



Shanghai Jiao Tong University

PI900 Introduction to Philosophy

Instructor:	Marcello Barison	Email:	marcello.barison@gmail.com
Instructor's Home Institution:	University of Chicago	Office:	
Office Hours:	TBD		
Term:	July 15-August 9, 2019	Credits:	4 units
Classroom:	TBD	Teaching Assistant(s):	TBD
Class Hours:	Monday through Friday, 120 mins per teaching day		
Discussion Sessions:	2 hours each week, conducted by teaching assistant(s)		
Total Contact Hours:	66 contact hours (1 contact hour = 45 mins, 3000 mins in total)		
Required Texts (with ISBN):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ RENÉ DESCARTES, <i>Meditations on First Philosophy. With Selections from the Objections and Replies</i>. Trans. by J. Cottingham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1996). ▪ BENEDICT DE SPINOZA, <i>Ethics</i>. Trans by E. Curley (London: Penguin, 2005), First and Second Part. ▪ I. KANT, <i>Critique of Pure Reason</i>. Trans. by P. Guyer and A. W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 81-192. ▪ H. MELVILLE, <i>Bartleby, the Scrivener, in Billy Budd, Bartleby, and Other Stories</i> (London: Penguin, 2016). ▪ F. DOSTOEVSKY, <i>Notes From Underground</i>. Trans. by R. Pevear and L. Volokhonsky (New York: Vintage, 1994). 		



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ F. NIETZSCHE, <i>Thus Spoke Zarathustra</i>, in <i>The Portable Nietzsche</i>, ed. by W. Kaufmann (London: Penguin, 1982). ▪ M. HEIDEGGER, <i>Nietzsche's word: "God is Dead"</i>, in <i>Off the Beaten Track</i>. Ed. by J. Young and K. Haynes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012). ▪ M. HEIDEGGER, <i>The Origin of the Work of Art</i>, in <i>Off the Beaten Track</i>. Ed. by J. Young and K. Haynes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012). ▪ M. HEIDEGGER, <i>Being and Time</i>. Trans. by J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson (New York: Harper Perennial, 2008), §§ 1-27 ▪ - G. DELEUZE, F. GUATTARI, <i>What is Philosophy?</i>, trans. by T. Tomlinson and G. Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).
<p>Prerequisite:</p>	<p>N/A</p>

Course Overview

This class considers philosophy in two lights: as an ongoing series of arguments addressed to certain fundamental questions about the place of human beings in the world, and as a historically situated discipline interacting with and responding to developments in other areas of thought and culture. The course will be divided into two fundamental parts, mostly addressing the modern and contemporary philosophical tradition respectively.

In the first part, we explore fundamental philosophical questions as they were formulated by modern philosophers. In terms of historical figures, we will concentrate on Descartes and Spinoza. Our guiding thread through this extraordinarily rich period will be the question: how do our minds represent (or misrepresent) the world? This will lead us into a host of other questions: how can we know anything about how the world is in itself? What (if any) aspects of our experience represent the way world really is? What is the fundamental structure of physical reality? How can we know anything about it?

In the second part of the course, we explore fundamental philosophical questions as they were formulated by contemporary writers and philosophers. Primary attention will be devoted to the problem of nihilism as a persistent theme of modernity, that will be investigated considering a wide range of author, from Nietzsche to Heidegger and Deleuze. As a general orientation, this course attempts to encourage the student to philosophize, not just to study philosophical texts. It is then more of an invitation to philosophize than an introduction to the discipline of philosophy. Introductions seek merely to lay out the structure of a particular discipline. We will do that here but more importantly, the course is an invitation to become



philosophical, not just become a student of the subject.

Course Goals

The course has an academic and an existential goal. These goals are related but distinct. Academic goal: The course aims to introduce you to the discipline of philosophy and its major branches: metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics; to provide you with a general introduction

to and understanding of philosophical views, issues, and arguments of some of the most important philosophers in the history of Western philosophy; to introduce you to some of the central problems of philosophy such as the existence of God, the mind-body problem, the question of what we can know, the problem of freedom and determinism, and the question of the meaning of life. Existential Goal: Philosophy, the great philosophers from Plato to Heidegger have said, begins in wonder. My principal goal is to provoke you to wonder about the mystery of life

through the reading and discussion of some of the greatest works in the history of Western Philosophy.

Grading Policy

Midterm Exam	The examination will consist of 4 essay questions (from a total of 6). It will cover the lectures and required readings from Day 1 to Day 10.	40%
Final Exam	The examination will consist of 4 essay questions (from a total of 6). It will cover the lectures and required readings from Day 11 to Day 20.	40%
Class participation	See below.	20 %

The midterm and the final are closed-book.

Essays Grade

Each assignment will be graded according to the following criteria:

A range: This answer is excellent. It is outstanding in form and content. The thesis is clear and insightful; it is original, or it expands in a new way on ideas presented in the



course. The evidence presented in support of the argument is carefully chosen and deftly handled. The argument is not only unified and coherent but also complex and nuanced.

B range: This answer is good. Its thesis is clear; the argument is coherent and presents evidence in support of its points. The argument shows comprehension of the material and manifests critical thinking about the issues raised in the course. The answer is reasonably well written and proofread. The argument, while coherent, does not have the complexity, the insight, or the integrated structure of an A-range answer.

C range: This answer is satisfactory. It has some but not all of the basic components of an argumentative essay (e.g., thesis, evidence, coherent structure). For example, it may offer a thesis of some kind, but it presents no evidence to support this thesis; or it may present an incoherent thesis; or it may simply repeat points made in class without an overall, original argument. Such an answer is usually poorly organized, written, and proofread.

D range or below: This answer is unsatisfactory. It will fall below a ‘C’ if it lacks more than one of the basic components of an argumentative essay.

Class Participation

A range: The student is fully engaged and highly motivated. This student is well prepared, having read the assigned texts, and has thought carefully about the texts’ relation to issues raised in class. This student’s ideas and questions are substantive (constructive and/or critical); they stimulate class discussions. This student listens and responds to the contributions of other students.

B range: The student participates consistently in discussion. This student comes to class well prepared and contributes quite regularly by sharing thoughts and questions that show insight and a familiarity with the material. This student refers to the materials discussed and shows interest in other students’ contributions.

C range: The student meets the basic requirements of class participation. This student is usually prepared and participates once in a while but not regularly. This student’s contributions offer a few insightful ideas but do not help to build a coherent and productive discussion.

D range or below: Failure to fulfill satisfactorily any of the C-range criteria will result in a grade of ‘D’ or below.

Grading Scale is as follows:

Number grade	Letter grade	GPA
90-100	A	4
85-89	A-	3.7
80-84	B+	3.3
75-79	B	3



70-74	B-	2.7
67-69	C+	2.3
65-66	C	2
62-64	C-	1.7
60-61	D	1
≤ 59	F (Failure)	0



Class Schedule (Subject to Change)

Date	Lecture	Readings
Day 1	- Dream and reality. - <i>Cogito ergo sum</i> : the foundation of human knowledge. - Do I exist?	DESCARTES, <i>Meditations on First Philosophy, Dedicatory letter to the Sorbonne, First Meditation</i> (pp. 3-15)
Day 2	- Descartes conception of the external reality: the <i>extended thing</i> . - What does it mean to perceive? - The meaning of rationalism.	DESCARTES, <i>Meditations on First Philosophy, Second Meditation</i> (pp. 16-23)
Day 3	- On the existence of God.	DESCARTES, <i>Meditations on First Philosophy, Third Meditation</i> (pp. 16-36)
Day 4	- On the relation between mind and body.	DESCARTES, <i>Meditations on First Philosophy, Sixth Meditation</i> (pp. 50-62)
Day 5	- The substance as cause of itself. Totality and infinity.	BENEDICT DE SPINOZA, <i>Ethics, Part I, Concerning God</i>
Day 6	- Another way to conceive the relation between extended and thinking thing: mind and matter.	BENEDICT DE SPINOZA, <i>Ethics, Part II, On The Nature and Origin of the Mind</i>
Day 7	- Beyond rationalism and empiricism.	IMMANUEL KANT, <i>Critique of Pure Reason</i> , pp. 99-124.
Day 8	- What does <i>a priori</i> mean?	IMMANUEL KANT, <i>Critique of Pure Reason</i> , pp. 136-152.
Day 9	- Space, time, and the scientific revolution.	IMMANUEL KANT, <i>Critique of Pure Reason</i> , pp. 172-192.
Day 10	- Is it possible not to be a subject?	H. MELVILLE, <i>Bartleby, the Scrivener</i> .
Day 11	- Introduction to nihilism.	F. DOSTOEVSKY, <i>Notes From Underground</i> .
Day 12	- Overcoming standard morality: God is dead.	F. NIETZSCHE, <i>Thus Spoke Zarathustra, First Part</i> .
Day 13	- The vision and the enigma. Beyond a linear conception of time.	F. NIETZSCHE, <i>Thus Spoke Zarathustra, Third Part</i> .
Day 14	- An outstanding interpretation of Nietzsche.	M. HEIDEGGER, <i>Nietzsche's word: "God is Dead"</i> .
Day 15	- What does it mean for something to be? The question of being.	M. HEIDEGGER, <i>Being and Time</i> , §§ 1-11.



Day 16	- How to define the world philosophically? - World and existence.	M. HEIDEGGER, <i>Being and Time</i> , §§ 12-27.
Day 17	- What does it mean to be a work of art? Art, history, and truth.	M. HEIDEGGER, <i>The Origin of the Work of Art</i>
Day 18	- What is philosophy?	G. DELEUZE, F. GUATTARI, <i>What is Philosophy?</i> , Part One, 1-2
Day 19	- The plane of immanence.	G. DELEUZE, F. GUATTARI, <i>What is Philosophy?</i> , Part One, 3-4
Day 20	- Philosophy, art, and science: differences and similarities.	G. DELEUZE, F. GUATTARI, <i>What is Philosophy?</i> , Part Two, 5-6