Honors Philosophy

Course packet

Instructor: John Davenport
Fall 2003

HOLU 1001-001

Wednesdays 2:30 - 5:15
Contents of Course Packet

General Course Handouts
1. Syllabus
2. Philosophy Department at Lincoln Center Website
3. The Philosophy Major and Careers
4. Philosophy Minors to accompany various Majors at Fordham
5. Reading a Philosophical Text
6. Tips on Essay Writing
7. Citation guideline and examples
8. The Writing Center at Fordham
9. Noesis Philosophical Research online

Handouts on Philosophical Anthropology
10. The Discipline of Philosophy and its Subdivisions
11. Philosophical Ethics: An Introduction
12. Plato's Theory of Forms and its Background
13. Four Stages of Love in Plato’s Symposium
14. Plato's Answer to Thrasymachus

Readings (outside the books for the class):
(3) Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics Books 8-9 selections
(4) Andreas Nygren, Eros and Agape, selections
(2) Harry Frankfurt, "The Importance of What We Care About," in The Importance of What We Care About (Cambridge University Press, 1988)
(4) Harry Frankfurt, "On Bullshit," in The Importance of What We Care About (Cambridge University Press, 1988)

Supplementary Readings on Eres
(1) Rolf Johnson, Three Faces of Love, chs. 1 & 2 (course packet)
(2) Stan van Hooft, “Commitment and the Bonds of Love” (course packet)
(3) Thomas Hill, “Servility and Self-Respect,” Autonomy and Self-Respect, chapter 1
Office Hours: Mondays 2:00 - 4:00 PM; Wednesdays by appointment. Thursdays I’m at Rose Hill, and Tuesdays and Fridays I’m home with the kids. (I occasionally have to be out during regular office hours for staff meetings, so check in advance).

Course Goals: This course is a general introduction to philosophy. Students are assumed to be capable of some challenging readings, but not necessarily to have any prior background in philosophy or its history. The course progresses historically, but in discussing our selection of great works from the history of western philosophy, we will focus on some key questions about the nature of human persons and our capacities for love and responsibility for others. So this course combines themes from ‘philosophical anthropology’ and ‘moral theory.’ This semester, the course will focus in particular on the following themes:

(A) Distinctions among different types of “love” as states of motivation. Do any forms of human love suggest that we are essentially social beings, or is our individual uniqueness and separateness from others a condition of love-relationships?

(B) Is their any rational motive for being moral, i.e. a motive based on the true nature of things, making it intrinsically right to lead moral lives, rather than simply to do whatever will maximize our own material interests and pleasures (egoism)? Do the phenomena of love shed any light on this question?

(C) How is our freedom related to moral responsibility, and what forms of evil does our freedom make possible? In particular, is evil merely weakness in the face of material and sensual temptation, or are more radical kinds of hatred and malice possible?

While we will cover quite a bit of ground in this course, the amount of reading in any given week will not be overwhelming, since class discussion and debate are also crucial. Each class will include both some lecture time to familiarize us with the readings, and some directed discussion so that you can explore your interests and reactions to the readings, exchange views with classmates, and develop ideas for your papers. Learning to write clearly argued expositions of theoretical material, followed by criticisms and defense of your own views, is potentially one of the greatest benefits of studying philosophy. Learning to analyze arguments and understand structures of inference is another. We will work on these vital skills throughout the semester.

Summary of Themes in the Readings
Plato on love of different kinds of good, and the mind’s natural orientation to ideal Forms.
Plato and Aristotle on the self-defeating nature of material egoism, and the ideal of friendship.
Scotus and Nygren agapeistic love of one’s neighbor vs eros and love of one’s own happiness.
Rousseau on natural pity as a basis for morality, and social envy as a source of political evil.
Kant on moral norms as requirements of respect for the inviolable dignity of persons as free beings.
Sartre on love and hatred as of others as a struggle for possession or domination of others.
Generous caring and agapeistic love as responses to Sartre.

Texts  *Great Dialogues of Plato*, Warmington and Rouse, eds. (Signet/Penguin) 0451527453

Course packet with all the other required readings (available from the professor only)

You need these editions to follow along with the class discussions. Please buy these ones in the bookstore, or online.

**Why you must buy all the books for this course!**
I have a strict policy that students must purchase all books for the class. There is no point in spending $20,000 to go to college and then trying to save $200 by not buying books for your courses, which makes it almost impossible to do the work. That is like buying a new car and then refusing to put any gasoline in it. I do order the cheapest good editions I can to make the costs easier, but my view is that students have to expect and plan on spending a few hundred dollars for course materials each semester as part of the normal cost of college.

– Buy all the books at the start of the semester. The bookstore starts returning unpurchased books as early as October to make room in its limited space for inventory.

– Keep your books! You should have a small library by the time you finish college, including books you can look back on for the rest of your life. You may not want to keep everything, but don't sell yourself out of this long-term asset by returning all your books for the mere pittance that the bookstore pays you when you sell them back!

**Grading System**
Progress review meeting  5%
Class participation:  15% This breakdown of course components is a basic guide
Three essays:  60% for you, but there is also be a certain amount of leeway
Final exam:  20% and credit for improvement in assigning the final grade.

Requirements:
*Progress review meeting:* I will meet each student for a short conference (approx 10 minutes) once during the semester. Although the main purpose of this is to answer questions and make sure that your work is coming along, I may ask you a few questions about the readings we have been doing as well, so there is a small grade component for showing up and being prepared for this.

*Class Participation:* Discussion is essential in a philosophy course. This requires being prepared, attending, and being willing to contribute. Don't worry about asking questions!--they are always
welcome, and no question is ‘dumb.’ The participation grade depends mainly on two factors:
-- The quality of your questions and contributions in class, including being prepared and able to
answer assigned study questions for the day. Be an active contributor, not just a passive
listener, and you'll get more out of this material! Philosophy should be fun.
-- Your attendance (this is especially crucial in a course that meets just once a week). See
attendance policy below.

**Final:** Your general familiarity with the readings will be evaluated in a final exam in December. The
test will consist of multiple choice questions along with some short-answer questions and probably a
short essay. It will be an open-book test, but remember you have only a limited time, so know
everything well in advance. Attending to class discussion will help a lot here, since test questions
will emphasize the material we focus on during class.

**Papers:** There will be three 5-6 page papers for this course, in September, October, and November
respectively, and together they constitute the bulk of your grade. In these essays, you’ll select your
topic among a short list of choices, and engage/debate some of the authors we’ve read. As we go
along, the emphasis will be increasingly on getting you to argue for your own position. Edit these
papers carefully, since I deduct 1% for every grammar error beyond the three!

**Other Policies**

**Attendance and typical excuses** (sorry but I’ve had to get tough):
-- No absence is excused for medical reasons without a real doctor's note.
-- No absence is excused for work reasons (tell your employers when you have classes)
-- Absence is excused for weddings and funerals only with some kind of proof.
-- No absence is excused because of family vacations or airline tickets booked at bad times.

The family vacation in the Poconos, the Caribbean, or Maui is not an excused absence!
If you have a real life crisis, talk to me in private; I am understanding. Please don't just vanish!

**Computer Disks:** You should never plead that the computer ate your disk. Always save any paper,
at every stage of drafting, *on more than one disk*!! They are only $1 a piece or less. Backup every
ten minutes, or more often: this is the most basic principle in using computers for college work.

**Honesty and Citation:** I take this very seriously; cheating is the one unforgivable sin. All your
work for this class must be original, must be your own, and you must cite your sources, both when
you quote text, and when you paraphrase. Examples of cheating:

1. Handing in work you did for another class without clearing it with me.
2. Copying another student's work on a test or paper, with or without their permission.
3. Handing in an essay downloaded from the internet, copied from an uncited website, or copied
   from an encyclopedia, book, or article without citation is plagiarism. This holds true even if the
   wording has been significantly changed.

*If I judge that a student has cheated in any of these ways, or in any comparably serious fashion,
that student will fail the entire course and it will go on his/her permanent record here.* If there are
Secondary Sources: You do not really need secondary sources for this course. Just do the primary readings. However, if you want more information, go to the new Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy first. Never depend on the Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia, which is very unreliable. There are other much better online guides to Philosophy (see the department website).

If you bring in ideas and quotes from secondary sources, but you must cite them either by footnotes or parenthetical references referring to a bibliography at the end of the paper. Even if you acknowledge an internet site, for example, you can't just lift large sections of its text wholesale: only take short quotations, clearly indicated as such in your paper.
—This includes paraphrases: even if you reword what the author said, cite the page number.
—It also includes websites: give the full URL of the page you cite. Note that webpages should never be the only source you cite in college essays.

Schedule for Readings and Discussion Topics

9/3: Introduction to course themes
(1) Review of the syllabus and course packet
(2) Introduction to philosophy in general, and philosophical anthropology and ethics especially.
(3) From Homer to Socrates/Plato/Aristotle: the fundamental change of worldview from the heroic honor code (or feudal) model to the philosophical-legal model.
(4) Introduction to Plato.

9/10: Plato on Love, Beauty, and the Good
(1) Plato’s Symposium (Great Dialogues, pp.69-122).
(2) Recommended: Giovanni Ferrari, “Platonic Love” (course packet)

9/17: Special Session: Karsten Harries on Aesthetics and Environmental Concerns
(1) Visiting Lecturer Karsten Harries, 12th floor lounge, 3 - 6 PM.
(2) Karsten Harries, The Ethical Function of Architecture, chs..1 & 9 (course packet).

9/24: Plato’s Ideal Forms and the Form of Justice
(1) Republic Book 7: Plato’s Cave Allegory and the theory of Forms (Great Dialogues, pp.312-33)
(2) Republic Book 1: The argument against Thrasymachus (Great Dialogues, pp.125-54)

10/1: Plato’s portrayal of evil: the unhappy tyrant
(1) Republic Books Books 8-9 (Great Dialogues).

10/8: Aristotle and Nygren on Friendship and Love
(1) Nicomachean Ethics Books 8-9 selections (course packet).
(2) Andreas Nygren, Eros and Agape, selections (course packet)
(3) Recommended: Neera Badhwar, “Friends as Ends in Themselves” (course packet)
10/15: Duns Scotus on the Will, Agape, and Radical Evil
(1) *Duns Scotus on the Will and Morality*, sections 5-7 on the will, 25-27 on charity, and 28-30 on sin and malice (course packet).

10/22: Rousseau on Natural Pity and Social Envy

10/29: Kant on Human Individuality and Moral Love
(1) *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Books I-II.

11/5: Kant and the problem of autonomous evil
(1) *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Book II continued.


11/12: Sartre on the other: does autonomy require domination of others?
(2) Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, Part III, ch.3: “Concrete Relations with Others” (course packet)

11/12 Extra Credit: *Galileo’s Daughter* symposium, 6:00 - 7:30 PM in the South Lounge Plaza cafe

11/19: Care-Love: An Answer to Sartre?
(1) Thomas Hill, “Servility and Self-Respect,” *Autonomy and Self-Respect* chapter 1 (packet)
(2) Rolf Johnson, *Three Faces of Love*, chs. 1 & 2 (course packet)

11/26: Thanksgiving Break: Enjoy!

12/3: Commitment as an Aspect of Love
(1) Stan van Hooft, “Commitment and the Bonds of Love” (course packet)

12/10: Conclusion and Review

12/17: Likely date of final exam

Further Readings on Reserve: