



Philosophy of the Human Person
PHIL R122-004

Course Term: Spring 2020

Course Location: Bobet Hall 216

Class hours: MWF 11:30-12:20pm

Instructor: Dr. Jack Stetter

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Office hours: TR 2:00-4:00pm and by appointment

Required Materials:

Title: *Down Girl: The Logic of Misogyny*

Author: Kate Manne

Edition: Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018

ISBN: 978-0190933203

Title: *Meditations on First Philosophy*

Author: Descartes

Edition: Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017

ISBN: 978-1107665736

Title: *The Philosopher: A History in Six Types*

Author: Justin E. H. Smith

Edition: Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017

ISBN: 978-0691178462

Title: *The Republic*

Author: Plato, ed. Allan Bloom

Edition: New York: Hachette, 1991

ISBN: 978-0465094080

Books for the course will be available in the **University Bookstore**. Additional texts and electronic material will be posted on the **Blackboard** course website. Your **Library Liaison** can also help you acquire electronic versions of the books. Again, consult the **Blackboard** course website for more information.

Brief Course Overview:

In this course, we raise the perennial question: *what is philosophy?* It should come as no surprise that philosophers have yet to reach a consensus as to the definition of philosophy. Etymologically, philosophy means “love of wisdom,” but this only helps so much. What is wisdom? How do we acquire it? Can we know fundamental truths without acting on them? And what of other highly specialized fields that seemingly touch on philosophical issues? In fact, philosophy is subject to many distinct, culturally sensitive definitions. Frequently, these definitions appear to contradict one another. It is doubtful that we will ever eliminate *all* ambiguity and contention in our definition of philosophy, but careful inspection of the competing views on the nature of philosophy and what we should expect of it should allow us, at the very least, to come to a broader appreciation of its purposes and place in the human experience.

Two main readings guide our discussion during the first half of the semester. The first is a recent work by Justin E. H. Smith, *The Philosopher: A History in Six Types*. Smith’s taxonomy of different sorts of philosophers sensitizes us to the way that philosophy has been taken to signify a variety of disparate theoretical and practical pursuits throughout human history. The second is Plato’s *Republic*, a cornerstone of the philosophical canon. We will be especially interested in looking to what Plato takes to be the distinctive traits of philosophical knowledge.

In the latter half of the semester, we will turn to another canonical text, Descartes’s *Meditations*. Descartes’s canonical statement in metaphysics and epistemology remains a reference for philosophers worldwide. It sets the agenda for much of Modern philosophy to follow and raises many difficult and exciting philosophical issues by means of many equally difficult and exciting philosophical arguments and thought experiments. Specific philosophical topics to be covered include the relationship of philosophy to the sciences, the aims of philosophy, philosophical skepticism, philosophical theology, and the mind-body problem. In conclusion, we

will discuss a work of contemporary moral and political philosophy, Kate Manne's *Down Girl*. This work exemplifies some of the best philosophical writing being done to deal with pressing current issues, such as misogyny.

Expected Student Learning Course Outcomes:

The student who works hard can expect to refine several extremely useful skills. These include: critical reading and writing skills; the ability to *analyze, reconstruct, and evaluate* complex arguments, which means determining the assumptions and consequences of arguments and assessing their cogency; an understanding of cultural difference and a greater sensitivity to conceptual change over space and time; research skills; and comfort and confidence in shared, cooperative discussion.

Assignments:

Week 1: Smith, *Philosopher*, Introduction, Ch. 1-2.

Core Topics – Philosophy, science, and art.

Week 2: Smith, *Philosopher*, Ch. 3-5.

Core Topics – Philosophy as a way of life.

Week 3: Smith, *Philosopher*, Ch. 6 and Conclusion

Core Topics – Cultural bias and prejudice in philosophy.

Week 4: Plato, *The Republic*, Books 1-4.

Core Topics – Philosophical argument and mythic rhetoric.

Week 5: Plato, *The Republic*, Books 5-7

Core Topics – Forms and Ideas.

Week 6: Plato, *The Republic*, Books 8-10.

Core Topics – Human nature and the nature of good governance.

Week 8: Descartes, *Meditations*, Prefatory Material, Letter, Synopsis and First Meditation.

Core Topics – Challenging orthodoxy and prejudices. **Midterm Exam Deadline.**

Week 9: Descartes, *Meditations*, First Meditation continued.
Core Topics – Hyperbolic doubt and philosophical skepticism.

Week 10: Descartes, *Meditations*, Second Meditation.
Core Topics – The *cogito* argument.

Week 11: Descartes, *Meditations*, Third Meditation, selections from objections and replies.
Core Topics – Philosophical theology and “cosmological proofs” of God’s existence.

Week 12: Descartes, *Meditations*, Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Meditations.
Core Topics – Human cognition and volition, God’s existence, and the existence of the material world.

Week 13: Mann, *Down Girl*
Core Topics – The nature of misogyny and contemporary instances of misogyny.

Week 14: Mann, *Down Girl*
Core Topics – Testimonial injustice and hermeneutical injustice.

Week 15: **Last Week before Final Exam Week.**
Core Topics – **Reviewing Themes in the Phil. of Human Person. Deadline for Term Paper.**

Week 16: **Final Exam Week – No Classes.**

This course schedule is provisional and subject to change. *All changes will be announced in class and made visible on the **Blackboard** course page.* Students are responsible for following these updates. For instance, I will sometimes indicate as an **Announcement** on our course **Blackboard** page the specific passages I would like you to focus on for the Week’s **Assignment**.

Please also keep track of the Full Semester Undergraduate Academic Calendar for information concerning the **Last Day to Add**, the **Last Day to Drop**, and the **Last Day to Withdraw**. You should consult with your **academic advisor** before deciding to **Withdraw** from any courses, including this one.

Participation Expectations:

Active and beneficial participation in discussion is very gratefully appreciated by all. Being a good participant means engaging with fellow students and creating a space for discussion and the exchange of ideas.

Criteria for Assigning the Course Grade:

Your final grade is determined based on the quality of your term paper, your midterm exam, weekly question submissions, and your participation in classroom discussion. Your **Blackboard Grade Book** will help you keep track of your grades and your progress over the course of the semester. I may decide later to introduce new grading methods if I think they will help students master the material. **All changes to the syllabus will be announced in class and on Blackboard.**

Failure to turn in all outstanding work by the last day of the semester will result in a Failing grade, unless we have already reached an explicit agreement for you to “**Withdraw**” or take an “**Incomplete**”.

All assignments must be completed to pass the course. If you are expecting to need more time to complete an assignment, contact me at least 72 hours in advance. No extensions will be granted unless in the case of a genuine emergency. If you *do* have a genuine emergency, say a medical or mental health emergency, **it is extremely important** to contact the **University Counseling Center** at **504.865.3835**— this is a 24/7 counseling number. Counseling is free of charge, make use of it! In fact, the **UCC** can help you with several issues you might face while at Loyola. University classes are often *very challenging*, but your well-being always comes first.

Last but certainly not least, please consider visiting the **Student Success Center** for any tutoring needs. For instance, they can help you with your writing. This is a resource at your disposal whenever you need it, make use of it!

All written work is evaluated in terms of its accuracy, clarity, persuasiveness, and readability.

Midterm exam: 20% of final grade. Students will be asked to write a brief commentary (roughly 3 pages) on a text selected from the course material we will have read by Week 8. That commentary should both describe the author’s argument present in the text (re: what are the premises and conclusions) and it should also evaluate it. I will announce the text on **Blackboard**. The commentary must be submitted **in class as a printed document, all pages stapled**.

Term paper: 30% of final grade. Students will be asked to write a brief commentary (roughly 5 pages) on a text selected from the course material we will have read by the term's end. That commentary should both describe the author's argument present in the text (re: what are the premises and conclusions) and it should also evaluate it. I will announce the text on **Blackboard**. The commentary must be submitted **in class as a printed document, all pages stapled**.

The above assignments (**Midterm exam and Term paper**) should achieve two goals. One is **descriptive**. You should tell me what is happening in the passage I assign in simple language. Figure out what author's views are and describe them to me. What is the context of the discussion, or how does the passage I've selected relate to bigger thematic issues from the work? Aim to restate the author's views in two or three sentences before further describing the structure and content of the passage I've selected.

The second goal is **evaluative**. You should tell me how strong you think the argument(s) is (or are), and why. Is the author persuasive? How compelling is the evidence the author provides for their view(s)? Whether you decide to defend or refute the author, consider possible objections to your own position.

Written work must be word-processed: 12 pt. Times New Roman, double-spaced, 1-inch margins. If you do not have a computer, please consider using a computer at the Library or asking to borrow one. Indicate your name, the assignment number, the course number, and my name. All papers are expected to be proofread and edited for spelling mistakes, etc., before submission. Poor presentation of final work will be reflected in the final grade. Good writing is *important*. Consult Strunk and White, *The Elements of Style*, if you have any doubts about English prose writing. (It's a classic.) I also highly recommend Umberto Eco, *How to Write a Thesis*, for general research advice. Although designed for upper-graduate level work, it's quite useful for researchers at any stage. It is important to develop skills in citation writing and bibliography writing. I will do my best to help you develop these. Consider also visiting the **OWLS Center** for further help.

Three Pop Quizzes: 30% of final grade. There will be three pop quizzes during the semester. These will be short answer and multiple-choice style tests. The test material will be chosen from the reading and classroom discussions.

Attendance and Participation: 20% of final grade (see **Attendance Policy**, below).

Attendance Policy:

Roll call is taken at the beginning of every class. If you are absent from class, you are responsible for finding out from your classmates what we covered that day and what was assigned as work, as well as for obtaining copies of any materials that were distributed that day. **All material covered in class could appear on a pop quiz or on the Midterm/Final Exams.** Three absences or more will be reflected in the final grade. If you have a medical emergency, please contact me as soon as possible so that we can arrange for you to make up missed classroom work. All students are sincerely encouraged to come to Office Hours after any absence.

Classroom Policy:

The University classroom is meant to be an adult setting, and appropriate decorum and dress is expected. I would prefer you not eat *unless* you have a doctor's note explaining why you must eat during classroom hours. Special accommodations can be provided, just please consult with me and with the **Student Success Center**. Cellphones should be turned off. Computers are for classroom related activities only. Please be polite to your fellow students. In general, if you have a question, before emailing me, please consider coming to office hours.