

Instructor: Dr. Alan Rhoda
 Office: CDC 422
 Hours: MWF 1:00-2:00 and by appt.
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Course Description

Of all the academic disciplines, philosophy asks the deepest and most far-reaching questions, questions of fundamental importance to every aspect of human existence: religion and the meaning of life, science and knowledge, ethics and politics. This course is intended to be a broad introduction to the discipline of philosophy and to the methods of philosophical inquiry. After getting a broad feel for philosophy through the writings of Plato, we will consider four important areas of philosophical study: (1) truth, knowledge, and the challenge of skepticism; (2) ethics and morality; (3) the existence of God and the rationality of religious belief; and (4) free will and determinism. Along the way, we will discuss how positions on these issues relate to each other in terms of the two dominant worldviews of modern Western culture: theism and naturalism.

Required Texts

Plato, *Five Dialogues*, 2nd edition (Hackett, 2002)
 Louis P. Pojman, ed., *Philosophy: The Quest for Truth*, 6th edition (Oxford, 2005)
 Additional readings will be made available on the Internet.

Course Work & Grading

Comprehension / Reflection Questions.....	40%
Midterm Exam	25%
Final Exam	25%
Participation.....	10%

Grades mean the following:

- A = exceptional work, genuinely outstanding
- B = above average work but not clearly superior
- C = average work for this course, the performance level I expect
- D = below average work
- E = unacceptable work

Comprehension / Reflection Questions

In connection with the reading assignments you will be given a list of questions to answer (typically 4 to 5). Most of the questions (typically 3 to 4) will be comprehension questions answerable from the text. A few (typically 1 to 2) will be reflection questions that require you to do your own thinking on issues raised by the text. Answers are to be *typed* and will be collected the following class.

Apart from *brief* quotations from the text when appropriate, answers to comprehension questions should be stated *in your own words* (excessive quoting from the text will be penalized). Some answers may be obvious but others will require a careful reading (and often a re-reading) of the text; so get an early start and give yourself plenty of time to do each assignment. Answers to comprehension questions will be graded on both *accuracy* and *thoroughness*. Answers to reflection questions should exhibit careful thought. Don't just make dogmatic assertions; try to justify your ideas and engage with possible objections.

Course Website

Readings and questions will be posted on my website (<http://www.alanrhoda.net>) on the day they are assigned.

Exams

There will be two exams: a midterm and a final. Format will consist of a combination of true/false, multiple-choice, fill-in-the-blank, and short answer questions. A general overview will be given the class before the exam.

Participation and Attendance

The success of this class depends to a great extent on your attendance, preparation, and involvement in class discussion. I will make it a point throughout the semester to call on each person more than once. If I ask you a question about the readings, I expect you to be able to give an informed answer that demonstrates that you have

thoughtfully done the readings. Lack of preparation will lower your participation grade. I will also take role at the beginning of each class. More than two unexcused absences and/or excessive tardiness will deduct from your participation grade. At the fourth unexcused absence you will get a 0 for participation.

Excuses and Late Work

Time extensions or make up exams will be given only in the case of serious illness or other extenuating circumstances (like a death in the family). In *all* cases, appropriate documentary evidence (e.g., note from a doctor on official stationary, or a funeral program or bulletin) must be produced by the student. Any make up exams will have to work around *my* schedule. Contact me ASAP if you need an extension or a make up. The maximum extension or makeup deadline *for any reason* will be one week from the original due date / exam date. If you know ahead of time that you cannot make it to class when a paper or assignment is due, either send it to me as an e-mail attachment (Microsoft Word preferred) or leave it for me at the Philosophy Department (CDC 4) on or before the beginning of class on the due date. Late assignments will be docked 10% for every calendar day after the due date. I will not accept anything more than one week late. Anything submitted after I collect papers in class counts as one day late. Day two starts at midnight.

Academic Integrity

Everything that you turn in with your name on it must be your own work. If you draw ideas from other sources, they must be properly acknowledged. Plagiarism will not be tolerated. If you are suspected of cheating you will be reported to the appropriate student disciplinary authorities. If these suspicions are corroborated, your name will then be reported to the other members of the philosophy department and you will be failed for the course. I have caught students at it in the past. Don't try it. It is immoral, it cheapens your education, and it is not worth the risk.

Students with Disabilities

If you have a documented disability that may require assistance, you should contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) located in the Reynolds Student Services Complex, room 137. You can contact the DRC at 895-0866 (Voice), 895-0652 (TDD), 895-0651 (Fax), or via the Internet at <http://www.unlv.edu/studentlife/drc>.

Campus Writing Center

One-on-one or small group assistance with writing is available free of charge to students at the Writing Center, located in CDC-301. Although drop-in times are sometimes available, students with appointments will receive priority assistance. Appointments may be made in person or by calling 895-3908. When you go to your appointment, bring your Rebel ID Card, a copy of the assignment specifications, and two copies of any written drafts that you may have completed on the assignment.

Schedule

Week	Topic	
	Monday	Wednesday
1	Course Introduction; What is "philosophy"?	Intro to Socrates & Plato; Plato's <i>Euthyphro</i>
2	Labor Day (no class)	Plato's <i>Apology</i>
3	The concept of truth	The problem of skepticism I – Descartes
4	The problem of skepticism II – Hume	Replying to skepticism
5	Introduction to ethics	Moral relativism vs. Moral objectivism
6	Moral relativism vs. Moral objectivism (cont.)	Plato's <i>Meno</i> – Can we have ethical knowledge?
7	Why be moral? Plato and the Ring of Gyges	Ethical egoism – Is ethics all about me?
8	Midterm Exam	Aristotle's ethics of virtue
9	Kant's ethics of duty	Mill's ethics of results
10	The concept of God	Existence of God I – Cosmological Argument
11	Existence of God II – Design Argument	Existence of God III – Moral Argument
12	Existence of God IV – Deductive Problem of Evil	TBA
13	Existence of God V – Evidential Problem of Evil	The Rationality of Religious Belief
14	Free Will and Determinism I	Free Will and Determinism II
15	Free Will and Determinism III	Wrap-up; Review for Final
16	Final Exam Week	

NOTE: This schedule is subject to revision at the discretion of the instructor.