

Gonzaga-in-Florence - Summer 2009

PHIL 412: Modern and Contemporary Philosophy, Dr. Liu

SYLLABUS

Course Description

This course is a survey of some of the influential philosophical works from the 16th century to the 20th century. This period of the history of philosophy is called modern and contemporary philosophy. In the 16th century, Western philosophy had no longer submitted itself to medieval theology. Philosophers could more freely appeal to human reason in pursuit of truths concerning human nature, science, ethics, religion, the cosmos, political systems and the like. Philosophical investigations started to focus on the foundation of scientific knowledge (along with its ramifications) and the cognitive conditions of the knowing subject. Since then, philosophers have produced numerous works for or against this conception of modernity and its ramification. This course is designed for non-philosophy majors to help them understand some important and difficult works of modern and contemporary philosophy. We will begin with an introduction to **Renaissance humanism**. Then we will read selected works of French Rationalist Descartes, British Empiricist Hume, German Idealists Kant and Hegel, anti-idealists Mill and Marx, American pragmatists Peirce and James, Existentialist Sartre, and Analytic philosopher Ayer respectively. This course will enrich students' knowledge of the history of philosophy and improve students' skills of presentation, argumentation and critical analysis. The course will combine the professor's lecture, students' presentation and class discussion.

Requirements

- I. Homework: It is important that everyone be prepared for each class---that each of you has read the assigned material and is ready to contribute to the discussion. In order to help you do so, at the beginning of each class you should have in hand either (1) two questions about the reading for that day, or (2) a point of interest or disagreement about the reading for that day. Your questions should not be one-liners. You should explain them. Similarly, you should explain why you find a certain point to be problematic, interesting, novel, neat, etc. You are required to turn in 15 preparations (one point each) during the semester in order to get a grade "B" or above. You should turn in your work at the beginning of class. A preparation will either get one point or get zero point.
- II. Presentation: In order to develop your ability to think critically and to articulate your opinions, you will be asked to do one twenty-minute presentation on an assigned material. You can be creative of how to present the material, but your presentation must answer the following questions. 1. What is the major issue that an assigned reading is concerned with? You should pinpoint the central issue. 2. What is the author's position on the issue? You should show that you can accurately summarize a given author's thesis on the issue and that you understand the author's method of approach to the issue. 3. What is the author's

major argument? You are supposed to show that you can analytically identify the author's reason to support his thesis. 4. What is your opinion on the reading? You must show that you have given critical thought to the reading.

III. You will be required to take three tests for this course. The format of the tests includes multiple choice, short answer and essay question.

GRADING

Your final grade in this course will be determined according to the following scale:

Homework (preparation)	15%
Presentation	10%
First Test	30%
Second Test	35%
Last Test	10%
Total	100%

90 - 100 = A (90-94 = A-)
80 - 89 = B (80-82 = B- / 87-89 = B+)
70 - 79 = C (70-72 = C- / 77-79 = C+)
60 - 69 = D (67-69 = D+)
0 - 59 = F

Textbooks:

1. Required: *Classics of Philosophy, Vol. II: Modern and Contemporary Philosophy*, ed. by Louis P Pojman, Oxford University Press
2. Handouts via Blackboard
3. Optional: *Looking At Philosophy: The Unbearable Heaviness of Philosophy Made Lighter* by Donald Palmer, the fourth edition

Internet sources:

Modern Philosophy: <http://www.class.uidaho.edu/mickelsen/readings.htm>

Contemporary Philosophy:
http://carbon.cudenver.edu/~mryder/itc_data/postmodern.html#readings

Reference: Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy <http://plato.stanford.edu/>

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE AND READING ASSIGNMENT

- 5/18 Syllabus and Introduction
- 5/19 Humanism and the Italian Renaissance Handout (via Blackboard) pp.191-204
- 5/20 The scientific revolution Handout (via Blackboard) pp. 204-221
- 5/21 Descartes: *First Meditation* and *Second Meditation* pp.463-470
- 5/25 Descartes: *Third Meditation* and *Six Meditation* pp. 471-477 and pp. 483-490
- 5/26 Hume: *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding* pp.670-671 and pp. 676-682
- 5/27 Hume: *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding* pp.682-690
- 5/28 Review and First Test
- 6/1 Kant: *Prolegomena* pp.771-784
- 6/2 No class
- 6/3 Kant: *Prolegomena* pp. 784-804
- 6/4 Kant: *Prolegomena* pp. 804-820
- 6/8 Hegel: *Phenomenology of Spirit* pp. 857-863 and Handout
- 6/9 Mill: *On Liberty* pp.913-914 and pp.945-963
- 6/10 Mill: *The Subjection of Women* pp.981-987
- 6/11 Marx: pp. 995-1013
- 6/15 Continue
- 6/16 Review and Second Test
- 6/17 Peirce: pp. 1052-1061
- 6/18 James: pp 1062-1063 and pp.1070-1084
- 6/22 Sartre: pp. 1201-1202 and pp. 1213-1217
- 6/23 Ayer: pp.1218-1225
- 6/24 No class
- 6/25 Adjustment and Review
- 6/26 Final