

Knowledge, Reality and Values

CORC 1210

Prof. Ross Colebrook
Email: colebrookred@gmail.com
Section: MW2B
Code: 0132

Semester: Fall 2012
Classroom: 3404B
Meeting time: M-W 2:15-3:30PM
Credits: 3.0

Office: Philosophy Department Adjunct Office
Office hours: M 3:30PM-5:00PM and by appointment.

SYLLABUS

Introduction

Philosophy is a distinctive way of understanding and thinking about perennial human questions: “What can I know?”; “What is real?” “What is right and wrong?” This course will cover the basic introduction to a number of major debates in epistemology, metaphysics, and value theory.

Learning Objectives

- 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

We will be considering John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty* in-depth. This book can be found for free at:

<http://www.earlymoderntexts.com/pdf/milllibe.pdf>

Alternatively, you can purchase an equivalent hard-copy of the text from Amazon:

On Liberty, John Stuart Mill, Hackett Publishing Co. 1978, ISBN: 0915144433

Course Requirements and Grading

Your final grade will be composed of the following:

- Two in-class essay tests, one as a midterm and the other as a final exam (25% each, 50% total).
- Fourteen short essay quizzes, one each week (15% total).
- Two short papers (2-3 pages) (first paper 15%, second paper 20%, 35% total).

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

Course Expectations

Students will be required to attend class, complete readings before the week in which they are due, participate in class discussion, and complete all listed assignments. Students should come to class with the required reading in-hand, either as a printed hard-copy or an electronic version (Kindle, iPad, etc.). Repeatedly attending class unprepared may adversely affect your grade.

Cell phone use (calling, texting, web browsing, etc.) is prohibited in class. Eating and drinking is acceptable as long as it does not interfere with the class. Habitual lateness (especially if it interferes with the class) may adversely affect your grade.

Make-up policy: Weekly in-class short essays cannot be made up under any circumstance. The two essay exams may be made up *only* with a doctor's note or in the event of serious family illness or death. Extra credit will not be offered.

The two required papers must be turned in on time. Each day the assignment is late will incur a one grade reduction from the paper's final grade. (If the paper is one day late, an "A" becomes a "B," if two days late, an "A" becomes a "C," etc.)

CUNY Policy on 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.

CUNY Policy on 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.

Reading Schedule

Knowledge	
1	René Descartes, <i>Meditation I</i> : http://www.earlymoderntexts.com/pdfbits/dm1.pdf
2	René Descartes, <i>Meditation II</i> . http://www.earlymoderntexts.com/pdfbits/dm1.pdf
3	Excerpt: Hume, <i>Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding</i> , section II. http://www.earlymoderntexts.com/pdfbits/he1.pdf
4	Murphy, Peter, “Coherentism in Epistemology” sections I & II. http://www.iep.utm.edu/coherent/ (Wednesday) Paper #1 Due
Reality	
5	Chisholm, Roderick, “He Could Have Done Otherwise.” <i>The Journal of Philosophy</i> 4: 409-417. (Will be Distributed in class the week before)
6	Excerpt: Hume. <i>A Treatise of Human Nature</i> . Book II, part III, section I & II. http://www.earlymoderntexts.com/pdfbits/humtr23.pdf
7	Excerpt: Reid. <i>Essays on the Active Powers of Man</i> . Chapter I and VI.

	http://www.earlymoderntexts.com/pdfbits/rea41.pdf http://www.earlymoderntexts.com/pdfbits/rea42.pdf (Wednesday) MIDTERM: In-Class Essay #1
8	Excerpt: Nichols, Shaun. Lecture 10: Free Will Impossibilism. <i>Great Philosophical Debates: Free Will and Determinism</i> . The Teaching Company. (Will be distributed in class the week before)
Values	
9	J. S. Mill, <i>On Liberty</i> Ch. 1 & 2. http://www.earlymoderntexts.com/pdfbits/mi1.pdf
10	J. S. Mill, <i>On Liberty</i> Ch. 3 & 4. http://www.earlymoderntexts.com/pdfbits/mi2.pdf
11	Excerpt: J. S. Mill. <i>Utilitarianism</i> . Chapter 2. http://www.earlymoderntexts.com/pdfbits/miu1.pdf (Wednesday) Paper #2 Due
12	Excerpt: Kant. <i>Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals</i> . Chapter II. http://www.earlymoderntexts.com/pdfbits/kgw2.pdf
13	Haidt, Jonathan (2010), "What the Tea Partiers Really Want." Wall Street Journal. http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703673604575550243700895762.html
14	Boghossian, Paul (2011). "The Maze of Moral Relativism." New York Times <i>Opinionator</i> . http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/07/24/the-maze-of-moral-relativism/
Final	(Last Day) FINAL: In-Class Essay #2