

Summer 2010

Dr. Jeffrey Morgan

## University of the Fraser Valley

### Philosophy 120

# Knowledge & Reality

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**Office Hours:** Monday & Wednesday: 12:00 - 12:30 pm  
Tuesday & Thursday: 1:00 - 1:30 pm

**Class Time & Venue:** Monday & Wednesday: 1:00: - 3:50; D 136

**Course Text:** Blackburn, Simon (1999). *Think: A compelling introduction to philosophy*. Oxford.

**Course Description:** Philosophy 120 is an introduction to the “big questions” of human life: What is reality? What is knowledge? What do I really know? What and who am I? These are the questions that most of us ask from time to time, but are usually persuaded to put out of our minds in order to concentrate on more pressing or practical issues. The questions seem too difficult and there are many more immediate concerns to occupy our energies. In Philosophy 120, however, we will allow ourselves to think hard about these issues.

Philosophy is unlike many other university subjects with which you may be familiar. In philosophy, we grapple with enduring problems that have resisted definitive solution for thousands of years. It is not however that there are no answers to the questions with which we will wrestle—

indeed, we might think that the problem is that there are too many answers, offered by philosophers and religions in countless cultures and periods. Furthermore, it is not clear how we could even begin to offer answers that will be satisfactory to all and there is little reason to be optimistic that these issues will be resolved anytime soon.

We will examine five main issues in this course. We will begin with an examination of the concept of knowledge, entertaining seriously the possibility that genuine knowledge is impossible. Second, we will consider the nature of mind and the relation of mind to body. Third, we will consider whether people have free will, or whether on the contrary all our actions are determined. The fourth question we will consider is the nature of a person's self or identity – what is it that makes me “me” and you “you”? Fifth, we will consider the problem of the external world – in what sense does the world beyond our minds exist? Does the mind in fact construct reality or does reality exist distinct from the mind?

### **Objectives:**

1. Students will become acquainted with major problems in Western philosophy: the problems of knowledge, mind-body relations, whether people have free will, the nature of the self and the nature of reality.
2. Students will understand and be able to respond critically to epistemological and metaphysical issues and to produce their own coherent, defensible positions on such issues.
3. Students will develop their abilities to write clear and persuasive philosophical essays.

### **Evaluation:**

Attendance	10%
Two short papers	20%; 25%
Midterm	20 %
Final Exam	25%

### **Course Content\*:**

<b>DATE</b>	<b>TOPIC</b>	<b>READING</b>
May 10	Introduction: Course Requirements	Think: pp. 1-13 Descartes: Meditations 1 & 2 – use the following internet versions: <a href="http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/phl302/texts/d">http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/phl302/texts/d</a>

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\* I reserve the right to make changes as necessary.

		<a href="http://escartes/meditations/meditations.html">escartes/meditations/meditations.html</a>
May 12	Knowledge	Think: pp. 15-48
May 17	Knowledge	Think: pp. 15-48
May 19	Mind <b>First paper due</b>	Think: pp. 49-80
May 24	<b>Victoria Day: No Class</b>	
May 26	Mind	Think: pp. 49-80
May 31	Free will	Think: pp.81-119
June 2	Free will	Think: pp.81-119
June 7	The Self	Think: pp. 120-148
June 9	<b>Midterm</b>	
June 14	The Self	Think: pp. 120-148
June 16	The World <b>Second paper due</b>	Think: pp. 233-269
June 21	The World	Think: pp. 233-269
June 23	Conclusion	