

Knowledge, Reality, and Values

CORC 1210 SYLLABUS

Prof:	Amanda Bryant	Semester:	Fall 2012
Email:	abryant@brooklyn.cuny.edu	Classroom:	4141B
Sect.:	MW9B	Time:	MW 9:30AM-10:45AM
Code:	0129	Credits:	3.0

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Office: 3316 Boylan Hall
Office hour: M 12:30PM-1:30PM

Introduction

This course will demonstrate what philosophy is and how to do it by examining historical and contemporary responses to paradigmatically philosophical questions, including the following:

- What is knowledge and can I have it? If so, how?
- Rationally, ought I to believe in God?
- How ought I to live? How do I decide what to do?

Learning Objectives (from the Philosophy Department)

- 1) Students will improve critical thinking by developing skills of explaining, critically examining, and responding to philosophical theories, issues, and claims in the philosophical areas of epistemology, metaphysics, and ethics.
- 2) Students will improve writing skills by explaining, exploring, and critically examining philosophical theories, issues, concepts, and arguments relating to the philosophical areas of epistemology, metaphysics, and ethics clearly in writing.
- 3) Students will improve communication skills by explaining orally philosophical theories, issues, claims, concepts, and arguments relating to the philosophical areas of epistemology, metaphysics, and ethics.
- 4) Students will improve skills of interpreting and evaluating philosophical writings.
- 5) Students will develop an openness to having their beliefs challenged, will learn to hear and comprehend the views of others, and to entertain objections to their own views.
- 6) Students will be able to explain several classic ethical theories, to compare and contrast ethical theories, and to apply these to justify conclusions relating to concrete moral issues.
- 7) Students will acquire a familiarity with and an understanding of some classic and contemporary philosophical literature and some fundamental philosophical issues, and will be able to explain important contributions to the history of philosophy and their relation to present viewpoints.
- 8) Students will be able to explain several classic epistemological theories, and to compare and contrast theories of what knowledge is and how it is acquired.
- 9) Students will be able to show that issues may be regarded from multiple viewpoints, and will be able to present reasons in support of each viewpoint.

10) Students will improve reasoning skills and ethical decision making skills by acquiring an understanding of ethical theories and philosophical concepts that will enable them to develop their own opinions on conceptions and practices of moral interaction and democracy.

11) Students will develop a conceptual foundation for future learning by exploring philosophical theories and arguments and will acquire related critical thinking and communication skills.

Required Text

Philosophical Inquiry: Classic and Contemporary Readings. Eds. Jonathan Adler and Catherine Elgin. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co, 2007. ISBN: 978-0-87220-867-4.

Course Requirements

Participation: You are expected to attend class regularly and contribute to discussion. Repeated, unexcused absences and latenesses will affect your grade negatively.

Short papers: You will write two short papers, between 2-4 pages in length, due October 3 and November 21. Topics will be distributed well in advance of the due dates. These papers are not subject to revision.

Midterm exam: There will be an in-class midterm exam on October 31.

Final exam: This exam is mandatory, and it will be cumulative. It will be held December 21, 8:00am-10:00am, location TBD.

Grading

Participation:	5%
1st short paper:	15%
2nd short paper:	20%
Midterm exam:	25%
Final exam:	35%

Note:

- There will be no extra credit given
- Final grades will be curved

Letter Grades

A+	90-100%	B+	77-79	C+	67-69	D+	57-59
A	85-89	B	74-76	C	64-66	D	54-56
A-	80-84	B-	70-73	C-	60-63	D-	50-53

My Policies

Course Expectations

I expect you to attend class regularly, to exhibit appropriate classroom behavior (discussed below), to do the readings before attending class, to participate in class discussions, and to complete and submit all of the course requirements as outlined above, on or before the due dates listed above (unless I have granted you an extension).

Classroom Behavior

- Be respectful: we may discuss topics that are controversial, about which some people hold strong opinions. We should be critical of the views of others, but never malicious or belligerent. This should be an environment in which we may all feel comfortable contributing to discussion
- Give your attention to whomever has the floor (this involves not having side-conversations, not texting, not Facebooking, and so on)
- Please arrive in a timely manner. If you must be late, try to enter the classroom in the *least* distracting manner possible
- Please do not bring food to class if it will be distracting to others
- Cell phones, laptops, and other noise-making devices should be silenced

Attendance

I will take attendance at the beginning of each class. If you arrive after I take attendance, remind me *after class has finished* (not during class) to mark you down as late. Repeated, unexcused absences and latenesses will affect your grade negatively.

If you must miss class, please let me know *beforehand*. In order to excuse your absence, you must present me with appropriate documentation that demonstrates your reason for missing class.

You must be present for all exams. Make-up exams will only be given to students with sufficiently-documented extenuating circumstances.

Email

If you choose to email me, please do so in a judicious manner. If you have a logistical question, consult the syllabus and/or essay assignment first. If you have a substantive question about course content that may require a lengthy response, avail yourself of my office hour. *Be advised that I do not discuss grades via email.* If you wish to discuss a grade, you must make an appointment with me.

Academic Dishonesty

Know what it is and don't do it. If you are having trouble completing an assignment or studying for an exam, be sure to come see me as soon as possible, and I will do my best to help you.

Academic dishonesty need not be malicious — it can be completely unintentional. Make sure that you cite your sources thoroughly, whether you are quoting somebody or simply paraphrasing an idea of theirs.

I will report all cases of academic dishonesty to the head of my department.

Late Assignments

Unless you have some well-documented excuse *and* my prior permission, late assignments will be subject to the following penalty:

5% deducted on the first day of lateness, 2% additional deduction for each subsequent day of lateness (including weekends). If you fail to hand in an assignment, your grade for that assignment will be 0.

Brooklyn College Policies

Academic Integrity

The faculty and administration of Brooklyn College support an environment free from cheating and plagiarism. Each student is responsible for being aware of what constitutes cheating and plagiarism and for avoiding both. The complete text of the CUNY Academic Integrity Policy and the Brooklyn College procedure for implementing that policy can be found at this site: <http://www.brooklyn.cuny.edu/bc/policies>. If a faculty member suspects a violation of academic integrity and, upon investigation, confirms that violation, or if the student admits that violation, the faculty member **MUST** report the violation.

Disability Services

In order to receive disability-related academic accommodations, students must first be registered with the Center for Student Disability Services. Students who have a documented disability or suspect they may have a disability are invited to set up an appointment with the Director of the Center for Student Disability Services, Ms. Valerie Stewart-Lovell at 718-951-5538. If you have already registered with the Center for Student Disability Services, please provide me with the course accommodation form and discuss your specific accommodation with me immediately.

Nonattendance Because of Religious Beliefs

Please be aware of the NY State Education Law, which provides that:

1. Any student in an institution of higher education who is unable, because of their religious beliefs, to attend classes on a particular day or days shall, because of such absence on the particular day or days, be excused from any examination or any study or work requirements.

2. It shall be the responsibility of the faculty to make available to each student who is absent from school, because of religious beliefs, an equivalent opportunity to make up any examination, study or work requirements which they may have missed because of such absence on any particular day or days
3. Any student who is aggrieved by the alleged failure of any faculty or administrative officials to comply in good faith shall be entitled to maintain an action or proceeding in the supreme court of the county in which such institution of higher education is located for the enforcement of their rights.

Lastly: All students should read carefully and thoroughly the 2011-2012 Brooklyn College Bulletin, especially pp. 27-74, for a complete listing of academic regulations of the College. It is available at the following URL:

http://www.brooklyn.cuny.edu/web/aca_general/120306_BulletinUndergraduate_2011-12.pdf

Reading Schedule

Note: This reading schedule is subject to revision at my discretion.

Introduction

Aug 27: Overview of Syllabus; What is Philosophy? (no reading)
Aug 29: Introductory Logic (no reading)
Sept 03: NO CLASS (Labor Day)

Epistemology

Rationalism/Empiricism; Skepticism

Sept 05: Descartes, *Meditations* Part I, pp. 50-52
Sept 10: Descartes, *Meditations* Part II, pp. 52-56
Sept 12: Descartes cont'd
Sept 17: NO CLASS
Sept 19: Hume, *An Enquiry Into Human Understanding* (Sections II, IV, V), pp.175-189
Sept 24: Hume cont'd
Sept 26: NO CLASS
Oct 01: G.E. Moore, "A Defence of Common Sense" (see Blackboard)

Justified True Belief

Oct 03: FIRST PAPER DUE
Ayer, *The Problem of Knowledge* (see Blackboard)
Oct 08: NO CLASS (Columbus Day)
Oct 10: (MONDAY SCHEDULE)
Gettier, "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?", pp. 43-44

Metaphysics

The Question of God

Oct 15: Aquinas, "The Five Ways", pp. 711-712

Oct 17: Paley, "The Design Argument", (see Blackboard)

Oct 22: Hume, "Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion" (Sections II, III), pp. 719-727

Oct 24: Hume cont'd

Oct 29: Overflow and Review

Oct 31: MIDTERM EXAM

Nov 05: Mackie, "Evil and Omnipotence", pp. 757-763

Nov 07: MIDTERMS RETURNED, van Inwagen, "The Magnitude, Duration, and Distribution of Evil: A Theodicy," pp. 764-771

Nov 12: van Inwagen cont'd

Ethics

The Question of Relativism:

Nov 14: James Rachels, "The Challenge of Cultural Relativism" (see Blackboard)

Divine Command Theory

Nov 19: Plato, *Euthyphro*, pp. 450-458

Utilitarianism

Nov 21: SECOND PAPER DUE

Mill, "Understanding and Defending Utilitarianism", pp. 493-502

Nov 26: Mill cont'd

Nov 28: Pojman, "Strengths and Weaknesses of Utilitarianism" (see Blackboard)

Deontology

Dec 03: Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, pp. 474-492

Dec 05: Kant cont'd

Dec 10: Kant cont'd

Dec 12: Overflow and review

Final Exam: Friday, Dec 21, 8:00am-10:00am, location TBD