

### ***Philosophy 1101: Problems of Philosophy [3]***

Fall 2014 MWF 9:05-9:55 *location*: Storrs Hall, rm. 2

*Instructor*: Mitch Green *homepage*: [uconn.academia.edu/MitchGreen](http://uconn.academia.edu/MitchGreen)

*office*: Manchester Hall, rm. 304 *e-mail*: [mitchell.green@uconn.edu](mailto:mitchell.green@uconn.edu)

*office hours*: M 10:00-11:00; F 12:30-1:30, or by appointment.

Philosophy is the replacement of intellectual habit with intellectual discipline. One who knows how to philosophize is in possession not so much of a body of knowledge as a *skill*, namely, the skill to think critically and circumspectly about issues that science alone is unable to settle but that nevertheless daily confront anyone who purports to live an examined life.

This course is intended as a general and non-technical introduction to the main traditional problems of metaphysics, ethics, and the theory of knowledge as they are to be found in the writings of historical figures (such as Plato, Descartes, Pascal, Leibniz, Hume, and John Stuart Mill) and contemporary authors. Among our questions will be: Can we be rationally justified in believing in the existence of a divine being? How can the will be free in a world governed by physical law? Is the rightness or wrongness of an act a matter of the conventions of the society in which that act is performed or can morality transcend social norms? Is there a difference in principle between knowledge as it is conveyed by science and beliefs or opinions that we might form in other ways, for instance on the basis of intuition? Is the mind so related to the body that it could survive the latter's death or are "mind" and "brain" two ways of referring to the same thing? This course is intended for those making a first approach to the subject, either to gain an idea of its scope or in order to lay a foundation for further study.

*Prerequisites*: None.

*Requirements*: Two papers (the first 3-5 pages, the second 4-6 pages), a midterm, a final examination, and active participation in discussion. In addition, there may be occasional quizzes and short assignments to be completed in class. For both the midterm and final examinations, study questions are distributed well in advance, and the exam questions are drawn from the lists of study questions. Please make sure that you are aware of the scheduled final exam time for this course and that it does not conflict with any of your other commitments or plans.

*Preparing for class*: Expect to do on average about twenty pages of reading for each lecture. Be forewarned that reading philosophy, even when the reading assignment is short, can be hard work. Often the author assigned will be developing a sophisticated and subtle line of reasoning that requires your closest attention. It is for this reason a good idea to read each article or chapter at least twice, being sure to write down your questions for discussion during discussion section, lecture, or an office hour. To determine how many hours you should study for this class, multiply the number of hours spent in class by two: That gives six hours total as a minimum.

*Grading*: Paper #1 (20%), paper #2 (20%), midterm (20%), final examination (20%), class participation (20%). We do not grade on a curve, so it is possible for all students to do quite well. The midterm and final exams consist of questions closely related to ones that will have been distributed or made available on the web well in advance. We will pass out topics for both papers at least three weeks before they are due, so you will have ample time for revisions before turning in your final draft.

*Some Ground Rules for the Course*: (i) Please come to each lecture and discussion section with the reading assigned for that date already completed. (ii) Do not read newspapers, magazines, Facebook, etc., either in hard copy or in wireless form, in class. (iii) No food or drink unless it can be consumed quietly and discreetly. (iv) Cell phones and other electronic communications devices must be turned off during class. (v) We strongly encourage everyone's oral participation. Please be respectful of others' desire to speak, and of the variety of opinions that are likely to be expressed by students in this course.

*Using the Husky CT site*: Some of our work this term will be facilitated by the class homepage found on the Husky CT site. There you will find paper assignments, study questions, online course readings, and many other resources.

*Contacting the instructor*: The best way to contact the instructor is either in an office hour or via e-mail. Please note that we are not likely to respond to e-mails immediately: expect up to a 24-hour turn-around time, and longer over weekends. Note also that substantive philosophical issues are difficult to discuss over e-mail, so while we encourage you to raise big questions, we may ask you to do so in person.

*Accessibility*: The instructor's office in 304 Manchester is not accessible via ramp or elevator. Please do not let this deter you from coming to Green's office; he will be happy to find another location at which to meet you.

*Required texts:*

1. David Hume, <i>Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion</i> (Hackett: 978-0-87220-403-4)	\$8.00
2. Plato, <i>Five Dialogues</i> , 2 <sup>nd</sup> Ed. (Hackett: 978-0-87220-633-5)	\$9.00
3. John Stuart Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i> , 2 <sup>nd</sup> Ed. (Hackett: 978-0-87220-605-2)	\$5.50
4. Rene Descartes, <i>Meditations on First Philosophy</i> , 3 <sup>rd</sup> Ed. (Hackett: 978-0-87220-192-7)	\$8.50
5. Mitchell Green, <i>Engaging Philosophy: A Brief Introduction</i> (Hackett 978-0-87220-796-7)	\$12.00
	-----
total:	\$43 (approx)

These may be purchased either in hard copy or as e-books.

*Policy for late work:* We take off 1/3 of a letter grade for each day that a paper is late. Missed exams cannot be re-taken.

*What you may expect to get out of this class:* As stated in the initial paragraph of this syllabus, our aim includes a survey of some of the main problems constituting the field of philosophy. So in part you may hope to get from this class a sense of what philosophy is “about”. However, we strive to go beyond this because one of the most important features distinguishing philosophy from other academic pursuits is that it is a *skill* and not just a body of knowledge. *Philosophizing* is a skill of critical and self-conscious reasoning, and its subject matter is unlimited. One of the reasons that philosophy majors do considerably better on the LSAT’s than all other majors except physics is that they are taught to develop and critically appraise lines of reasoning irrespective of the subject matter. This is why philosophizing is the ideal “transferrable skill”, and one of our aims is to help you to cultivate this skill.

*A bit more about the instructor:* I received my doctorate in Philosophy in 1993, and before commencing work toward that degree I studied a bit in England and before that in California. (My B.A. is from U.C. Berkeley, so if you are feeling a bit overwhelmed by the size of this University be assured that I once went through something like this shock myself.) My research centers around issues having to do with communication, emotion, and cognition, and I study these topics primarily from a conceptual rather than from a primarily empirical point of view. My work does, however, spill over into linguistics, psychology, and evolutionary biology. (More about this research may be found on my homepage the url of which is above.) I teach everything from advanced research seminars to this course and lots of things in between. Although some faculty see teaching introductory courses as something of a chore, I always enjoy teaching Introduction to Philosophy and I doubt that this term will change that attitude. In particular, I find it exciting to expose intelligent and eager people to fascinating questions they’ve never considered before, or at least never considered in the way we shall do here. I should mention that I get nervous if I lecture too long without hearing what students have to say, and I have found that even in our large lecture it is possible to have some class discussion. For this reason I encourage you to raise questions during class if you think that our answering them might enhance your or others’ learning experience. Also, please make use of my office hours or speak with me after class if only to introduce yourself. I’m always delighted to get to know my students, and look forward to getting to know you.

*Special situations, etc.:* If you have a special situation concerning learning needs that require accommodation, or that you would simply like us to know about, please contact us as soon as possible. We will make every effort to aid you.

**COURSE SCHEDULE (39 meetings). The reading listed for a given date is to be done *by that day*.**

- 8/25 Introductory lecture: get acquainted, review our syllabus and course mechanics, and get a bird's eye view of our subject.
- 8/27 Reasoning: on arguments and their assessment.  
Reading: Green, *Engaging Philosophy*, Chapters One and Two (pp. 1-29)
- 8/29 Further into reasoning and argumentation:  
Reading: Green, *Engaging Philosophy*, Chapter Two (re-read).
- \*\*\*
- 9/1 **No class meeting: Labor Day.**
- 9/3 Philosophy and religion: Are there rational grounds for theism?  
Reading: William Paley, 'The Argument from Design' (Husky)
- 9/5 The Cosmological Argument and the Argument from Design.  
Reading: Samuel Clarke, 'A Modern Formulation of the Cosmological Argument' (Husky)  
Aquinas, 'The five ways' (Husky)  
Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, Parts I-III (pp. 1-27)
- \*\*\*
- 9/8 The Ontological Argument  
Reading: Anselm, 'The Ontological Argument' (Husky)  
Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, Parts IV-VIII (pp. 28-53)
- 9/10 Practical reasoning: preparing for Pascal.
- 9/12 You bet your life: Might faith be rational even if God's existence cannot be proven?  
Reading: Pascal, 'The Wager' (Husky)  
Cargile, 'Pascal's Wager' (Husky)  
Green, *Engaging Philosophy*, Chapter Three (pp. 31-51)
- Assignments for Paper #1 distributed.**
- \*\*\*
- 9/15 God and evil: How could God have allowed this world to contain as much evil as it does?  
Reading: Leibniz, 'God, Evil, and Best of All Possible Worlds' (Husky)  
Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, Parts IX-XII (pp. 54-89)
- 9/17 More on the problem of evil  
Reading: Adams, 'Must God Create the Best?' (Husky)  
Green, *Engaging Philosophy*, Chapter Three (pp. 51-65)
- 9/19 **No class meeting (Green in Norway)**
- \*\*\*
- 9/22 Might God have made morality?  
Reading: Plato, *Euthyphro*
- 9/24 Could the state be the source of morality?  
Reading: Plato, *Crito*
- 9/26 Ethical relativism  
Reading: Green, *Engaging Philosophy* (82-88)
- \*\*\*
- 9/29 The utilitarian view introduced.  
Reading: Bentham, 'The Principle of Utility' (Husky)
- 10/1 Mill's version of utilitarianism: Socrates dissatisfied or a pig satisfied?  
Reading: Mill, *Utilitarianism*, Chapters 1-3 (pp. 1-33)
- 10/3 Mill continued  
Reading: Mill, *Utilitarianism*, Chapters 1-3 (pp. 34-88)
- \*\*\*
- 10/6 Critics of utilitarianism: Does the theory really capture our sense of what is right?  
Reading: Carritt, 'Criticisms of Utilitarianism' (Husky)  
Smart, 'Extreme and Restricted Utilitarianism' (Husky)
- 10/8 Overview of utilitarianism and its critics.
- 10/10 **MIDTERM EXAMINATION: Bring two bluebooks and two pens.**  
**Paper #1 due by 5 pm.**
- \*\*\*

- 10/13 If not utility, then what?  
Reading: Williams, 'Utilitarianism and Integrity' (Husky)  
Green, *Engaging Philosophy*, Chapter Four
- 10/15 A Kantian alternative  
Reading: Nagel, 'War and Massacre' (Husky)  
Green, *Engaging Philosophy*, Chapter Four
- 10/17 The Kantian approach refined.  
Reading: O'Neill, 'Kantian Approaches to Some Famine Problems' (Husky)
- \*\*\*
- 10/20 On knowledge: Plato and what you were born with  
Reading: Plato, *Meno*
- 10/22 On knowledge: Descartes' doubts and his inference, *cogito, ergo sum*.  
Reading: Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy* (Meditation I).
- 10/24 Descartes on what he is  
Reading: Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy* (Meditations I-II).
- \*\*\*
- 10/27 Descartes on clear and distinct perception  
Reading: *Meditations on First Philosophy* (Meditations II-III).
- 10/29 Descartes on the separation of mind and body  
Reading: *Meditations on First Philosophy* (Meditations VI).  
*Assignments for Paper #2 distributed.*
- 10/31 No class meeting (Green in Portland)
- \*\*\*
- 11/3 Contemporary Challenges to Dualism  
Reading: Ryle, 'Descartes' Myth' (Husky)
- 11/5 Challenges continued  
Reading: Armstrong, 'The Nature of Mind,' (Husky)
- 11/7 A Computational Approach  
Reading: Turing: 'Computing Machinery and Intelligence' (Husky)
- \*\*\*
- 11/10 Can science fully account for consciousness?  
Reading: Jackson, 'What Mary Didn't Know' (Husky)  
Green, *Engaging Philosophy*, Chapter Five
- 11/12 Freedom of action and freedom of will.  
Reading: Green, *Engaging Philosophy*, Chapter 6.1-6.7
- 11/14 Experimental Approaches to Free Will  
Reading: Wegner and Wheatley, 'Apparent Mental Causation' (Husky)
- \*\*\*
- 11/17 Life, death and personhood.  
Reading: Locke, 'Of Identity and Diversity' (Husky)  
Plato, *Phaedo*  
Reid, 'Of Identity' (Husky)
- 11/19 Other accounts of personhood  
Reading: Hume, 'Of Personal Identity' (Husky)  
*Engaging Philosophy*, Chapter Seven
- 11/21 A non-Western perspective on the self  
Reading: Siderits, 'Buddhist Theories of the Self' (Husky)
- \*\*\*
- 11/23-9 Thanksgiving recess; no class meetings
- \*\*\*
- 12/1 Life's Meaning: What is the Question?  
Reading: Wolf, 'Meaning in Life and Why it Matters,' (Husky)
- 12/3 Life's Meaning cont.  
Reading: Taylor, 'The Meaning of Life' (Husky)
- 12/5 Final class meeting: Is life meaningless?  
*Paper #2 due by 5 pm*

**12/10, 8-10 a.m.** Final examination (provisional date). Please come equipped with three bluebooks and plenty of writing utensils. The exam will be closed-book and closed-note. **Note:** Please make sure *now* that this time for the examination does not create a conflict for you in any way.