

PHIL 101: Introduction to Philosophy
Spring 2009, Coastal Carolina University
Class meeting times: MWF, 12:30-1:20, Edwards 256

Instructor: Dennis Earl
Office: Edwards 278
Office hours: M/W 1:30-2:15; T/Th 9-2; also by appointment
Office phone (from off-campus): 349-2787
Email: dearl@coastal.edu
Webpage: <http://ww2.coastal.edu/dearl>

Course description:

Our course is an introduction to the central issues and methods of philosophy. Philosophers consider some of the deepest questions there are, with the ultimate aim of not just thinking about them, but answering them. In that sense, philosophers are after the most basic truths there are. But there's a catch: Philosophers seek those truths through rational means. What that means is that we need to defend our views with good reasons, and that can make things very challenging.

You can also think of this course as a direct challenge to many of the things you probably take for granted. You probably believe that people can know lots of things. You likely believe that there's a physical world for us to study, and that we really can know lots of things about it. You probably believe that you have a mind, and you might even believe that your mind is some kind of nonphysical soul. You probably believe that your actions are under your own control, where your actions are "up to you." You might believe that there's a god. You probably believe that there is such a thing as moral goodness and badness, and that it's easy to say why some things are good and some things are bad.

All of that will come under attack during our time together. But don't be too afraid—taking your beliefs and thinking very carefully about them is a good thing. Being willing to be critical about one's most basic beliefs is essential to being an educated person, and that's the most basic reason for taking a course like this.

Student learning outcomes (i.e., what you can expect to learn):

Goals concerning philosophy itself—Upon successful completion of this course, you will understand...

- (1) what philosophy is, and what kinds of questions philosophers ask
- (2) why it is good to ask philosophical questions
- (3) how to go about answering such questions
- (4) how to critically evaluate both your own and others' answers to such questions

Other goals concerning rationality and critical thinking—Upon successful completion of this course, you will be better able to...

- (5) understand argumentative writing
- (6) critically evaluate arguments
- (7) express your own views, arguments, and criticism

Text:

Lawrence Bonjour and Ann Baker, *Philosophical Problems: An Annotated Anthology*, 2nd Ed. (Longman, 2008).

Webpages:

My main webpage is at <http://ww2.coastal.edu/dearl>. Under the link for PHIL 101, you will find important documents such as this syllabus, electronic versions of anything handed out in class, and links to readings and relevant materials online. There is also a Blackboard page for our course, which will be used both for posting grades and for the course weblog.

Course requirements and grade distribution:

<i>Assignment</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Tests (5 total)	40%
Reading quizzes (very often)	20%
Weblog participation	25%
Final exam (comprehensive)	15%
Total	100%

Notes:

- Final course grades are calculated as follows: A \geq 90%; 85% \geq B+ $>$ 90%; 80% \geq B $>$ 85%; 75% \geq C+ $>$ 80%; 70% \geq C $>$ 75%; 65% \geq D+ $>$ 70%; 60% \geq D $>$ 65%; F $<$ 60%.
- The lowest two reading quizzes will be dropped from the calculation of your final quiz average.
- I reserve the right to make adjustments to the grading scheme, the number of assignments, due dates, and the overall course plan as necessary.

Course policies:

Attendance: Attendance is expected, and you are expected to be on time for class. The CCU *University Catalog* states, with respect to attendance, that “An instructor is permitted to impose a penalty, including assigning the grade of F, for unexcused absences in excess of 25% of the regularly scheduled class meetings.” Attendance will be taken, and absences in excess of 25% of our class meetings will result in a failing grade, no matter what your actual performance in the course happens to be. The *Catalog* also states that “Absences will be excused for documented cases of:

- a) incapacitating illness,
- b) official representation of the University (excuses for official representation of the University should be obtained from the official supervising the activity),
- c) death of a close relative, and
- d) religious holidays.”

Quizzes missed due to excused absences will not be included in the final quiz grade calculation.

Late assignments: Unless otherwise specified, all written assignments are due in class on the given due date, at the beginning of that day’s class meeting. Ten points will be deducted for late papers, with an additional ten points for each calendar day the assignment is late. Some leniency may be expected for documented medical excuses, the leniency being at the instructor’s discretion.

Academic misconduct: Academic misconduct will not be tolerated, and if you are caught committing an academic infraction your action will be reported to the university and my standard sanction will be to fail you for the course. The *CCU Student Code of Conduct* (URL: <http://www.coastal.edu/judicialaffairs/codeofconduct.pdf>) gives examples of plagiarism and cheating as follows:

- a. Examples of plagiarism include but are not limited to the following:
 - (i) Words, sentences, ideas, conclusions, examples and/or organization of an assignment are borrowed without proper acknowledgment from a source (for example, a book, article, electronic documents, or another student’s paper).
 - (ii) A student submits another person’s work in place of his/her own.
 - (iii) A student allows someone else to revise, correct, or edit an assignment without explicit permission of the instructor.
 - (iv) A student submits work without proper acknowledgment from commercial firms, Web sites, fraternity or sorority files, or any other outside sources, whether purchased or not.
 - (v) A student allows another person to take all or any part of a course, including quizzes, tests, and final

examinations.

- (vi) A student submits any written assignments done with the assistance of another without the explicit permission of the instructor.
- (vii) A student knowingly aids another student who is engaged in plagiarism.

b. Examples of cheating include but are not limited to the following:

- (i) A student uses unauthorized information, materials or assistance of any kind for an assignment, quiz, test, or final examination.
- (ii) A student knowingly aids another student who is engaged in cheating.

See the *Code of Conduct* for more details, as well as other cases of academic misconduct. The simplest rule of thumb here is this: Do your own work, and give proper credit for ideas that aren't your own.

Class cancellations: If class is to be cancelled for any reason, either (1) I will have announced this (in person or via email) prior to the day class will be cancelled, or (2) a faculty or staff member will be present to announce that there is no class that day. If neither of these conditions is met, wait at least ten minutes after class was scheduled to begin before leaving.

Class atmosphere: This is something I take very seriously. In order for all of us to have the best educational experience in this course, our class meetings need to be focused on our material, with very little distractions and with the very best interaction between us—that's interaction between me and you, and between you and your comrades. Important maxims to keep in mind are thus these:

- Come to class prepared, having read the material for the day very carefully.
- Be ready to participate in class and discuss our material actively and critically.
- Be sure that all electronic devices (cell phones, pagers, and laptops, unless approved by me) are off and stored away.
- Don't arrive late or leave early, unless you've cleared it with me beforehand.
- Treat your fellow students and their views with respect—criticize each other, yes, but do so in a fair and appropriate way.
- Be well rested. Dozing a bit might not seem like a disruption, but it is. Being present in both mind and body is necessary here, and otherwise I'll just mark you absent. Plus I might wake you up and make fun of you.
- Uncivil behavior will not be tolerated, where such behavior includes anything disruptive to the learning environment for our course. This includes not only obnoxious and rude comments in class, whether directed at other students or otherwise, but also any behavior (whether verbal or not) that distracts me or other students from our respective tasks in our course. Uncivil behavior may be treated as academic misconduct and handled as such under the *Student Code of Conduct*.

Communications. If I need to contact you, I will use your *coastal.edu* address unless I'm replying to a message you've sent me using another address. It is very important that you either use your *coastal.edu* account or have it forwarded to an account you check regularly. If you need to contact me, emailing me at dearl@coastal.edu is the best option. I'll usually respond to messages requiring a reply within twenty-four hours, often much less. In emailing me, be sure to make it clear who you are (if the 'From:' line of your message doesn't include your name), and be sure to make your message itself clear. Incomprehensible email doesn't make a particularly good impression.

Special needs: If you have a physical or documented mental disability, see me to make the appropriate arrangements for you to complete the course in a way suitable for you. Note that in order to receive such compensation, you need to register with the Services for Students with Disabilities Office (in the Student Counseling Center, 204 University Blvd., phone 349-2305, website <http://www.coastal.edu/counseling/disabilityservices.html>).

Course schedule, readings:

Notes:

- Unless otherwise indicated, all readings are in the text by Bonjour and Baker, *Philosophical Problems: An Annotated Anthology*.
- Reading(s) listed for a particular day on the calendar below should be completed by that day's class meeting. For instance, January 21 lists a reading by Ann Baker for the day. Have that read by January 21.
- Our schedule may change, but if so, I'll notify you in class (and perhaps by email) of any changes.

Date	Topic	Readings/activities/assignments due
W, 1/14	I. What is philosophy? What's the value in it? Introduction Course expectations and requirements	The syllabus for our course Introduction to Ch. 1
F, 1/16	The nature of philosophy	
M, 1/19	Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday	
W, 1/21	Logic and critical thinking	Ann Baker, "Introduction to philosophical thinking" (just pp. 3-7)
F, 1/23	Plato on what philosophy is, and its value	Plato, <i>Apology</i>
M, 1/26	II. Knowledge and skepticism Introduction The classical analysis of knowledge	Introduction to Ch. 2
W, 1/28	Knowledge and the problem of the "external" world The project in Descartes' <i>Meditations</i>	René Descartes, Meditation I (pp. 46-49)
F, 1/30	Knowledge and the external world Meditation I, continued	
M, 2/2	Knowledge and the external world	René Descartes, Meditation II (pp. 49-52)
W, 2/4	Catch up/Review for Test 1	
F, 2/6	Test 1	
M, 2/9	III. Mind and body Introduction The mind-body problem Dualism—arguments in favor	Introduction to Ch. 3
W, 2/11	Dualism—criticisms	
F, 2/13	Celebration of Inquiry—Classes redirected	
M, 2/16	Materialism—arguments in favor Materialist views—logical behaviorism and the identity theory	J.J.C. Smart, "Sensations and brain processes"
W, 2/18	Materialist views—functionalism	
F, 2/20	Qualia and phenomenal consciousness The knowledge argument Review for Test 2	Frank Jackson, "What Mary didn't know"
M, 2/23	Test 2	
W, 2/25	IV. Freedom and determinism Introduction	Introduction to Ch. 4
F, 2/27	Class cancelled	

M, 3/2	Incompatibilism—Hard determinism	Robert Blatchford, “A defense of hard determinism”
W, 3/4	Incompatibilism—Libertarianism	C.A. Campbell, “In defence of free will”
F, 3/6	Compatibilism	W.T. Stace, “A compatibilist account of free will”
M, 3/9	Freedom and moral responsibility Catch up/review for Test 3	
W, 3/11	Test 3	
F, 3/13	V. Philosophy of religion Introduction	Introduction to Ch. 7
M, 3/16- F, 3/20	Spring break	
M, 3/23	The cosmological argument	Samuel Clarke, “The cosmological argument”
W, 3/25	The argument from design	William Paley, “The argument from design”
F, 3/27	The argument from design	
M, 3/30	Pascal’s wager	Walter Kaufmann, “Pascal’s wager”
W, 4/1	The problem of evil Review for Test 4	John Mackie, “Evil and omnipotence”
F, 4/3	Test 4	
M, 4/6	Ethics Introduction Ethical theory/theories of the nature of morality	Introduction to Ch. 8
W, 4/8	Cultural relativism	James Rachels, “The challenge of cultural relativism”
F, 4/10	Student holiday	
M, 4/13	Consequentialist ethical theories—hedonism and utilitarianism	John Stuart Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i> (just the excerpt from Ch. II, pp. 330-333)
W, 4/15	Deontological ethical theories—Kant’s ethics and rights-based views	Onora O’Neil, “The moral perplexities of famine relief” (just sections 22-26, pp. 368-370)
F, 4/17	Aretaic ethical theories Review for Test 5	Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> (just the excerpts from Books II and III, pp. 398-403)
M, 4/20	Test 5	
W, 4/22	Applied ethics, issue #1: War	Online reading: Vincent Verraro, “Principles of the just war” (URL http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/pol116/justwar.htm) Online reading: Jimmy Carter, “A just war or just a war” (URL http://www.cartercenter.org/news/documents/doc1249.html)
F, 4/24	Applied ethics, issue #2: Helping others/giving to charity	Peter Singer, “Famine, affluence, and morality”
M, 4/27	Applied ethics, issue #3: Animal rights/vegetarianism	Reading to be announced
W, 4/29	Animal rights/vegetarianism	Video presentation
F, 5/1	Catch up/Review for final exam	

Final exam: Monday, May 4, 1:30 p.m. in Edwards 256 (our regular classroom)