



Bridgewater State University

Summer 2022, 3 Credits

PHIL 151 INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

Professor: TBA

Office Hours: TBA

Semester and Year: June 13- July 14, 2022

COURSE DESCRIPTION

What can we know? How can we know it? This course is an introduction to philosophy through seminal questions concerning knowledge. We will investigate such questions as how we acquire knowledge, the ability to articulate our knowledge, the relation between theoretical and practical knowledge, and especially the relation between external reality and what we can know of it. We will explore these issues through the writings of major figures in the history of Western philosophy, such as Plato, Descartes, Hume, Kant, Wittgenstein, and Moore.

REQUIRED TEXTS

**** All texts are posted on the course site ****

Plato, *Meno*, and *The Republic* (selections).

René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*.

David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Book 1(selections).

William James, *What Pragmatism Means* (excerpt).

Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics* (selections).

G. E. Moore, *A Defence of Common Sense*, and *A Proof of the External World*.

Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* and *On Certainty* (selections).

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| | Knowledge and belief | JTB; Wittgenstein <i>Phil Investigations</i> 65-75 |
| June 16 | Knowledge and reality | Plato's <i>Republic</i> , book 5 |
| | Knowledge and truth | <i>The Republic</i> , book 7: The Cave |
| June 20 | The problem of universals | <i>The Republic</i> , book 6: Divided line + the sun |
| | – First exam questions assigned– | |
| June 21 | Descartes – doubt | Descartes, <i>Meditations</i> – <i>Meditation 1</i> |
| | The cogito | <i>Meditation 2</i> |
| June 22 | – First exam – | |
| June 23 | God; Clear and distinct ideas | <i>Meditation 3</i> |
| | Error; Mind and body | <i>Meditation 4-5</i> |
| June 27 | Descartes's Conclusions | <i>Meditation 6</i> |
| | Hume's Empiricism | Hume's <i>Treatise</i> , book 1 part I, sections 1-7; Part II, section 6 |
| June 28 | Induction and Causation | <i>Treatise</i> book, I part III, sections 1-4, 12-14 |
| June 29 | Identity, Substance, Doubt | <i>Treatise</i> book 1 part IV, sections 1,2,7 |
| June 30 | Analytic, synthetic; A priori | Kant's <i>Prolegomena</i> , Sections 1-21 |
| | Intuition, Understanding, Categories | <i>Prolegomena</i> , 27-35 |
| July 4 | Kant's system | <i>Prolegomena</i> : Kant handout |
| | – Second exam questions assigned– | |
| July 5 | Kant, Hume and the external world | Discussion and review |
| July 6 | – Second Exam – | |
| July 7 | Skepticism vs. common sense | G.E. Moore: <i>A Defence of Common Sense</i> |

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| | The External World | Moore: <i>A Proof of the External World</i> |
| July 11 | Knowledge and Certainty | Wittgenstein: <i>On Certainty</i> |
| July 12 | Certainty, Pragmatism Pragmatism and Knowledge 3rd exam questions assigned | Wittgenstein <i>On Certainty</i> James: <i>What Pragmatism Means.</i> |
| July 13 | Last class: conclusions, review | |
| July 14 | – Third exam – | |

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students completing this course will have learned:

1. How to think abstractly and concretely not only about matters that preoccupy philosophers but also about fundamental issues in other disciplines and practices.
2. How to produce a cogent argument and how to express it with maximum perspicuity, both in writing and orally.
3. How to anticipate and even welcome objections to one's views, how to apply the principle of charity to others' opinions, and how to address objections and competing views effectively and respectfully in one's writing.
4. How to read, analyze, and articulate arguments and viewpoints in primary philosophical texts, both historical and contemporary.
5. How to develop and defend one's own position with respect to problems that have occupied both historical and contemporary philosophers.