

Philosophy 303

Human Nature

MWF 3–4

Instructor: Malte Willer
Office: WAG 427
Office hours: MW 2–3
Email: willer@mail.utexas.edu

Reader: Brian Cutter
Office: WAG 406
Office hours: T 1–3
Email: cutterbc@mail.utexas.edu

Course Website: http://www.maltewiller.net/?page_id=5

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course provides an introduction to philosophical questions which arise from the ways in which we, as people, take ourselves to be unique or special in the world. Common sense conceptions of human nature give rise to issues in the study of value, knowledge and reality. Many people say that life has a purpose, but is that really the case, and if so, what is it? We take ourselves to be agents capable of freely choosing between good and evil, but is there a free will, a good and and evil? It seems as if our knowledge increases every day, but is there knowledge in the first place and if so, by what mechanism is it achieved? Readings from the history of philosophy will provide us with a better understanding of these questions and—if we are lucky—with some possible answers.

A close reading of key texts and an analysis of the arguments contained in them will be the two pedagogic foci of the course.

University E-Mail Policy: All students should become familiar with the University's official e-mail student notification policy at:

<http://www.utexas.edu/its/policies/emailnotify.php>

Email exchanges between instructors and students should be considered official communication and, so, formal communication. Please write emails accordingly.

SYLLABUS AND ASSIGNMENTS

We will follow the syllabus as closely as possible. Please do the assigned reading before the lecture discussion of it. There is a substantial amount of reading for this course. I strongly encourage you not to fall behind the syllabus. Please bring with you to class the texts with that day's reading assignment.

BOOKS

1. Steven M. Cahn (ed.), *Classics of Western Philosophy*, 7th edition, Hackett Publishing
2. Any further materials will be available on Blackboard (online)

GRADES

Grades will be determined as follows:

1. 4 in-class exams increasing in weight: 15%, 20%, 25%, 30% respectively
2. 2 response papers: 5% each

Exams will consist of both short answer and essay questions.

Response papers will consist of short discussions (2-3 pages) of an assigned reading, to be submitted on the day that reading is discussed. The choice of reading is up to you, but at least one of them must be done by **Friday October 16**, the second by **Wednesday November 25**. These discussions should express your personal reflections upon the reading for that session. They are meant to express your thoughtful reactions to the readings before they are discussed in class. Attending the lectures will be crucial for getting a good feeling for how to write a good response paper.

MAKEUPS

If you have a valid medical, religious, or some other reason for missing a deadline or exam, please notify me as far in advance as possible. Please note, however, that it is the policy of the University of Texas at Austin that you must notify your instructor at least fourteen days prior to the classes scheduled on dates you will be absent to observe a religious holiday. In order to reschedule any missed exam, you are expected to provide me with the appropriate paperwork within 48 hours of your absence. I will not give incompletes.

SCHOLASTIC DISHONESTY

Scholastic Dishonesty on any assignment will result in a failing grade (F) for that assignment which may not be dropped. Any further scholastic dishonesty will result in a referral to the office of the dean. Scholastic Dishonesty includes any kind of cheating. Students are expected to abide by the standards of academic conduct of the University of Texas at Austin, as detailed at:

<http://www.utexas.edu/student/registrar/catalogs/gi06-07/app/appc11.html#Subchapter.11-800>

DISABILITIES

Students who require special accommodations need to get a letter that documents his or her disability from the Services for Students with Disabilities area of the Office of the Dean of Students. Please then bring this letter to me at the beginning of the semester, when we can discuss your individual needs. If you have any questions, please contact me. More information can also be found at:

<http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/ssd/>

ROADMAP

- Week 1** Introduction to philosophical inquiry
08/26 Arguments
08/28 Analysis
- Week 2** Early Platonic dialogues on piety, virtue and knowledge
08/31 Plato's *Euthyphro*
09/02 Plato's *Meno*, 70a–79e
09/04 Plato's *Meno*, 80a–99e
- Week 3** Why should anyone play fair? Introducing the problem of justice
09/07 Labor Day
09/09 Plato's *Crito*
09/11 Plato's *Republic*, Book I 327a–331d, Book II 357a–367e
- Week 4** Justice in the state and in the soul
09/14 Plato's *Republic*, Book II 368a–376c, Book III 412b–417b,
Book IV 427d–434e
09/16 Plato's *Republic*, Book IV 435a–445e
09/18 Plato's *Republic*, Book VI 503a–511d, Book VII 514a–521b
- Week 5** The Human Good
09/21 Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, Books I, X
09/23 Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, Books II–III
09/25 Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, Books VIII–IX
- Week 6** Wrongdoing and the problem of freedom
09/28 **Exam I**
09/30 Augustine's *On Free Choice of the Will*, Books I–II
10/02 Augustine's *On Free Choice of the Will*, Book III
- Week 7** Egoism
10/05 Hobbes's *Leviathan*, Chapters I–VI
10/07 Hobbes's *Leviathan*, Chapters XIII–XV
10/09 Hobbes's *Leviathan*, Chapters XIII–XV continued
- Week 8** The foundations of knowledge and mind-body dualism
10/12 Descartes's *Meditations*, Mediation I
10/14 Descartes's *Meditations*, Mediations II–III
10/16 Descartes's *Meditations*, Mediation IV
Last day to hand in 1st response paper

- Week 9** Humean Nature
 10/19 **Exam II**
 10/21 Hume's *Treatise*, section I
 10/23 Hume's *Treatise*, section II
- Week 10** The proper limitations of liberty
 10/26 Hume's *Treatise*, section III
 10/28 Mill's *On Liberty*, section I
 10/30 Mill's *On Liberty*, section II
- Week 11** What should I do? A utilitarianist answer
 11/02 Mill's *Utilitarianism*, section I
 11/04 Mill's *Utilitarianism*, sections II, III
 11/06 Mill's *Utilitarianism*, section V
- Week 12** Civilization as a perverting force
 11/09 Rousseau's *Second Discourse*, part I
 11/11 Rousseau's *Second Discourse*, part II
 11/13 **Exam III**
- Week 13** Resentment and the slave revolt in morality
 11/16 Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Introduction
 11/18 Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals*, First Treatise
 11/20 Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Second Treatise
- Week 14** Internal drives, external threats
 11/23 Freud's *Civilization and its Discontents*, chapters 1–4
 11/25 Freud's *Civilization and its Discontent*, chapters 5–8
Last day to hand in 2nd response paper
 11/27 Thanksgiving
- Week 15** Existence versus essence
 11/30 Sartre's *The Humanism of Existentialism*
 12/02 Sartre's *The Humanism of Existentialism* continued
 12/04 Wrapping up

Final exam: December 12, 2:00–5:00 pm