

Philosophy 100: Introduction to Philosophy

Craig Fox

Spring 2005

1 General Course Information

M 5:30–8; LC A7; Call No. 15655/15658

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Office Hours: Monday 4:30–5:30 (also by appt.)

Course Website: <http://www.uic.edu/classes/phil/phil100cdf>

Texts:

Craig Fox, “Some Notes on Logic,” “Some Notes on Necessary and Sufficient Conditions”

Immanuel Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*

J. S. Mill, *Utilitarianism*

Bertrand Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy*

Ludwig Wittgenstein, “A Lecture on Ethics”

Hugo Bedau, *Thinking and Writing about Philosophy*

(This text is recommended but not required.)

2 A Brief Overview

As philosophy is a very broad subject, we will only be able to cover a sampling of philosophical topics in this course. We shall, however, get a sense of the breadth of the subject by looking at a number of somewhat different sub-fields.

In weeks 1–4, we will take a look at logic. Logic can be a course entirely of its own. It can be studied rather abstractly, much as in a math course. It can

also be studied with an eye towards its relevance to the field of philosophy. This is how we will approach the subject. In particular, of interest to us is the general question: What tools can we use to determine whether or not we have a good argument before us?

In weeks 5–8, we will examine Bertrand Russell’s *Problems of Philosophy*. This book was originally published in 1912 (for a popular audience!), and Russell is considered one of the founders of what has come to be called *analytic philosophy*. (Very roughly—analytic philosophy is characterized by what we might call a “scientific” approach to philosophical questions, championing precision and clarity in argumentation.) In *Problems*, Russell presents a number of central philosophical questions. It therefore serves as a good introduction to a fair number of more specialized sub-fields.

In weeks 9–13, we will turn to ethics, looking at some work of Immanuel Kant and John Stuart Mill. With our readings here, your attention should be on the question of what makes an act morally correct or incorrect. Of Kant’s work, we will look at the *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, and of Mill’s we will look at *Utilitarianism*. These works represent two important attempts to provide a foundation for ethics—and their approaches are certainly still relevant to the analysis of *our* ethical problems today.

Finally, in the last two weeks we will consider another work prepared for a general audience, Ludwig Wittgenstein’s “Lecture on Ethics.” We should be reasonably situated to consider what he has to say in this lecture, just having finished studying Kant and Mill. We’ll find that Wittgenstein seems to be both critical and yet respectful of the very idea of a theory of ethics. (Wittgenstein was originally a student of Russell’s who went on to become one of the most important intellectual figures of the twentieth century. Most of his work has the appearance of being concerned with logic and language.)

3 Grading

3.1 Percentage Breakdown

- (1) “Notes,” Attendance, Participation: 20%
- (2) Logic Examination: 20%
- (3) Russell Paper: 30%
- (4) Ethics Paper: 30%

3.2 Explanation of Components

Note that *all components must be completed*, in order to receive a passing grade for the course.

(1) The concepts of attendance and participation are straight-forward. (Do observe though that participation can simply mean *asking a question*.) The “Notes” are your (almost) weekly writing assignment. They need to be typed, double-spaced, and at least one page in length. You may write on whatever topic you choose. For example, you might want to write on something I said in class that you found particularly illuminating (or otherwise). You might want to write on something another student said, or on something you read in the assignment, or on something the assignment made you think of, or on something you saw on the news, or... The main goal with the Notes is for you to start applying some of the skills that we’re trying to develop in this course. (For each topic we cover in class, I will be giving out a sheet of review questions and Notes suggestions. You may use any of these questions for your Notes as well.)

I will read and assign grades for each of your Notes. The grades will be on a “check-plus/check/check-minus” scale. I’m not interested as much in *what* you write as I am in *how* you write it.

(2) The Logic Examination will be an open notes examination. There will be some relatively simple problems, as well as some short-answer questions. More information will be coming shortly.

(3) & (4) The papers will be each approximately 5 pages in length. (Typed, double-spaced, normal margins...) Topics will be assigned.

4 General Information

Attendance is especially important in a course that meets once per week. As our pace needs to be steady, missing even one class can mean missing important information that may not be covered again. If you are sick, be sure to get in touch with me (or someone else in the class) to find out what you missed.

Please make sure your **cell phones, pagers, etc.** are turned off before class. (This is simply common courtesy: you should do this for *every* course!)

All students should behave appropriately. This includes (but is not limited to) arriving at class on time, respecting others' opinions, and not talking during class. **Inappropriate behavior** will not be tolerated.

All students are also expected to behave in accordance with all regulations pertaining to **academic honesty**. *Any student who engages in academic dishonesty shall have his or her case referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs.* I treat plagiarism cases quite seriously; any student who plagiarizes a paper (or Notes) will receive a **failing grade** for the course. For your reference, see:

http://www.uic.edu/~edelberg/crediting_others/index.htm and

http://www.uic.edu/~edelberg/writing_philosophy.htm

“Students with disabilities who require accommodations for access and participation in this course must be registered with the Office of Disability Services (ODS).” Please contact ODS at 312/413-2183 (voice) or 312/413-0123 (TTY).

5 Schedule of Assignments

- *Assignments listed are to be completed for the next class session.*

Week	Date	Reading	Written Assignment
1	1/10	Read "Some Notes..."	Write Notes # 1
2	1/17	NO CLASS	(M.L.K. Jr. Day)
3	1/24	Read "Necessary and..."	Write Notes # 2; Exam 1/31
4	1/31	Read Russell, Ch. 1–5	Write Notes # 3
5	2/7	Read Russell, Ch. 6, 7	Write Notes # 4
6	2/14	Read Russell, Ch. 11, 12	Write Notes # 5
7	2/21	Read Russell, Ch. 15	Write Notes # 6
8	2/28	Read Kant, pp. 392–445	Russell Paper due 3/7
9	3/7	Review Kant, esp. pp. 420–433	Write Notes # 7
10	3/14	Review Kant	Write Notes # 8
—	3/21	NO CLASS	(Spring Break)
11	3/28	Read Mill, Ch. 1–4	Write Notes # 9
12	4/4	Review Mill, esp. Ch. 2	Write Notes # 10
13	4/11	Read Wittgenstein	Write Notes # 11
14	4/18	Review Wittgenstein	Ethics Paper due 4/25
15	4/25	(Last Class)	—

Note the following important dates:

Notes due: 1/17, 1/24, 1/31, 2/7, 2/14, 2/21, 2/28, 3/14, 3/28, 4/4, 4/11, 4/18

Logic Examination: 1/31

Russell Paper due: 3/7

Ethics Paper due: 4/25