

PLS: Philosophical Inquiry
PLS 20301

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Office Hours/Location: T 1pm-4pm or by appointment/Check Homepage

Course Description

What sort of inquiry is philosophy? Is it a genuine *scientia/ae* (i.e a knowledge, a science, an expertise)? If so, what distinguishes it from other human endeavors, and what is its relation to liberal education? What are philosophy's fundamental questions and what objects in or beyond the world are its subject matter? What is the difference between rational discussion and rhetoric, and how can we distinguish a good from a bad argument? What is the difference between knowledge and opinion? Is philosophy a way of life and, indeed, the best way of life, or is it possible that philosophy is a sham project, harmful to human life and happiness? We will address these questions and others through selected philosophical readings organized into three thematic units: 1) *Being and Its Principles*; 2) *Language, Logic, Knowledge*; 3) *Philosophy as a Way of Life/Philosophy as Anti-Life*. The English word "philosophy" is from the Greek "φιλοσοφία" — "love of wisdom." In this course, I hope to make you feel a little bit of that love and develop a taste for thinking carefully, for questioning things that have always seemed obvious to you, and for imagining different ways the world might be.

Required Texts

Aristotle. *The Basic Works of Aristotle*. edited by Richard McKeon. introduction by C. D. C. Reeve. New York: Random House, Modern Library, 2001.
ISBN: 0375757996

Boethius. *The Consolation of Philosophy*. translated with an introduction and notes by P. G. Walsh. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.
ISBN: 0199540543

Descartes, René. *Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy*. translated by Donald Cress. 4th ed. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1999.
ISBN: 9780872204225

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Twilight of the Idols*, edited by Michael Tanner, translated by R. J. Hollingdale. New York: Penguin Books, 2003.
ISBN: 9780140445145

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Edited by Robert C. Holub, translated by Michael A. Scarpitti. New York Penguin Books, 2014.
ISBN: 9780141195377

Plato. *Gorgias*. translated by R. Waterfield. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.
ISBN: 9780199540327

Plato. *Meno*. translated by G. M. A. Grube. 2nd ed. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1976.
ISBN: 9780915144242

A Presocratics Reader. Selected Fragments and Testimonia. Ed., with introduction, by P. Curd.
Trans. R. D. McKirahan Indianapolis: Hackett, 2011.
ISBN: 9781603843058

Various other materials will be handed out via email—indicated below with a *

Assignments and Academic Policies

Papers: there will be three paper assignments over the course of the semester (I will specify the length limit at the time of handing out the assignment). The papers are weighted equally (at 25% each). Papers are graded for substance (i.e. understanding the prompt, answering the prompt completely, producing good arguments, etc.), as well as for the quality of writing (i.e. grammar, usage, organization, style, etc.). For the sake of fairness, do not exceed the length limit. You should not need to make use of outside sources. Papers are due at the beginning of class, in hard copy, on the Thursday of the week that they are due. Late papers will be penalized.

Participation: Your participation score measures your engagement in terms of philosophical discussion. The best scores will go to students who show a sustained pattern of thoughtful contribution and questioning in class, especially if that contribution demonstrates that you have read the assigned material diligently. This can take the form of asking questions to me or other students, answering questions that I ask you by offering your interpretation of a text, producing or analyzing arguments, comparing different texts, etc. In general, think of the readings and class participation as an act of citizenship, through which each individual and the collective body is responsible for the class experience. You must bring to class the text we are reading each day. If the assignment is from an electronic text that I distribute, you should print it out and bring it to class. You can also better your participation score by responding to The Chain (described below) with intelligent questions or commentary. Class attendance is an essential part of participation. Only university required absences will be excused—i.e. those described in this policy: <http://studenthandbook.nd.edu/academic/absence/> Multiple unexcused absences will result in significant penalties to your participation score. Lastly, before completing the second or third paper you must see me in person at my office hours to discuss the grade you received on the prior paper. This applies to everyone and the point of it is to have an opportunity to provide the best feedback about how to approach the second and third papers.

“The Chain”: The Chain is a string of emails that I’ll send you throughout the semester (chained together so as not to gum up your inbox—hence the name). Each email in The Chain will have three parts—1) the Afterthought: a brief summary of the latest reading, which should be very handy when it comes time to review ideas before writing a paper, 2) the Forethought: a few guiding comments or questions for the next reading, and 3) a Funny Thought: a place for me to post philosophical memes, videos, articles, and, in all likelihood, pictures of my cat, Alice. If

there are readings to be handed out, they will be attached to The Chain. Reading/viewing The Chain is entirely optional, but reading the attached assignments is not optional. If you find yourself struggling with the readings, consider at least reading the Forethought.

Summary: Each of the papers counts for 25% of your grade, Participation 25%. **Rubric:** A: 93%, A-: 90%, B+: 87%, B: 83%, B-: 80%, C+: 77%, C: 73%, C-: 70%, D+: 67%, D: 63%, D-: 60%

Disabilities: The university's policies regarding disabilities can be found at: <https://dulac.nd.edu/academic/disabilities/> Information concerning Sara Bea Disability Services can be found at: <http://sarabeadisabilityservices.nd.edu/>

Academic Integrity: Don't Cheat! This includes plagiarism of any variety, including having others do your work for you or merely syntactically or terminologically altering the work of others (e.g. plugging in a few different words into a paragraph written by someone else). Any instances of cheating discovered will be dealt with swiftly according to university policy.

Laptop and Mobile Device Policy: Laptops and Mobile devices should not be used during class. The results are in: scientific studies show that screens mean less glean. Science giveth the iPhone X Plus and science taketh it away!

Schedule:

Being and Its Principles

Week 1: Introduction, Philosophy and the Liberal Arts; The One Unmoving

Class 1 (8/22) Introduction to the course, Kass: "The Aims of Liberal Education"*

Class 2 (8/24) Parmenides: *Presocratics Reader* pp. 55-65

Week 2: Everything in Everything; The Many in Motion

Class 3 (8/29) Anaxagoras: *Presocratics Reader* pp. 101-108

Class 4 (8/31) Leucippus and Democritus: *Presocratics Reader* pp. 109-126

Week 3: The Categories of Being; The Principles of Nature

Class 5 (9/5) Aristotle: *Categories* 1-8

Class 6 (9/7) Aristotle: *Physics* Book 1

Week 4: Nature and the Four Causes, Chance and Telos

Class 7 (9/12) Aristotle: *Physics* II, 1-3, G.E.M Anscombe: "Causality and Determination" *

Class 8 (9/14) Aristotle: *Physics* II 4-9

Week 5: The Science of Being Qua Being; The First Mover

Class 9 (9/19) Aristotle: *Metaphysics* I

Class 10 (9/21) Aristotle: *Metaphysics* II; XII, 7

First Paper Due (9/21)

Week 6: The Existence of God; Divine Simplicity, Perfection

Class 11 (9/26) Aquinas: *Summa Theologiae* Q. 2*

Class 12 (9/28) Aquinas: *Summa Theologiae* Q. 3-5*

Language, Logic, Knowledge

Week 7: Divine Goodness, Infinity, Immutability, Goodness; The Socratic Elenchus, Learning as Recollection

Class 13 (10/3) Aquinas: *Summa Theologiae* Q. 6-10*

Class 14 (10/5) Plato: *Meno*

Week 8: Rhetoric and Dialectic; A Calliclean Challenge

Class 15 (10/10) Plato: *Gorgias* 447a-481b

Class 16 (10/12) Plato: *Gorgias* 481b-499b

Mid-Term Break

Week 9: A Calliclean Challenge Cont.; Names, Sentences, Affirmations

Class 17 (10/24) Plato: *Gorgias* 499b-527e

Class 18 (10/26) Aristotle: *On Interpretation* 1-10

Week 10: Scientific Knowledge and Demonstration

Class 19 (10/31) Aristotle: *Posterior Analytics* I, 1-3, 31

Class 20 (11/2) Aristotle: *Posterior Analytics* I, 32-34; II, 19

Week 11: Modern Philosophical Method

Class 21 (11/7) Descartes: *Discourse on Method* I; II

Class 22 (11/9) Descartes: *Discourse on Method* III; IV

Second Paper Due (11/9)

Philosophy as a Way of Life/Philosophy as Anti-Life

Week 12: Modern Philosophical Method Cont.; Fortune

Class 23 (11/14) Descartes: *Discourse on Method* V; VI

Class 24 (11/16) Boethius: *The Consolation of Philosophy* I, II

Week 13: Happiness, Evil, Fate, Providence; Chance and Freedom

Class 25 (11/21) Boethius: *The Consolation of Philosophy* III, IV

Thanksgiving Break

Class 26 (11/28) Boethius: *The Consolation of Philosophy* V

Week 14: The Problem of Socrates; “Good and Bad,” “Good and Evil”

Class 27 (11/30) Nietzsche: *Twilight of the Idols* p. 29-57

Class 28 (12/5) Nietzsche: *On the Genealogy of Morals* I

Week 15: Good and Evil, Bad Conscience

Class 29 (12/7) Nietzsche: *On the Genealogy of Morals* II

Final paper due: (by 5pm on the day of the final in hard copy in my Malloy mailbox)