edu).

3. Required Texts:

- Louis P. Pojman (editor), *Introduction to Philosophy: Classical and Contemporary Readings*, 3rd Edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004) – ISBN: 0-19-517150-0.
- John Perry, *A Dialogue on Personal Identity and Immortality* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1978) – ISBN: 0-915144-53-0.
- Selected articles that will be available for downloading and printing from the "Online Readings" section of Blackboard. These will be PDF files that require [Adobe Reader](#), which can be downloaded for free by clicking on the link provided.

4. Blackboard and Email:

The course is supported by the ASU Blackboard website at myASU Courses (<http://myasucourses.asu.edu>). Blackboard is an online course management system. Using the Blackboard website, you will be able to access important course content online: handouts, announcements, lecture outlines, the syllabus, and the instructor's contact information. You will also be able to check your grades on various assignments and to send emails to your fellow students (but note that I receive a copy of any email sent through the system and will be monitoring emails to ensure that they pertain to the course). I will also use Blackboard to email you. Blackboard will be an important source of information, so please check Blackboard at least twice a week for new announcements.

In order to get key course announcements, you must not only check the Blackboard website but also regularly check your ASU-sponsored email. If you would like to use an alternate (non-ASU) email address, you must redirect your ASU email address to the one you more commonly use. To do so, go to www.asu.edu/emma. Click EPO update on the left, and then change your destination address. Make sure the email you redirect it to is currently active/valid. And please make sure that your mailbox is not full. As an instructor, I will not know if course emails are not getting to you, so the responsibility is on you.

For more information on using Blackboard, see the handout entitled: "MyASU and Blackboard."

5. Course Description: The aim of the course is to introduce students to the practice of philosophizing: the art and science of thinking in a critical manner about some of the great issues of life. Some of the questions that will be explored include: (1) Does God exist? (2) Is each of us both a mind and a body? If so, how is it that such radically different substances are able to interact with each other in the way that they clearly seem to in each of us? (3) What is it to remain one and the same person over time? What would it mean, and is it possible, to survive one's bodily death? (4) Do we have free will? (5) Do we have knowledge of an external world, a world that exists independently of our perceiving it? (6) And, lastly, what is the nature of morality? Is it objective, and does it depend on God or religion?
6. Course Objectives: One of the central aims of the course is to challenge students to think critically about their own beliefs. The course requirements aim to develop students' abilities to think critically and analytically as well as to foster reading, writing, and oral communication skills.
7. Course Requirements and Grading Policy:

Points will be allocated as follows:

▪ Participation:	-10 – +10 Points
▪ Exam I:	100 Points
▪ Exam II:	100 Points
▪ Exam III:	100 Points
Total Points Possible:	
	300 Points

The plus/minus system will be used. Course grades will be assigned according to the following point distributions:

A+	300-291	Points	(100-97%)
A	290.9-279	Points	(96.9-93%)
A-	278.9-270	Points	(92.9-90%)
B+	269.9-261	Points	(89.9-87%)
B	260.9-249	Points	(86.9-83%)
B-	248.9-240	Points	(82.9-80%)
C+	239.9-225	Points	(79.9-75%)

C	224.9-210	Points	(74.9-70%)
D	209.9-180	Points	(69.9-60%)
E	179.9-0	Points	(59.9-0%)

8. Participation: Your grade will be a function of the following: (1) the quality and regularity of your participation in class discussions; (2) the extent to which your participation indicates that you have properly prepared for class, having read the required readings and thought about the relevant philosophical issues, and (3) the extent to which you observe proper classroom etiquette—see below. If you participate regularly in class discussions and faithfully observe proper classroom etiquette, you can earn up to ten extra credit points which will be added to your total score for the three exams. If you never participate but faithfully observe proper classroom etiquette, you won't have any points added to your total score for the three exams, but you won't have any points deducted from your total score for the three exams either. If you fail to observe proper classroom etiquette, you can have up to ten points deducted from your total score for the three exams. Of course, if your bad etiquette is to the point that it disrupts the educational process, you will be withdrawn from the course by the instructor with a mark of "E" or "W" for the course—see item 13 below.

Students are expected to participate regularly in class. It is partly the students' responsibility to make the class a lively one. And please note that good participation involves more than just speaking out during class; quality counts just as much as, if not more than, quantity. What you say should be informed and constructive. You should be able to speak intelligently about that day's reading assignment. During class discussions, you should be respectful of others even when they have radically different viewpoints. Do not monopolize class discussions; give others a chance to have their say. And, most importantly, please observe proper classroom conduct:

- Raise your hand and wait to be called on before speaking.
- You should make every effort to avoid coming in late or leaving early. If you ever are late for class, enter in complete silence and avoid walking between the class and the professor.
- Never leave during class unless you absolutely must. Leaving for a short break and then returning is not acceptable. The professor is not a TV set, but is a person addressing the class, and it is rude to leave when someone is addressing you.
- Likewise, it is rude and unacceptable to talk with classmates while the professor (or another student who has the floor) is talking.
- Visible and/or noisy signs of restlessness or inattentiveness are rude as well as disruptive to others—this includes, for instance, sleeping, reading the paper, listening to music, surfing the web on your laptop, talking to your classmate, etc. If you cannot sit still, stay awake, and pay attention, you should not be taking a college class and you may be asked to leave.
- Do not begin packing up your things or otherwise indicate that you think it is time for class to come to an end; wait for the professor or TA to dismiss class.

- Always address others in the class (including your fellow students) in a respectful manner.
- Failing to turn off pagers and cell phones before coming to class is unacceptable.
- Do not use your laptop to check your email or browse the web. If you must use your laptop during class, be sure that you are using it only to take notes.

9. Readings: The readings for this course are quite difficult, perhaps much more difficult than what undergraduate students are typically required to read. To compensate for this fact, we'll be proceeding very slowly. But you'll be expected to pull your own weight as well. You'll be expected to read each article two to three times. Ideally, each article should be read twice before class: first, a quick read to get a sense of the article's main thesis and argument and then a second careful read, taking notes on the following: (1) the author's main thesis (or theses) and the arguments offered in its (their) defense; (2) definitions/explanations of key terms, distinctions, and examples that the author uses; (3) any potential objections or counterarguments that the author addresses along with his or her rebuttals; (4) your assessment of the author's arguments; and (5) any thoughts or questions that you have about the reading. It is also a good idea to read the article again after we have finished discussing it in class.

10. Exams: There will be three exams. A week before each exam, I will pass out a finalized sheet of possible questions—a tentative list of all the possible exam questions for the course can be found on Blackboard under "Handouts." Each exam will consist of a subset taken from the finalized lists. There's no final exam (except for those who have been excused from one or more of Exams I-III). Please bring a bluebook, a PEN, and your ASU ID with you to the exam. The use of books or notes during the exam is NOT permitted. Each exam will cover only the material subsequent to the previous exam (or, in the case of the first exam, the material subsequent to the start of the semester). Please see item 17 below for the dates of the exams.

Ordinarily, no make-up exams will be given. However, exceptions will be granted if there are genuinely extenuating circumstances for which the student can provide supporting documentation. In the event of such circumstances arising, please contact me by e-mail as soon as possible—preferably before the regularly scheduled exam time. Those who fail to contact me within 48 hours will normally receive an "E" on the exam.

The make-up exam will consist in a comprehensive final exam taken during finals week. The score received on this comprehensive final exam will substitute for the zeros received on any missed exams from which the student has been excused.

11. Policy on Academic Dishonesty and Violations of the Student Code of Conduct: Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated. My policy is to impose a failing grade for *the course* as a sanction for any act of academic dishonesty. In flagrant cases of academic dishonesty, I will recommend to the Dean or Director that the student be assigned a grade of XE. Furthermore, you should be advised that it is in the purview of the Provost and the Dean or Director to impose additional sanctions, including removal from the School or College, expulsion from the University, and the revocation of a degree. You should read ASU's "[Student Academic Integrity Policy](#)."

Students are also expected to abide by the "[Student Code of Conduct](#)" and to abide by the policies set forth in this syllabus, the university catalog, the schedule of classes, and the [Student Affairs web site](#). Misconduct will be reported to university authorities for appropriate action.

If you ever find yourself in a jam, where you feel like you have to resort to cheating, please come see me instead. I can be quite sympathetic and reasonable.

12. Policy on Incompletes:

Incompletes are given only when a student who is doing otherwise satisfactory work is unable to complete a course because of illness or other conditions beyond the student's control. These are only given under the most extenuating of circumstances. For more information on university policy on the grade of "I" (incomplete), please see <http://www.asu.edu/aad/manuals/usi/usi203-09.html>.

13. Withdrawing from the Course:

An instructor may withdraw a student from the course with a mark of "W" or a grade of "E" in cases of disruptive classroom behavior.¹ "A student may withdraw with a grade of "W" from one or more classes beginning with the second week of classes through the tenth week of classes for the Fall and Spring semesters." "Check the [Registrar's Semester Calendar](#) for specific course withdrawal dates." Please refer to the ASU General Catalog for additional information.

14. Disability Accommodation:

If you have a physical, psychiatric/emotional, medical, or learning disability that may impact on your ability to carry out assigned course work – either papers or exams – I encourage you to contact Disability Student Resources (DRS). Their phone number is (480) 965-1234 (voice) or (480) 965-9000 (TTY). They can also be accessed on the web at <http://www.asu.edu/drs>. DRS will review your concerns and determine with you what accommodations are necessary and appropriate for you. All information and documentation of your disability is confidential and will not be released without your permission.

15. Getting Help: I'm more than happy to go out of my way to help those who are eager to learn. I am also happy to make appointments with students for whom my office hours are inconvenient. Please don't hesitate to schedule an appointment. To do so, you need only e-mail me. If you are not doing as well as you would like in the course and need suggestions on how to improve, please come see me immediately. If you don't come see me within a week of receiving a grade on some assignment, I will assume that either you are satisfied with your performance or that you know what you need to do to improve.

16. Honors Contracts: The course may be taken for honors credit by students in the Honors College. In order to receive honors credit for my PHI 101, the student must write a 2,000-3,000 word thesis-defense paper on an assigned paper topic and earn a B or better on that term paper. The student is

¹ As stated in the [Student Enrollment Services Policies and Procedures Manual](#) (SES), "[a]n instructor may withdraw a student from a course with a mark of 'W' or 'E' when the student's behavior disrupts the educational process. Disruptive classroom behavior for this purpose is defined by the instructor." See SES 201-19.

expected to consult with the instructor during office hours or by appointment about specific requirements, possible topics and potential additional related readings by the seventh week of classes. If they don't, they will not receive honors credit. These contract requirements are not integrated with the course requirements.

It's the student's responsibility to file the necessary petitions by the appropriate deadlines.

17. My Expectations:

- a. Students are expected to check their email and Blackboard regularly.
- b. Students are expected to spend an average of 1½ hours outside of class working on class materials for each hour spent inside of class.
- c. Students are expected to abide by the policies concerning student conduct set forth in the university catalog and the schedule of classes.
- d. Students are expected to use a word-processor for all written assignments.
- e. Students are expected to have, or be willing to acquire, basic computer skills. Students will need to be able to use Internet Explorer (or other web browser), Adobe Acrobat Reader, and some sort of word processing software.
- f. Students are expected to do the assigned readings prior to coming to class, and students are responsible for all the material covered in the assigned readings even if not all of that material is discussed in class.
- g. Students are expected to complete assigned work on time.
- h. Students are expected to be present and on time for every class meeting or to have a very good excuse. Students who miss a class even for a legitimate reason are, nonetheless, responsible for the material covered in that class, and they are also responsible for being apprised of that day's announcements. Students that miss class should obtain lecture notes from a fellow student and see me if they have any questions concerning the material that they missed. They should also check the course web site for any announcements that they may have missed.
- i. Students are expected to participate; it is partly the students' responsibility to make the course a lively one.
- j. Students are expected to be courteous to and respectful of both the professor and their fellow classmates.

18. Important Dates:

01/15/08: First class.

02/07/08: Finalized list of possible questions for Exam I distributed.

02/14/08: **Exam I.**

03/20/08: Finalized list of possible questions for Exam II distributed.

03/27/08: **Exam II.**

03/28/08: Course Withdrawal Deadline (in person).

03/30/08: Course Withdrawal Deadline (ASU Interactive and SunDial).

04/22/08: Finalized list of possible questions for Exam III distributed.

04/29/08: **Exam III.** Last class. Complete Withdrawal Deadline.

05/06/08 (Tuesday): Make-up Exam (a comprehensive final exam) only for those who have been excused from one or more of Exams I-III: 12:20-2:10 PM in Coor 174. Study the finalized lists of questions from Exams I-III.

19. Assigned Readings:

These are the assigned readings in the likely order that we will read them. The page numbers refer to the Pojman text. Due dates for the assigned readings will be announced on Blackboard. This list is tentative. I may need to make additions, deletions, and/or substitutions as we proceed through the semester depending on the pace at which students are learning.

- a. Pojman's "A Little Bit of Logic," p. 626.
- b. Paley's "The Watch and the Watchmaker," p. 178.
- c. Either Gould's "The Panda's Thumb" or Gould's "Male Nipples and Clitoral Ripples." These readings are available online under "Online Readings" in Blackboard.
- d. Miller's "Life's Grand Design." This reading is available online under "Online Readings" in Blackboard.
- e. Swinburne's "A Theistic Response to the Problem of Evil," p. 213.
- f. Russell's "The Problem of Evil," p. 207.
- g. Holbach's "A Defense of Determinism," p. 370.
- h. Stace's "Compatibalism," p. 382.
- i. Taylor's "Libertarianism," p. 375.
- j. Descartes's *Meditations on First Philosophy* (Meditations I & II only), p. 42.
- k. Perry's *A Dialogue on Personal Identity and Immortality* (The First Night)
- l. Perry's *A Dialogue on Personal Identity and Immortality* (The Second Night)
- m. Perry's *A Dialogue on Personal Identity and Immortality* (The Third Night)
- n. Pojman's "Ethical Relativism versus Ethical Objectivism," p. 489.
- o. Shafer-Landau's "Values in a Scientific World." This reading is available online under "Online Readings" in Blackboard.
- p. Rachels's "Does Morality Depend on Religion?" This reading is available online under "Online Readings" in Blackboard.

20. Lecture Outlines: I use PowerPoint presentations during class. Redacted versions of these PowerPoint presentations are available on Blackboard under "Lecture Outlines." These lecture outlines are made available to you so as to facilitate your note-taking and to make it easier for you to participate in class discussions. The lecture outlines are available in Rich Text Format so that you can manipulate them using a word processor. Some students print them out and take notes on them during class. Other students take notes on their laptops in class, using these lectures outlines as their starting points. Note, though, that the lecture outlines are redacted, such that certain crucial words, phrases, and examples are missing. These omissions are indicated in the lecture outlines by the following: "[Redacted]." Also, please note that you should do more than just fill in for the ellipses. The PowerPoint presentations are only *outlines* of my lectures. You should take notes on the entire lecture, using these outlines as an organizational guide. And please note that I do not distribute my PowerPoint presentations to students under any

circumstances. If you miss class, even for a legitimate reason, you'll need to ask one of your fellow students for the notes that you missed.

21. Keys to Succeeding in this Course:

- (1) Attend class regularly.
- (2) Participate in class discussions, asking questions when you don't understand something and challenging me when I say something that you disagree with. If you participate, you'll stay engaged, and, as a result, you'll come away with a better understanding of the material. Also, the more participation there is, the slower we'll progress through the material. And the slower we progress through the material, the less you'll end up being required to know for the tests. (Note that, so far, I've never gotten through all the lectures that are posted up on Blackboard. How many of these lectures we get through and, consequently, what portion of the possible exam questions you'll be responsible for, all depends on how much discussion there is.)
- (3) Print out the lecture outlines before coming to class, and take thorough notes during class, using the lecture outlines.
- (4) After each class, review the relevant possible exam questions, and if you have any questions regarding how to answer them, ask me about them at the beginning of the subsequent class. At the beginning of each class, I will give students the opportunity to ask questions about the material covered in the previous class.
- (5) Write up answers to the possible exam questions as we progress through the course. Come see me immediately if you're at all unsure as to what the correct answer is. (You can use these written up answers to study for the exam.)