

PHILOSOPHY 120
Knowledge and Reality
Section AB1 — September 2007

INSTRUCTOR: Dr. Peter B. Raabe
CLASSROOM: A354
TIME: Wednesdays, 8:30 a.m. – 11:20 a.m.
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COURSE OUTLINE

OBJECTIVES: In this class we'll be discussing and thinking about a number of representative questions dealing with the nature of reality (metaphysics) and knowledge (epistemology). But this is not a history of philosophy course. Instead we'll be doing the work ourselves, tackling a range of questions such as, How do we know life isn't just one long dream? Given all the changes I go through, am I still the same person today I was ten years ago? If every event is preceded by a cause, how can we say we have free will? Does God exist? We'll also be considering why discussing and thinking about these sort of questions is important to living a good life.

TEXT: required: *Ultimate Questions* by Nils Ch. Rauhut (Penguin, 2004).

EVALUATION: There will be two short essay assignments, a midterm, and a final exam.

Distribution of marks:

Essay 1 (max. 4 pages double spaced)	25%
Midterm examination	20%
Essay 2 (max. 6 pages double spaced)	25%
Final examination	30%

Essays: You may use any citation style you wish as long as you keep it consistent throughout your entire essay. Quoted passages must be properly cited to avoid plagiarism. Please **do not** put any sort of plastic cover on your essay. A title page is acceptable. Always put your student number on anything you hand in.

LATE ASSIGNMENTS: Assignments must be handed in at the beginning of class. Late assignments without good reason will be given an automatic 0%.

OUTLINE OF TOPICS AND READINGS

- 1) Wednesday
September 5 **Chapter 1&2**
Greetings and introduction — What is philosophy anyway?
- 2) **Chapter 3**
Sept 12 What can be known? (Epistemology – theories and skepticism)
- 3) **Chapter 3**
Sept 19 Existence (idealism, empiricism, and rationalism)
- 4) **Chapter 3**
Sept 26 Substance **(Essay 1 due)**
- 5) **Chapter 4**
October 3 Free will & Responsibility
- 6) **MIDTERM EXAM**
Oct 10
- 7) **Chapter 5**
Oct 17 What does it mean to be me? 1 (Personal Identity – soul and memory)
- 8) **Chapter 6**
Oct 24 What does it mean to be me? 2 (Personal Identity – mind/body)
- 9) **Chapter 6**
Oct 31 Change and time
- 10) **Chapter 6**
Nov. 7 How good is scientific knowledge? (postmodernism, feminism)
- 11) **Chapter 7**
Nov. 14 Does God exist? **(Essay 2 due)**
- 12) **Chapter 7**
Nov. 21 Does metaphysics remove meaning?
- 13) **Chapter 7**
Nov. 28 Open discussion and review for final exam.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY “PHILOSOPHY”?

Philosophy involves examining the reasons we have for the values we hold as good, and the beliefs we hold as true, so that we can free ourselves from blindly following tradition, obeying the dictates of some authority figure, or simply acting on our emotions.

Personal philosophy: my philosophy; my approach to life; my “Weltanschauung;” what leads me to act the way I do; what I believe, not just spiritual.

Being philosophical: critical and creative thinking and discussion; good reasoning about an issue; a thoughtful and thorough exploration; a learned skill.

History of philosophy: the study of the origin and evolution of ideas; what great thinkers have said on various important topics.

Academic philosophy: structured courses studying philosophers and their theories and ideas; systematic examination of various, mostly abstract, issues.

Applied philosophy: discussion and research into problems arising in specific areas such as medicine, business, the environment, etc.

Philosophical counselling: A philosopher helps a non-philosopher resolve real-life issues and problems by examining conflicting values, problematic assumptions, dubious beliefs, unjustified biases, things learned as a child, etc.

Epicurus (341 B.C.-271 B.C.): “Empty is the argument of the philosopher which does not relieve any human suffering; for just as there is no benefit in medicine if it does not drive out bodily diseases, so there is no benefit in philosophy if it does not drive out diseases of the soul.”