

College of Humanities and Social Sciences
Department of Philosophy
Introduction to Philosophy

Location:	Welcome to the class. According to Aristotle, philosophy begins with wonder. I hope that this course serves to deepen your sense of wonder in the world. More importantly, I hope that you learn to love wisdom—which is the essence of philosophy—and that our discussions stay with you long after the class ends. As Plato says, the end of education is a whole, complete, person. I'm glad you decided to take this class.
Instructor: Dr. Mark Bernier	
Office:	
E-mail:	
Phone:	
Office hours:	

Response time: instructor responds to emails usually within 48 hours (except weekends)

COURSE DESCRIPTION From website: Nature, methods and some of the main problems of philosophy. Primarily for freshmen and sophomores. Not a prerequisite for advanced courses. One or more sections may be offered in any online format.

COURSE TEXTS (REQUIRED)

- Plato: *The Trial and Death of Socrates* (trans. Grube and Cooper. Hackett Publishing, 3rd ed.)
- Plato: *The Republic* (trans. Grube & Reeve. Hackett Publishing, 2nd ed.)
- Descartes: *Meditations on First Philosophy* (trans. Donald A. Cress. Hackett Publishing, 3rd ed.)
- Kierkegaard: *Fear and Trembling* (trans. Sylvia Walsh. Cambridge University Press. 2006)
- Viktor Frankl: *Man's Search for Meaning* (trans. Ilse Lasch (part one). Beacon Press, 4th ed.)
- Epictetus: *A Manual for Living* (ed./trans. Sharon Lebell. Harper/Collins, 1994)

(Other texts will be supplied as needed)

REQUIREMENTS

- **Two exams:** 30% each.
- **One paper:** 25%.
- **Participation:** 15%. This includes: attendance, quizzes, in-class writing, and *quality* contribution to discussion in class.
 - Note 1: part of your participation grade -- 5% -- will be based on a short (5 minute) presentation on the reading for a particular day. You must (a) summarize some main points of the reading, and (b) provide 3 questions to the class to generate discussion.
 - Note 2: This is a *discussion-driven class*, which means that you are expected to be prepared for — discussion. You must do the reading, be ready for short quizzes, be ready to answer questions, or (more important) come with your own questions.

- Note 3: Extra Credit (up to 5%) is available for anyone who desires to turn in additional work, such as written reflections on the readings, *outstanding* preparation for and participation in class discussion, or other work jointly agreed upon between student and instructor.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS
(SUBJECT TO REVISION: THIS IS A DISCUSSION DRIVEN CLASS)

THEME FOR THE CLASS: HAPPINESS & MEANING

INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY

WEEK ONE

No readings / Introduction / What is philosophy? History, Tools, etc.

WEEK TWO

Tuesday reading: Descartes' *Meditations* (first meditation)

What can we know? Can we trust our senses?

Thursday reading: Descartes' *Meditations* (second meditation)

A foundation for all knowledge?

WEEK THREE

Tuesday reading: Socratic dialogues: *Euthyphro* (in *The Trial and Death of Socrates*)

The beginnings of philosophy / Socratic Method vs Cartesian Method

Thursday Socratic dialogues: *Apology* (in *The Trial and Death of Socrates*).

Philosophy as religious/ethical way of life, as a way to be happy.

WEEK FOUR

Tuesday reading: Socratic dialogues: *Crito*, death scene (in *The Trial and Death of Socrates*)

Crime, Punishment, Duty to the State; and Death with Dignity

Thursday reading: Plato. *Republic*. Bk I (all).

Introducing Plato's *Republic*, the people, main issue: what is justice, and is it better to be just?

WEEK FIVE

Tuesday reading: Plato. *Republic*. Bk II: 357a-362c

Is it better to be a just person than an unjust person? The challenge given: is a bad (unjust) person better off, even happier, than a good (just) person? The One Ring!

Thursday: Plato. *Republic*. Bk II: 368c-376c; Bk III: 412b-end; Bk IV: 419-422a

What makes a city good? The growth of the city, its rulers, and why the rulers cannot be wealthy

WEEK SIX

HAPPINESS AND THE GOOD (MORAL) LIFE

☞ What do education, society, the arts, marriage, family, good rulers, knowledge, and most importantly, *living a moral life*, have to do with happiness?

Tuesday: Plato. *Republic*: Bk IV: 427d-end

Finally: Justice! The parts & virtues of the city and the human soul

Thursday: Plato. *Republic*: Bk II: 376c-end; Bk III: 386a-402a
The importance of the arts: Education; Censorship; The dangers of Imitation

WEEK SEVEN

Tuesday: Plato. *Republic*. Bk V: 457a-462d
Government regulated breeding and marriages
Thursday: Plato. *Republic*. Bk V: 473-end; Bk VI: 484a-d
Philosopher kings! Knowledge vs mere opinion.

WEEK EIGHT

Tuesday: Plato. *Republic*. Bk VI: 505e-509c; Bk VII: 514a-526e, 540-end
The metaphysics & epistemology of a good education: The Cave
Thursday: Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics* (class file) Book I (all of it); Book II (all of it); Book VII (11-14); Book VIII (1-3); Book IX (9-12)
What is happiness? What is necessary for it? How does being virtuous relate to happiness? And is friendship necessary for happiness?

WEEK NINE

Tuesday: Epictetus. *Manual for Living*.
Why our external commitments and hopes are the cause of misery and unhappiness. What is happiness? What should we depend on for it?

THURSDAY: FIRST EXAM

WEEK TEN

MEANING AND HAPPINESS (EXISTENTIAL SEARCH FOR MEANING)

☞ Can life have meaning without happiness? Where could we find meaning? How does faith relate to meaning, happiness, and the moral life?

Tuesday: Kant (class file)
A critique of the ancient view. How does happiness relate to the moral life? What is Kant's view of ethics? What is the highest good? What may we hope?
Thursday: Kant (continued)

WEEK ELEVEN

Tuesday: meaning & life (no readings)
Thursday: Albert Camus *The Myth of Sisyphus* (class file)
Existence has no meaning, so why not suicide? Can we still be happy?

WEEK TWELVE

Tuesday: Viktor Frankl: *Man's Search for Meaning*. Read: Part One: Experiences in a Concentration Camp
Life can have meaning. But can we have this without happiness? How do we secure meaning?
Thursday: Camus & Frankl (finishing up)

WEEK THIRTEEN

Tuesday: faith, meaning & the religious question (no readings)

Thursday: Kierkegaard. *Fear and Trembling*: Read: Preface, Tuning Up, A tribute to Abraham
How does faith relate to meaning, happiness and the moral life? What is faith? What can Abraham show us about faith?

WEEK FOURTEEN

Tuesday: Kierkegaard. *Fear and Trembling*: Read: Problems - A Preliminary Outpouring from the Heart
The Knights of Resignation and Faith! The boy and the princess

Thursday: Kierkegaard. *Fear and Trembling*: Read: Problem I: Is there a teleological suspension of the ethical? (read through page 52). Read: Problem II: Is there an absolute duty to God? (read only the first paragraph)
The paradoxical relationship between faith and the ethical

WEEK FIFTEEN

Tuesday: Kierkegaard: *Fear and Trembling*: wrapping up

Thursday: Final Reflections

FINAL EXAM