

The Mind and the World (Day 1 Syllabus)

Philosophy 111 Honors, Spring 2010

TPHI11, class #16801

Office Hours: TBA

MWF 10:25-11:20 AS15

Course web page: <http://profron.net/phi111h>

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Requirements & Grades:

The course grade comes 45% from exams, 30% from short papers, and 25% from a combination of online and in-class participation and quizzes. To pass the course, students taking the course for a letter grade must average at least a **D-** and have at least three passing grades (i.e., **D-** or better) on a combination of papers and exams.

Papers: Topics for very short (about 800 words) papers will be handed out four times during the semester, and will be due about a week after being assigned. You must do two of these, including at least one of the first two. (See the *Addenda* page for the rules on late papers.) Each short paper is worth 15% of the final course grade.

Exams: There will be four 55-minute in class closed-book tests, spaced relatively equally throughout the semester. Tests are mostly short-answer format, and will be non-comprehensive. (See the *Addenda* page for the rules on makeup exams.) Your three best exam scores are each worth 15% of the final course grade

Participation, etc.: Class participation, polls, quizzes, and other stuff will total 25% of your course grade:

- Short pop quizzes and polls will be given in class via the electronic iClicker system (see the addendum for more on the iClicker). Your participation in polls and quiz scores all together will count for 15% of your course grade.
- You'll be expected to participate in classroom and online discussion. Students must sign up for the online discussion board linked from the course web page. I'll occasionally ask for particular bits of online participation in addition to any general discussion that might go on there. Online and classroom participation together will count for 10% of your course grade.

Readings: All reading materials for this course are online; there is no physical textbook. The readings are available as PDF files from the Library EReserves page for the course; the password for that page will be given out in class. All notes and other materials will be available on the main course web page.

Course Outline: (subject to minor change)

I. Knowledge, Appearance, and Reality

- **Argument and Language**
 - Sober, "Lecture 2: Deductive Arguments"
 - Devitt, "Reference, Theories of"
- **Radical Skepticism**
 - Descartes, *Meditations I and II*
 - Bouwsma, "Descartes' Evil Genius"
 - Grau, "Brains in Vats and the Evil Demon"
 - Putnam, "Brains in a Vat"
- **Appearance and Reality**
 - Plato, from *The Republic*
 - Churchland, "The Problem of Self-Consciousness"
- **Probable Generalizations**
 - Sober, "Lecture 15: Justified Belief and Hume's Problem of Induction" and "Lecture 16: Can Hume's Skepticism Be Refuted?"

II. Minds, Brains, and Actions

- **The Mind-Body Problem**
 - Churchland, "The Ontological Problem (the Mind-Body Problem)"
 - Fodor, "The Mind-Body Problem"
 - McClamrock, from "Non-Reductive Materialism Without Impotence"

Freedom, Choice, & Responsibility

- Nagel, "Free Will"
- Sober, "Lecture 23: Freedom, Determinism, and Causality" and "Lecture 24: A Menu of Positions on Free Will"
- Dennett, from *Elbow Room: On the Varieties of Free Will Worth Wanting*
- Dennett, "Conditions of Personhood"

III. God, Meaning, and Value

- **The Existence of God**
 - Paley, "The Design Argument"
 - Rennie, "15 Answers to Creationist Nonsense"
 - Teichman & Evans, "The Existence of Evil"
 - Yahweh, from the book of *Job*
 - Plato, from *Euthyphro*
 - Pascal, "The Wager"
- **Nihilism, Value, & Significance**
 - Nagel, "Death", and "The Meaning of Life"
 - Sartre, "The Wall"
 - Nozick, "The Holiness of Everyday Life"
 - Nozick, "Value and Meaning"
 - Camus, "The Myth of Sisyphus"

TPHI 111 Spring 2010 Syllabus Addenda

Detailed Grade Calculation Rules:

1. Every exam and paper is given a letter grade. These letter grades range from **A+** (the best) to **F** (the worst).
2. Each of these letter grades has a numerical equivalent. Here are the possible letter grades and numerical equivalents.

A+ = 15	B = 11	C- = 7	E+ = 3
A = 14	B- = 10	D+ = 6	E = 2
A- = 13	C+ = 9	D = 5	E- = 1
B+ = 12	C = 8	D- = 4	F = 0

3. Once this assignment of letter grades is made for, say, a given exam, nothing else matters. In calculating your final grade, all that matters is (the numerical equivalents of) your various letter grades for the various graded pieces of work.
4. I use the numerical equivalents of the letter grades to calculate a composite numerical grade: In this class, your 4 best exams each count for 20% of your final grade, and the composite grade from your pop quizzes and other in-class clicker-based participation counts for the other 20%.
5. I round the composite numerical grade to the nearest integer (.5 and above go up, below go down). I convert back to letter grades using the chart above. You get the letter grade determined by the chart, except if (i) you got an **A+**, in which case your official grade is an **A** (the University doesn't use **A+**); (ii) you got lower than a **D-**, in which case your official grade is **E**; or (iii) you didn't get at least a **D-** on at least 2 of the exams, in which case your official grade is an automatic **E**.

iClicker use and grading:

It's a requirement of this class is that you get and use an iClicker for in-class quizzes and polls. I'll give tests and polls frequently in class. Scores from quizzes and polls will constitute 15% of your final course grade. You're responsible for getting the iClicker, bringing it to class each day, registering it at iclicker.com, and using it. If you don't, you'll get no credit for any quizzes or polls on days when you're without it.

Makeup exams and quizzes:

Makeup exams and quizzes are given only when extreme circumstances make it *impossible* for you to take the test when given; e.g., when you are hospitalized on that day. To be given a makeup exam or quiz, you must do all of the following:

1. Obtain a letter of excuse from the Office of the Dean of Undergraduate Studies; all inquiries about such letters and the documentation required for them should be directed to the Dean's office (LC-30). This request (with documentation) is to be made to the Dean's office (LC 30) no more than two weekdays after the end of the period for which you are asking to be excused.
2. Give me a **written** (e-mail is best, paper is OK) request for a makeup exam. This request must be given to me no more than two weekdays after the end of the period for which your absence has been excused.
3. Talk to me in person at the end of the first class after your excused absence in order to schedule a makeup.

You must do all of these in order to be given a makeup. But even if you do, I reserve the right to judge that the excuse is inadequate, in which case I may decline to give the makeup.

Cheating:

Any student caught cheating in the course will be failed for the entire course and will be turned in for further disciplinary action by the Dean's office. Instances of cheating include but are not limited to copying from others during exams or quizzes, bringing an iClicker for someone else and using it to take quizzes or polls for them, and using notes during exams.

General Education Information:

This course is a Humanities General Education course.

Characteristics of *a//* General Education Courses:

1. General Education courses offer introductions to the central topics of disciplines and interdisciplinary fields.
2. General Education courses offer explicit rather than tacit understandings of the procedures, practices, methodology and fundamental assumptions of disciplines and interdisciplinary fields.
3. General Education courses recognize multiple perspectives on the subject matter.
4. General Education courses emphasize active learning in an engaged environment that enables students to be producers as well as consumers of knowledge.
5. General Education courses promote critical inquiry into the assumptions, goals, and methods of various fields of academic study; they aim to develop the interpretive, analytic, and evaluative competencies characteristic of critical thinking.

Learning Objectives for General Education *Humanities*

Courses: Humanities courses teach students to analyze and interpret texts, ideas, artifacts, and discourse systems, and the human values, traditions, and beliefs that they reflect.

1. Humanities courses enable students to demonstrate knowledge of the assumptions, methods of study, and theories of at least one of the disciplines within the humanities.

Depending on the discipline, humanities courses will enable students to demonstrate some or all of the following:

2. An understanding of the objects of study as expressions of the cultural contexts of the people who created them.
3. An understanding of the continuing relevance of the objects of study to the present and to the world outside the university.
4. An ability to employ the terms and understand the conventions particular to the discipline.
5. An ability to analyze and assess the strengths and weaknesses of ideas and positions along with the reasons or arguments that can be given for and against them.
6. An understanding of the nature of the texts, artifacts, ideas, or discourse of the discipline and of the assumptions that underlie this understanding, including those relating to issues of tradition and canon.