

Philosophy A/2015-16

Steven Goldberg

Introduction:

Philosophy is a varied, often-changing discipline, one without a fixed body of information that can be mastered easily and all at once. Instead, a grasp of philosophy's concerns, methods, and traditions demands the persistent searching that characterizes the doing of philosophy. In keeping with this description of philosophy as an activity rather than a subject matter, the class encourages careful critical inquiry, debate, and reflection upon perennial questions about the human condition and our most fundamental beliefs.

The class includes readings from philosophers, classical and modern, as well as short works of literature and films that explore imaginatively philosophical issues. Although the course must be partly historical--philosophers nearly always work with one eye fixed on their own traditions--it will be organized around a set of central themes or issues: ethics, justice and the state, free will and determinism, the rationality of religious belief, the problem of evil, the meaning of human existence, the mind-body problem, personal identity, artificial intelligence, knowledge of other minds and the external world, the nature of truth.

The class has five basic objectives:

- To acquaint the student with the ideas, methods, and issues central to philosophy;
- To provide students with an intellectual foundation for the study of their cultural heritage;
- To invite self-reflection and an inquiring attitude into perennial questions;
- To encourage shared inquiry through good will, careful listening, and thoughtful conversation about the issues of the course;
- To sharpen students' critical thinking and ability both to analyze and write arguments with clarity and precision.

Readings:

Pojman (ed.), *Philosophy: The Quest for Truth (8th edition)*

Numerous photocopied readings (about half the material for the course)

Topics

1. Ethics: relativism, egoism, utilitarianism (Mill), deontological ethics (Kant), virtue ethics (Aristotle), applied ethics (affirmative action, bio-ethics)
2. Free Will and Determinism: fatalism, hard determinism, compatibilism, libertarianism
3. Philosophy of Mind: mind-body problem, personal identity, artificial intelligence
4. Epistemology: nature and limits of knowledge
5. Philosophy of Religion: rationality of religious belief, problem of evil, meaning of human existence
6. Political Philosophy: distributive justice (Rawls, Nozick), democracy, rights and liberties

Course Expectations and Evaluation:

Careful reading of all assigned material is crucial for both a firm grasp of the issues and ability to contribute meaningfully to class discussion. In addition to the daily reading, students will be assigned periodic **formal essays** on major topics each quarter; **short essay tests and a final**. Study questions distributed throughout the semester will guide students through the readings and arguments for each topic. Students also will be evaluated for **class participation** (50 pts. or half the value of an essay) for each quarter grade.

Participation and Discussion:

Expectations for Class Discussion

Discussion is group inquiry. We will try to understand our readings and reach answers to the important questions they raise. Group inquiry only works when the insights of many people are made public. It requires that these perspectives be received with respect but subjected to respectful scrutiny and criticism. For these reasons I want you to feel free and encouraged to speak your mind even when you suspect that others may disagree. You should reflect before speaking, build on previous comments, help discover the meaning that others are struggling to express, be open to persuasion, and bend to the weight of evidence and reasoning. You must be prepared to substantiate your factual and textual claims, to defend your value judgments, to show the connection between your premises and conclusions, and to use the diversity of insights and perspectives in the class to advance your understanding of the readings and their themes. The ultimate premise of class discussion is that each of us can learn from each of us. If you accept the principle that discussion is group inquiry, then your uncertainty about a question is a good reason to speak, not a good reason to remain silent. I will try to maintain an atmosphere in which each student's contribution is welcomed and respected and otherwise look primarily to the quality of oral contributions. If you want respect, insights, seriousness, and a healthy balance of speaking and listening from others, you must give the same to them.

Grading Policy

Papers must be turned in during class on the assigned due date. If you must be absent, have a friend or family member deliver the paper to the Welcome Center or email your paper no later than the period it is due. Late papers have four consequences: 1) a one-grade reduction, 2) no comments, 3) slow return, 4) and no opportunity to rewrite for a higher grade. Students who turn in their papers on time may revise for a higher grade. (The old grade is erased and replaced with the higher grade from the revised paper.)

Topics, Issues, Activities, Readings, and Assignments

The following represents a sampling of possible choices for readings and assignments. Please don't read this section as a blow by blow account of the course. You will be assigned some readings that don't appear here and won't be assigned some that do.

Ethics and Distributive Justice

- **Issue: Introduction to normative ethics: preliminary discussion of criteria for distinguishing right from wrong**

Activity: Raging River Moral Dilemma; Worksheet on Nature of Morality

- **Issue: Ethical Relativism: Is morality relative to cultural norms?**

Activity: Analysis of anthropological cases; assessment of arguments from readings on the objectivity of moral values

Readings:

Bambrough, "Proof" (H)
Benedict, "A Defense of Moral Relativism" (H)
Edgerton, "Sick Societies" (H)
Fluehr-Lobban, "Cultural Relativism and Universal Rights" (H)
Harman, "Ethics and Observation" (H)
Mackie, "The Subjectivity of Values"
Miner, "Looking for the Nacirema" (H)
Perlez, "Uganda's Women: Children, Drudgery, and Pain" (H)
Pojman, *Who's to Judge* (H)
Rachels, "Morality is Not Relative" (H)
Smith, "Moral Realism" (H)
Sumner, "A Defense of Cultural Relativism" (H)

- **Issue: Egoism: Is morality reducible to self-interest? Should morality be reducible to self-interest? Why should I be moral? Why shouldn't I be selfish?**

Activity: Prisoner's Dilemma, screening of *Crimes and Misdemeanors*, analysis of cases and readings

Readings:

Plato, *Ring of Gyges* (from *Republic*)
Rand, *In Defense of Ethical Egoism*
Rachels, *A Critique of Ethical Egoism*
Butler, "Benevolence and Self-Interest" (H)
Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene* (H)

- **Issue: Utilitarianism: Should the morality of an action be judged according to its social utility or long-term consequences for society?**

Activities: Happiness Box thought experiment, analysis of cases, application of criteria for evaluating an ethical theory, use of video clips (from Michael Sandel's *Justice*) to test Mill's distinction between "high" and "low" pleasures

Readings:

Mill, *Utilitarianism*
Harris, *Moral Theories*

Singer, “The Singer Solution to World Poverty” (H)

- **Issue: Deontological Ethics: Should the morality of an action be judged according to the individual’s motive of duty rather than the desire to achieve the greatest happiness for the greatest number?**

Activities: Analysis and application of Kant’s First and Second Categorical Imperatives to cases (e.g., Inquiring Murderer, capital punishment, *Casablanca*, bioethics, just conduct in war)

Readings:

Kant, *The Moral Law*

Harris, *Moral Theories* (H)

Nagel, “War and Massacre”

- **Issue: Virtue Ethics: Should morality be judged not in terms of the motive or consequence of an action but according to the cultivation of excellence in individual character?**

Activities: Students create their own “Aristotelian” table of virtues; screening of *The Lives of Others* on what it means to be a “good man”; close reading of Plato’s *Meno*; students examine the meaning and limits of forgiveness in light of Wiesenthal’s personal story in *Sunflower*; Can and should “nature” be improved: debate on ethics of genetic enhancement.

Readings:

Aristotle, *The Ethics of Virtue*

Frankfurt, *Reasons of Love* (H)

Green, *Babies by Design* (H)

Plato, *The Meno* (H)

Sandel, “The Case Against Perfection” (H)

Wiesenthal, *Sunflower* (H)

- **Issue: How do Nietzsche’s genealogy of morals and E.O. Wilson’s sociobiology challenge the authority of traditional ethical theories? What is the significance of this challenge to moral and religious authority?**

Activities: Close analysis of Nietzsche’s *Gay Science*; discussion of the role of science in understanding morality

Readings:

Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* (H), *Genealogy of Morals* (H)

Wilson, *Morality as Biology* (H)

- **What is distributive justice? How should society’s benefits and burdens be distributed in the interest of fairness?**

Activity: Analysis of Rawls and Nozick; Rawls Game; discussion of case studies (e.g., surrogate motherhood, military service; preferential admissions debate)

Readings:

Packet on Hopwood and Bakke case: forward and backward-looking arguments,

Nozick, *The Entitlement Theory of Justice* (H)

Rawls, *Justice as Fairness* (H)

Study Questions on Ethical Relativism

1. How do anthropologists such as Ruth Benedict draw from the social sciences to defend ethical relativism? How do ethical relativists account for change in a society's norms over time?
2. What absurd or ridiculous consequences arguably arise from adopting the stance of ethical relativism?
3. How is it possible for social scientists such to challenge ethical relativism without losing professional objectivity or risking ethnocentrism?
4. How do Mackie and Harman challenge belief in objective moral truths?
5. How do Smith and Brambrough defend belief in objective moral truths?

Study Questions on Ethical Egoism:

1. What kind of good is justice, according to Glaucon? How does Glaucon use the ring of Gyges scenario to defend his view of the origin and nature of justice? What kind of good is justice, according to Socrates? How does Socrates challenge Glaucon by offering an alternative picture of justice?
2. Evaluate the argument that egoism is comparable to racism.
3. What ethical questions raised by the film also appear in Plato's story of the ring of Gyges? Compare and contrast Plato's treatment of the ring of invisibility with Allen's. Does the film support the argument of Glaucon or echo Socrates' reply? Does the film offer any fresh insights into the question of whether we should be "moral" if we can act with impunity? Does the film support the view that we are incapable of acting altruistically?

Study Questions on Utilitarianism:

1. Explain the objection to Bentham's version of utilitarianism that it is a theory "worthy of swine". Next, explain why Mill holds that a proper form of utilitarianism needs to take into account the fact that some pleasures are "higher" than others. What is Mill's test for determining which pleasures are "higher" than others? What, finally, does Mill mean in suggesting that it is better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a pig satisfied? Assess Mill's justification for distinguishing higher from lower pleasures.
2. Discuss three of the following objections to Mill's utilitarianism: (a) unrealistically high moral standard, (b) difficulties associated with calculation, (c) conflict between utility and both rights and justice, (d) mistaken belief that happiness is the sole intrinsic good? Use examples where possible.
3. Evaluate utilitarianism as a normative theory by applying the following four criteria: (1) usefulness (theory is action-guiding and can be meaningfully applied to specific cases), (2) plausibility (theory is not far-fetched, unrealistic, or far-removed from intuition and common sense), (3) consistency (claims are internally consistent with one another), and (4) justification (a cogent argument supports the theory's chief claims).

Study Questions on Kantian Ethics:

1. How does Kant argue against Mill's view that happiness is intrinsically valuable and the sole purpose of morality? Your explanation should address his concept of "good will" and the distinction between "hypothetical imperative" and "categorical imperative."
2. What role does freedom (or autonomy) and reason play in Kant's conception of moral duty? Explain in light of his conception of the categorical imperative. Next, show how Kant's procedure for determining our duty applies to two of the four cases discussed in the text (e.g., suicide, promising to repay a loan).
3. How does the case of the inquiring murderer invite objections to Kant's conception of moral obligation? Can these objections be met without abandoning Kant's insistence upon following moral law?
4. Why do utilitarians favor deterrence and Kantians retribution as the chief purpose of legal punishment? Also explain why Kant believes capital punishment is consistent with the second formulation of the categorical imperative.
5. Apply the two formulations of the categorical imperative to the case of the Agolas who conceived one child to save the life of another. According to the modified procedure, was their decision morally permissible? Explain.

Distributive Justice: Theory and Cases

1. Explain Nozick's libertarian theory of distributive justice, including his core principles (e.g., just acquisition of holdings), the appropriate role of government, and his objections to patterned theories of justice.
2. Explain Rawls's liberal theory of distributive justice, including his appeal to an ideal contract under the veil of ignorance, his core principles (e.g., liberty principle), the appropriate role of government, and his objection to libertarian and meritocratic theories of justice.
3. Summarize the arguments in the two New Jersey court rulings on commercial surrogacy in the Baby M case. How does the higher court challenge Nozick's absolute right to self-ownership? How does the lower court ruling uphold it?
4. Is the all-volunteer army today more just than substitutes and commutation fees during the Civil War? If military service can be purchased, do you see any principled reason why mercenaries should not fight our wars? Finally, how might it be argued that a universal draft would be more just than a volunteer army?
5. How is the distinction between moral desert and entitlement to legitimate expectations of a benefit at stake in the preferential admissions debate?
6. Drawing from the Hopwood case, state the chief backward-looking and forward-looking arguments for preferential admissions.
7. Drawing from the Hopwood case, state the chief backward-looking and forward-looking arguments against preferential admissions.
8. Speculate about how Rawls and Nozick would argue a position on the justice of preferential admissions.

Aristotle: Moral Virtue and Character

1. How does Aristotle characterize eudaimonia and moral virtue? What are the conditions that make virtuous character possible?
2. Why does Aristotle think an ethical theory that centers on (a) particular actions and (b) rules for prescribing action is misguided and ill-conceived? Explain.

3. Is Aristotle's account of virtue open to charges of subjectivism and relativism? Why or why not? Explain.
4. Critically assess Aristotle's ethics for (1) justification, (2) consistency, (3) plausibility, and (4) usefulness.

Study Questions on The Ethics of Genetic Enhancement

1. How does Sandel argue against genetic enhancement that would make our children "better than well"?
2. How does Kamm directly challenge Sandel's argument against genetic enhancement? Why does he find Sandel's reasons unpersuasive?
3. How does Savulescu appeal to the principle of procreative beneficence in arguing that parents have an obligation to select genetically the best children?
4. How does Green assess arguments for and against genetic assessment in his discussion of (1) the creation of superathletes, (2) the role of parents as gardeners and guardians, (2) the implications for social justice and creation of a "genobility," and concerns from both science and religion of "playing god"?

Study Questions on Nietzsche: Critique of Traditional Normative Ethics

1. How does Nietzsche use his genealogical method to trace the emergence of herd morality? Why does he group together Christianity, Kantian ethics, Platonic metaphysics, and utilitarianism as instances of herd morality? Explain.
2. What does Nietzsche mean by the "death of god"? What are the "shadows of god" that persist? Why does he believe the death of god, understood as both a cultural and philosophical event, is a source of exhilaration as well as despair?
3. If Nietzsche is a kind of physician, what is his diagnosis of a philosophical malady and what does he see as therapy or treatment that would restore philosophical health?
4. Critically assess Nietzsche's moral philosophy for (1) justification, (2) consistency, (3) plausibility, and (4) usefulness.

Sociobiology: Critique of Traditional Normative Ethics

1. According to Pinker and Wilson, what role should science play in explaining morality? Why do both scientists believe that traditional moral philosophy is either misguided or inadequate for a correct and adequate account of moral beliefs and principles?
2. Explain Pinker's "periodic table of moral sense." How, according to Pinker, do nature and nurture interact in the weighing of spheres of moral conduct?
3. Compare and contrast Wilson and Pinker on the following question: If scientific explanation analyzes and demystifies morality, does it thereby debunk traditional moral and religious beliefs?
24. Critically assess Wilson's claim that philosophy (or "transcendentalism") is obsolete and that modern science ("empiricism") can and should replace normative ethics.

Sample Ethics Essay Questions:

1. In “The Case Against Perfection,” Michael Sandel writes that breakthroughs in genetics hold promise in treating and preventing serious diseases. Yet he also expresses reservations about using genetic knowledge “to manipulate our own nature” for enhancement of our bodies and minds, enhancement that would make us and our children “better than well.” Should we refrain from using biotechnology that enhances human nature only by altering it? Should we draw a sharp distinction between genetic treatment and genetic enhancement? If so, why? What moral limits, if any, should be placed on genetic enhancement? Represent all sides of the issue and defend your position. [Don’t limit your reading to Green and Sandel.]
2. View *Groundhog Day* and analyze the film about Phil’s moral transformation as an illustration of Aristotle’s ethics. Include in your interpretation of the film Aristotle views on *eudaimonia* (living well), the conditions of virtuous character, the role of habit and training in acquiring virtuous character, the specific Aristotelian virtues and doctrine of the mean, and the nature and importance friendship. [You would need to screen the film. Draw from the Aristotle reading in the text and my handout excerpting Aristotle on the nature of friendship.]
3. Drawing extensively from the primary source readings (*Gay Science* and *Beyond Good and Evil*), represent the major themes of Nietzsche’s ethical theory (e.g., genealogy of morals, eternal recurrence of the same, the “death of god,” the nihilism of nihilism) and his radical critique of both traditional philosophy and religion as sources of ethical standards. Next test the strength of Nietzsche’s ethical theory by applying each of the following criteria: 1) plausibility (how well it squares with experience and our own intuitions), 2) justification (the strength of the evidence or abstract argument for its merit, 3) usefulness (how well the theory can be applied in the “real world,” 4) consistency (the theory’s claims do not contradict or conflict with each other; they fit together logically). [Note: This is a challenging question because it depends on analytical skill as well as mastery of the Nietzsche readings.]
4. Write a **dialogue** on preferential admissions representing each of the following perspectives on distributive justice: Rawls/Dworkin (liberal theory of justice), Nozick (libertarianism), utilitarianism, and Kantian ethics. Using the Hopwood case, 1) apply each theory to the issue of preferential admissions and 2) evaluate each theory for strengths and weaknesses in light of the question whether Hopwood’s rights were violated and her claim that preferential admissions is fundamentally unjust. So, I’m asking you to craft a conversation in which philosophers (or their proxies) defend their own positions against objections from their interlocutors on criteria used to allocate opportunities for higher education. [Note: Don’t ignore Dworkin or forget to distinguish appeals to entitlement from appeals to desert.]

Freedom & Determinism

- **Issue: What is a free act? Do we ever act freely? How is being free different from being fated? From randomness? Why should we care whether we are free?**
Activity: Newcomb's Paradox, *Cookies*, story of Osmo, Paradise Island thought experiment, close reading of *Notes from the Underground* and *Escape from Spiderhead*
Readings:
Taylor, *Fate*
Dostoevsky, *Notes from the Underground* (H)
Loebel, *Cookies* (H)
Saunders, "Escape from Spiderhead" (H)
- **Issue: Is free will compatible with determinism? Why do we, or should we, want to possess a free will that is incompatible with determinism? Does such a freedom exist in the natural world and, if so, where?**
Activity: Formal debate on hard versus compatibilism (or soft determinism); oral reading of *No Exit*
Readings:
D'Holbach, *Are We Completely Determined?*
Inwagen, *The Powers of Rational Beings*
Stace, *Compatibilism*
Frankfurt, *Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person*
Hospers, "A Psychoanalytic Defense of Hard Determinism" (H)
Dennett, "I Couldn't Have Done Otherwise: So What?" (H)
Williams, *Moral Luck* (H)
- **Issue: Does existentialism offer a viable, credible alternative to soft determinism as a radical defense of human freedom? What is the relationship between consciousness and freedom? How does existentialism challenge traditional theories of human nature?**
Sartre, *Existentialism as a Humanism*
Sartre, "The Wall" (H)
Sartre, *No Exit* (H)
- **Issue: When is someone too sick to be bad? When should we grant mitigated responsibility to agents who perform illegal or immoral acts?**
Activities: Prosecution and defense teams present closing arguments based on transcript of William Hinckley trial; discussion of Harris and Manson cases
Reading: Transcript of Hinckley trial

Study Questions on Free Will and Determinism

1. Using the D'Holbach reading ("We Are Completely Determined"), explain the argument for hard determinism and why it is incompatible with free will.

2. Explain van Inwagen's Principle and its appeal to "untouchable facts." How does the Principle justify hard determinism and challenge compatibilism? (Note: make sure you define "hard determinism" and "compatibilism.")
3. According to van Inwagen, why does both hard determinism and libertarianism (or indeterminism) present us with profound mysteries? Which option does van Inwagen find least mysterious, and why?
4. Explain Stace's compatibilist reply to hard determinism. Why does Stace believe that hard determinism is not a threat to free will? Discuss two possible objections to Stace's argument.
5. How does Frankfurt arguably offer a stronger compatibilist defense of free will than Stace? Your essay should address his core concepts (e.g., first and second order desires, second order volition, wanton) and carefully explain his account of freedom of will.
6. How does Frankfurt apply his theory of hierarchical compatibilism to the cases of (a) the willing addict, (b) the unwilling addict, and (c) the indifferent addict?
7. Drawing from both "Existentialism as a Humanism" (the essay in the text under "Existentialist Ethics") and the secondary source (handout titled "Sartre"), explain how Sartre grounds his incompatibilist defense of radical freedom in his analysis of consciousness. Make sure you address his core concepts and claims (e.g., "Existence precedes essence", "en soi", "pour soi", "facticity", "transcendence", "intentionality", "bad faith", "anguish")
8. Explain how Sartre's views on freedom, death, and the nature of consciousness are dramatized in his short story, "The Wall".
9. Explain how Sartre's views on freedom, death, bad faith, and the question of the other ("Hell is other people.") are dramatized in his play, *No Exit*.
10. Critically assess Sartre's incompatibilist (or libertarian) defense of radical freedom.
11. Suppose a man is carried, while fast asleep, into a room, where there is a person he longs to see and speak with; and suppose he is locked into the room, beyond his power to get out: he awakes, and is glad to find himself in so desirable company, which he stays willingly in (i.e., prefers staying to go away). I ask, is this stay voluntary?" How can this scenario be used to illustrate (a) hard determinism, (b) Stace's compatibilism, and (c) hierarchical compatibilism. Explain.
12. *Briefly* explain the Paradise Island scenario. Then give the chief arguments both for and against going to Paradise Island. (Note: Do not rehearse arguments related to the happiness box scenario.) Explain how the scenario explores the question of the *significance* of having or not having free will.
13. How is the *personal* predicament of the Underground Man attributable to the *philosophical* problem of free will and determinism? How does he *live* the problem? Discuss key passages that present supporting evidence and details in your response to the question.

14. Using both the handout and Taylor reading (“Fate”) in your text, reconstruct and assess the chief arguments for fatalism.

Sample Free Will Essay Questions:

Do human beings have free will? Please give the best reasons that you can in defense of your position, taking pains to explore possible objections to your view and to explain how you would reply to those objections. In your answer, make sure to explain how you define the term ‘free will.’ Also, if you hold that people lack free will, please explain how they can be held responsible for their actions. (Note: Keep in mind that I am asking for a thoughtful analysis of a complex issue that shows evidence of both independent thinking and familiarity with arguments you have encountered in the unit.)

Philosophy of Mind

- **Issue: Epistemology: What can we know? Can we know anything? Does the case for constructivism or relativism have merit?**
Activities: thought experiments on idealism and materialism, technological corrections of first-person experiences; analysis of Sartre and Russell’s critiques of first and second meditations; discussion of whether the tar water (or beer) I drink is an idea in my mind; video clips from *Waking Life*; Gettier problems and objections to theory of knowledge as true justified belief (TJB); cases and thought experiments in contemporary alternatives to TJB (e.g., causal theory of knowledge)
Readings:
Berkeley, *The Principles* (H)
Boghossian, *Fear of Knowledge*
Dennett, *Postmodernism and Truth*
Descartes, *Meditations I and II*
Feldman, *Epistemology* (H)
Hume, *The Origin of Our Ideas and Skepticism about Causal Reasoning*
Locke, *Empiricist Theory of Knowledge*
Plato, *Allegory of the Cave* (from *Republic*) (H)
Rorty, *Dismantling Truth: Solidarity versus Objectivity*
- **Issue: Mind-Body Problem: What am I? A mind or a body? If both, how do they interact? Might computers have software minds embedded in hardware bodies?**
Activities: What Mary Knows? thought experiment, Chinese room thought experiment, Bats thought experiment, Schumann thought experiment
Readings:
Block, *Chinese Nation*
Chalmers, *Property Dualism*
Churchland, *On Functionalism and Materialism*
Descartes, *Meditation III, VI*

Fodor, *The Mind-Body Problem*
Graham, *Philosophy of Mind* (H)
Nagel, *What Is It Like to Be a Bat*
Ryle, *The Concept of Mind*

Searle, *Minds, Brains, and Programs*

- **Issue: Personal Identity: What is a person? What is identity? Do we have personal identity? If so, which criterion best applies: brain, memory, or body? What is the significance of race and gender for personal identity?**

Activities: Theseus's ship thought experiment, Williams' torture through experiments; duplication thought experiments (e.g., Parfit's teleporter) screening of *Memento*

Readings:

Appiah, *But Would That Still Be Me?* (H)
Dennett, *Where Am I?* (H)
Hume, *Of Personal Identity*
Kagan, *Death* (H)
Kundera, *The Hitchhiking Game* (H)
Locke, *Our Psychological Properties Define the Self*
Perry, "Personal Identity: A Dialogue" (H)
Plato, *Alcibiades and Phaedo*
Parfit and Vesey, *Brain Transplants and Personal Identity*
Sider, *Personal Identity* (H)

Descartes: Cartesian Dualism

1. How does Descartes apply the method of hyperbolic doubt to put philosophy on a firm foundation? Explain what kinds of belief are possibly false as he considers each of the following: illusions, dreams, and the evil genius.
2. According to Descartes, what belief cannot possibly be mistaken, and how does he show that he cannot possibly be mistaken about it? What challenges have been made by Russell and Sartre that even this belief is not entirely certain?
3. How does Descartes attempt to restore knowledge of the external world after introducing the hypothesis of the evil genius? How does he take account of errors arising from perception of the external world?
4. How does the voice of reason lead Descartes to the conclusion that mind and body are distinct, sharing no properties in common? How does the voice of experience lead Descartes to the conclusion that mind and body form a single unity? How does Descartes attempt to harmonize these two voices? Does he succeed or fail? Explain.

Ryle: Logical Behaviorism

5. Explain the "official doctrine" associated with Descartes' solution to the mind-body problem. Why does Ryle characterize the doctrine as a mistaken and deeply confused belief in a "ghost in the machine"? Explain how Ryle applied the concept of "category mistake" to explain Descartes' error.

6. How does Ryle replace Descartes' solution with one that applies the concept of mind to behavior and dispositions to behave? Give an example. What objections can be raised against Ryle's logical behaviorism as a solution to the mind-body problem?

Churchland: Identity Theory

7. What is reductive materialism (or physicalism) and why is it referred to as "identity theory"? How does reductive materialism, if it is justified, dissolve Descartes' mind-body problem?
8. What arguments does Churchland present in defense of identity theory? What arguments does he present *against* the claim that mental states are identical with brain states? How does Churchland respond critically to these objections in defense of identity theory? Are his replies to objections persuasive?
9. If identity theory is true, we should expect to find matches between types of mental states (e.g., the desire to eat a tuna sandwich for lunch) and types of brain states (e.g., brain state x,y,z). Yet no such matches have been found. Using examples such as phlogiston, how does Churchland account for this failure? What is "eliminative materialism" and why does Churchland think this radical theory might have greater promise than the search for matches between folk psychology and brain states?

Fodor and Searle: Functionalism and Its Critics

10. Using class notes and handout on functionalism, explain this alternative position on the mind-body problem. How this functionalism (a) draws from elements of reductive materialism (or physicalism) and logical behaviorism while (b) challenging both theories as incomplete and misleading?
11. How does Searle use the thought experiment of the Chinese Room to challenge the functionalist's claim that the right computer program could pass the Turing Test and qualify as having genuine mental states? If we are machines, and we think, why, according to Searle, is it inconceivable that computers might one day have mental states as well? Carefully reconstruct his argument.
12. What counter-arguments have been made against Searle's denial of the possibility of artificial intelligence? Which, if any, of these counter-arguments are persuasive?

Nagel, Jackson, and Chalmers: Challenges to Identity Theory ("Mysterians" and Property Dualism)

13. According to Nagel, why is the reduction of mental states to brain states not at all comparable to the reduction of lightening to electrical discharges or sound to compression waves? Why does Nagel introduce a thought experiment involving "bats" to show that mind-brain reduction is inconceivable? Precisely what is it about mental states that cannot be captured in a physicalist account of the mind, according to Nagel?

14. Drawing from Jackson's thought experiment of Mary in the black and white room, reconstruct Jackson's argument against identity theory. What, according to Jackson, does Mary know when she leaves the room that she did not know inside? Discuss at least two objections against Jackson's knowledge argument.
15. How does Chalmers challenge both Cartesian substance dualism and identity theory? How does he argue that brains have both physical and mental properties? Use the examples of (a) Schumann's tragic life and (b) recordings of Schumann's music to illustrate property dualism.
16. How does Ned Block modify Searle's thought experiment in his Chinese Nation scenario? What argument is making against functionalism? Is it the same as Searle's? Explain.

Personal Identity

1. In the Ship of Theseus thought experiment, two ships are claimants for "The Spirit of Athens." Examine critically arguments in defense of both Ship X and Ship Y. Which has the stronger claim, and why? Then comment on the relevance of the thought experiment to the larger question of personal identity.
2. On the second night in Perry's dialogue, how do Cohen and Miller use the Blue River analogy, which was used against soul arguments on the first night, to defend psychological continuity as a criterion for personal identity? Next, explain how these arguments reinforce Locke's appeal to memory. Finally, discuss each of the following objections to arguments for psychological continuity: circularity, intransitivity, insufficiency, and duplication.
3. How does Hume make the skeptical argument that personal identity is a fiction? How does the argument arise from his commitment to empiricism? What crucial objection might be raised against Hume's argument?
4. Explain how the following concepts fit together in Parfit's distinctive theory of personal identity: identity, person, psychological continuity, and survival. Next, show how his theory addresses the duplication problem through the brain fission and teleportation scenarios. Finally, evaluate Parfit's response to the duplication problem.

Sample Philosophy of Mind Questions:

1. How did Descartes' method generate the mind-body problem? How have philosophers attempted to solve or dissolve the problem? Have any modern theories (e.g. identity theory, behaviorism, functionalism) offered a more satisfying solution than Cartesian dualism? Or does the question of mind-body interaction remain mysterious and beyond the comprehension of both philosophy and science? Explain.
2. Are you today the **same person** as the incoming freshman of several years ago? The same person you were at ten or at two? Will you be the same person tomorrow?

Twenty years from now? Are you more the same person over time than Leonard in *Memento*? Why or why not? Critically discuss psychological continuity and other candidates (e.g., soul, body) for securing personal identity. Are arguments for any of the candidates successful? If not, does philosophical inquiry lead ultimately to skepticism, or should we revise traditional thinking about personal identity without resorting to skepticism (e.g., social construction, Parfit's survival without absolute identity)? Explain (Note: The question is philosophical, *not* psychological.)

Philosophy of Religion

- **Issue: Is religious belief rational? Provable? Reducible to superstition?**
Activities: Discussion of what beliefs we hold are irrational, reasonable, and provable; Battleground God (internet site); Gould/Dawkins debate on the compatibility of religious belief and science; film clips from *Contact* to illustrate the debate on rationality of religious belief
Readings:
 Anselm, *The Ontological Argument*
 Aquinas, *The Five Ways*
 Buber, "The Horse"
 Clifford, *The Ethics of Belief*
 Dawkins, "Is Science a Religion?"
 Hume, *Critique of the Teleological Argument*
 Flew, Hare, and Mitchell, *A Debate on the Rationality of Religious Belief*
 Gould, "Nonoverlapping Magisteria"
 Kirkegaard, *Faith and Truth*
 Paley, *The Watch and the Watchmaker*
 Pascal, *Faith Is a Logical Bet*
 Russell, *Why I Am Not a Christian* (H)
- **Issue: Is the belief in a just and caring god compatible with the presence of human and natural suffering?**
Activities: discussion of possible responses to Ivan Karamazov and Mark Twain
Readings:
 Twain, *Letters from Earth* (H)
 Dostoevsky, *Brothers Karamazov* (H)
 Hick, *There Is a Reason Why God Allows Evil*
 Mackie, "God and the Paradox of Omnipotence" (H)
 Smullyan, "God Is a Taoist" (H)
- **Issue: What contribution can religion make to our understanding of the meaning of human existence? Can this question be seriously posed, let alone answered, in a secular world? Is the human need for meaning a philosophical question or a psychological problem?**
Activities: Comparison of Dante and Russell as rival world views; screening of *Wings of Desire*
Readings:

Barth, "Night Sea Journey" (H)
 Camus, "Myth of Sisyphus" (H)
 Dante, "Divine Comedy" (excerpt) (H)
 Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (H)
 Kagan, "Death" (H)
 Martin, "A Good Woman and a Fast Car"
 Nagel, *The Absurd*
 Taylor, *The Meaning of Life* (H)
 Russell, *A Free Man's Worship*
 Wolf, "Happiness and Meaning: Two Aspects of the Good Life"

Study Questions in Philosophy of Religion:

1. In light of their respective stories, how do Flew, Hare, and Mitchell respectively assess the question of rationality of religious belief? For each philosopher, state (a) what makes a belief rational or irrational and (b) why religious belief meets or fails to meet the prescribed criteria for rationality. Note the thought experiment that illustrates each of their respective arguments. (Note: The concepts of unfalsifiability and blik should be addressed.)
2. How does Anselm use the ontological argument to show that God necessarily exists? What serious objections have been raised to show that the argument is unsound? (Note: Your discussion should include the distinction between "contingent" and "necessary" truths, between "analytic" and "synthetic" propositions, and between "first order" and "second order" predicates.)
3. How does Paley present a design argument for the rationality of belief in God's existence? Next carefully represent no fewer than three major objections directed by Hume against the teleological argument.
4. What is Hick's theodicy for moral and natural evil? How does Mackie challenge Hick's theodicy and argue that the problem of evil makes belief in the "omni" God irrational? (Note: Address Mackie's critical response to each of the three major theodicies outlined in his essay.)
5. What does Nagel mean by the "absurd"? Why does Nagel believe the absurd is an unavoidable condition of being human? Next compare and contrast critical responses to Nagel's claim that life is absurd from two of the following: Taylor, Martin, Wolf.
6. How does John Barth's "Night Sea Journey" cleverly borrow from the language and sensibility of Dante's late medieval "Divine Comedy" to deliver Russell's modern language on the meaning of human existence?
7. Hick's theodicy is specifically Christian while Smullyan's "God is a Daoist" draws from religious beliefs outside Western monotheistic traditions. Compare and contrast Hick and Smullyan on their respective (a) metaphysical pictures of man's relationship to the divine and (b) theodicies in response to the problem of evil.

Sample Philosophy of Religion Essay Questions:

1. Is faith compatible with reason? Should religious beliefs be evaluated for rationality any differently from ordinary beliefs we hold about the world? If religious beliefs are not testable (or falsifiable), should we conclude that they are irrational? Why or why not?
2. Analyze in depth ONE of the following standard arguments for the existence of God: cosmological, teleological, or ontological. Carefully represent the argument and evaluate its merit in demonstrating that belief in God is either reasonable or provable. Make sure that you address criticism of the argument (e.g., Hume's critique of the teleological argument). You also may wish to address any significant revisions meant to bolster the original argument (e.g., Malcolm on the ontological argument).
3. Belief in an omnipotent, all-loving (or good) god can be reconciled with the presence of moral and natural evil. Represent both sides and argue for or against this claim. Also consider how an alternative conception of the divine drawn from Taoism or the Upanishads would address the question of theodicy.
4. Analyze and evaluate each of the following claims regarding the meaning of life: (a) Life is Meaningful, (b) Life is meaningful, (c) Life is meaningless. Be sure to state clearly the nature of the question(s) each claim is meant to answer.