

Basic Problems of Philosophy: Knowledge, Education, and Identity

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Office: Bowden 313
Hours: MF 10 – 11

Phil 100 – 002
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MWF 9 – 9:50
Ignatius Few Building 131

Description:

What is “knowledge”? How do we come to know it? And who is it that knows? Education as a vehicle for receiving, discovering, and interrogating knowledge has been a philosophical topic ever since the foundations of Western classical philosophy in ancient Greece. For almost as long, the concept of personal identity has also been at issue – Do we have a stable self that persists over time? What is the role of experience and the social realm in shaping our identities? In contemporary thought, the topic of identity has gained even more emphasis as thinkers attend to previously unexplored systems of meaning, privilege, and oppression. What can we know about identity, and how does our identity shape what we know? Does education liberate or constrain our personal identities? Over the course of the semester, we will explore these questions through the lens of important philosophical thinkers, theories, and texts, as well as through contemporary debates and commentaries on education. We will also attempt to engage critically with our own personal identities and our educational histories in a class blog.

Course Objectives:

Throughout the course, students and instructor will engage in discussion, reading, and writing assignments in order to:

1. Develop the ability to read well by engaging with challenging texts; this also means developing the ability to ask relevant, interesting questions and connect ideas between passages, thinkers, and themes.
2. Develop writing skills across varying formats and lengths, providing clear theses, well-supported claims, and effective organization. By the end of the semester, each student will hopefully have gained a habit of semi-professional writing through the blogging component and will have a useful “product” to take away from the class.
3. Think critically about education, its purpose, and effects in order to better understand their own experience, goals, and situation in higher education.
4. Gain a general introduction to the history of philosophy and exposure to key figures and movements within classical, modern, and contemporary eras.

Required Texts:

Plato, *Protagoras and Meno*, Penguin, 2006. Trans. Beresford. ISBN: 978-0140449037
Plato, *Republic*, Hackett, 1992. Ed. Reeve. Trans. Grube. ISBN: 978-0872201361
Rousseau, *Emile*, Basic Books, 1979. Trans. Allan Bloom. ISBN: 978-0465019311
Dewey, *Experience and Education*, Touchstone, 1997. ISBN: 978-0684838281

Assignments:

1. Blog:

Because this class awards four credit hours and meets for only three hours per week, Emory requires an extra online component to supplement our in-class time that ostensibly stands in for an extra hour of class. With this in mind, we will have a classroom blog to which all students will be required to post weekly. You will also be required to post responses to other students' posts so that we can continue our conversations outside of the classroom.

Blog posts should be a chance to reflect on the course themes in general, connect the readings to other interests, classes, or experiences, thoughtfully present and reflect on your personal opinions regarding education, and work through questions inspired by our discussion. These posts should relate to our class themes, but can stray from our material in order to bring in other outside resources: books, theorists, stories, news, videos, poems, films, etc. These posts are an opportunity to be creative and reflective, and are a chance to think about your personal connection to the material.

While these posts may be of a more personal nature content-wise, and of a more casual writing style, they should still be professional, thoughtful, and critical. This is not an easy task. Blending our professional and personal voices to produce something interesting yet still *polished* will take practice, but is immensely useful: many successful blogs employ this style, and sections of investigative reporting, memoirs, essays, etc. I'm sure you can think of other examples.

Weekly Posts:

Students will be required to post weekly to the class blog **by 8 A.M. Monday** morning each week, unless otherwise noted in the schedule. These posts should be approximately 250-500 words long.

They should be on a topic clearly related to the themes of the course: knowledge, education, and identity, and the relationship between the three. They can focus on outside materials, personal experiences, or opinions, but must be polished pieces that include support for your positions when applicable, proper citation of sources, and clear articulation of how your idea, story, or connection relates to something covered in our course.

Occasionally over the semester I will provide a more focused prompt for your blog posts, or require you to respond to a particular question or incorporate an example or piece of media in your post. I will announce these details ahead of time.

Weekly Comments:

Two comments on others' blog posts will also be due weekly, by **8 A.M. on Wednesday and 8 A.M. on Friday**. If a post already has several comments, I highly encourage you to respond to another post so that we can engage with everyone's ideas in class. I also encourage you to use one of your comments (most likely the one due by Friday) to respond to a comment made on *your* post, if possible. Many of these comments will include questions, suggestions, or critiques, and it will improve your own thinking and writing to respond to those directed at your work.

Extra Credit Opportunities:

I encourage all students to set up their own personal blog, independent of the class's blog site, and copy each entry posted to the class blog to this personal blog throughout the semester. Once you set up your personal blog, posting to two places will only take a couple extra minutes and will ensure that you have a lasting product that you can keep and continue to develop once the class, and even your time at Emory, is over. Getting in the habit of writing regularly, semi-professionally, and crafting interesting observations and comments will be useful for many future endeavors and for personal growth. Cultivating an online presence is also increasingly important and helpful for employment opportunities. For these reasons, I hope that many set up their own blog with the posts you will be generating over the course of the semester, and put some work into giving it a professional and attractive feel. I will award **up to 5% of your final grade** in extra credit if this is maintained throughout the semester. If you already have a personal blog and wish to migrate your class posts there, please see me about a slightly modified way you can take advantage of the extra credit option.

You may also attend the Phi Sigma Tau Lecture given by Dr. Ann Hartle on Thursday, April 16, at 4:15 p.m. in Psychology 290. If you attend the lecture and question and answer period and turn in a one-page summary of her talk by the following Monday in class, you may receive **up to 2%** of your final grade.

2. Reading Responses

Reading responses will also be **due once per week**. Responses will take one of three forms:

A. Seminar Questions: Three thoughtful, interesting, and critical questions that respond to the text, using page number citations to indicate which passages the question is coming from and which passages might aid us in answering it.

B. Keyword Definitions: A list of the most important "terms of art" used throughout the text, with thoughtful and text-based definitions of **what those terms mean and how they are utilized in the text**. These should not be merely difficult vocabulary, but rather specific jargon employed by the philosopher that are given a specific meaning, role, or connotation in the work at hand. Definitions should not be dictionary definitions of the terms, nor should they be quotations from elsewhere in the reading – if the author gives a direct definition, it should be re-phrased in your own words. You must provide page number citations to the passages you used to define the term and its role in the text. The amount of terms you identify will vary depending on the text, but you must include **at least four terms**. If you cannot identify four "terms of art" in the text, you must choose a different response format.

C. Text Outline: This should be a general outline of the reading's argument, structure, and main points. You may want to select just a portion of the text to do an outline on—a particularly difficult and dense passage, for example. If you choose to outline just a portion of the text, you must justify your selection (why you think it is *important* or *valuable* to look at this section closely, in relation to the argument or main points of the entire piece) in one to three sentences at the top of your paper. If you choose to do a general outline of the entire reading, you do not need a justification.

You may pick any of the three styles you wish for each week. You may switch between them as often as you like. You may find it helpful to do more than one to help with your reading

comprehension. You must, however, **do each of the three at least once** throughout the semester.

Only one response is required per week, and the choice is yours whether to complete it for Monday, Wednesday, or Friday's class. If there are only two classes that week, you must complete the response for one of those two classes. **Regardless of the day you choose to complete the response, you must bring a printed copy to class to turn in to me**, and have access to your questions during class. If you cannot make it to class, you must email your response to me by class time in order to receive credit.

Depending on the specific text or how helpful each of the response styles are throughout the semester, I reserve the right to limit your options for a given week to a specific style (questions, definitions, outline), or to give you further instructions as to particular sections to focus on.

3. Papers

You will have three short papers (2-3 pages) and one long paper (6-8 pages) due over the course of the semester. Papers should be double-spaced, with 12 pt. Times New Roman font and one-inch margins. The short papers will be due approximately every three to four weeks, and the long paper will be due at the exam time assigned to our class. These papers will respond critically and directly to the course texts. There will be a rubric and further details to come. Each paper will also be accompanied by a short author's note that evaluates your writing process and the strengths and weaknesses of the paper. This is a required portion of the paper. More details regarding the author's note will also be made available.

Grading:

Grading Breakdown:

Attendance and Participation:	15 %
Weekly Reading Response:	15 %
Blog Posts and Comments:	20 %
Three Short Papers:	30 %
Final Paper:	20 %

Grading Scale:

A	93-100
A-	90-92
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D+	67-69
D	60-66

Grading Details:

Attendance and Participation:

You are allowed to miss **three** classes throughout the semester without penalty. After the third absence, each unexcused absence will count as 2% off your final grade. Excused absences may be obtained by ADSR or by contacting the Office of Undergraduate Education in White Hall Room 300. Please arrive on time to class. If I notice a pattern of tardiness, I will approach you about the problem. If tardiness persists, I will mark each late arrival as an absence from then on. If this problem is widespread, I will adopt this policy for the entire class.

Because this class will be primarily structured as a seminar, I expect participation from each student. This means you have arrived having done the reading and are prepared to engage in discussion with your classmates about the text. I expect each student to engage in dialogue throughout the semester, and will approach you if I think you are not speaking up enough. Please come talk to me if this is a particular challenge for you, and we can identify strategies for making this aspect of class more manageable.

Weekly Reading Responses, Blog Posts and Comments:

You are allowed to skip three reading responses and three blog posts throughout the semester. We have thirteen weeks of class in which these assignments will be due. This means that you will have turned in at minimum **ten** blog posts and **ten** reading responses by the end of the semester. Each will be graded on a scale of 1-3.

You may miss only one week's worth of blog comments without penalty. Blog comments will be graded for completion and awarded 1 point each.

Papers:

Each of the three short papers will be worth 10% of your final grade, and the long paper will be worth 20%. A grading rubric will be provided.

Late Policy:

No late work will be accepted. This includes electronic blog posts and comments. The only exception will be for excused absences for illness, or if cleared in advance with me given specific extenuating circumstances. If you know you will be absent on a day a paper is due, you must email me your paper in advance of the class session at which it is due.

Other Policies:

Accommodations:

If you need any disability accommodations, please let me know early in the semester. You will want to contact the Office of Disability Services, Administration Building, Suite 110, phone: (404) 727-9877. They can help you acquire the accommodations you need.

Honor Code:

All students are expected to abide by Emory's official Honor Code policy. Emory's honor code can be found here: http://catalog.college.emory.edu/academic/policy/honor_code.html.

Weekly Schedule:

Week 1 – Course Introduction

W 1/14 – Introductions

F 1/16 – Blog Workshop

1. Ancient Conceptions of Knowledge and the Problem of Education

Week 2 – Socrates

M 1/19 – NO CLASS (MLK Day)

W 1/21 – *Meno* (all), *Protagoras* (351b-358d)

F 1/23 – Continued Discussion of *Meno* and *Protagoras*

Week 3 – Plato

M 1/26 – *Republic*, selections

W 1/28 – *Republic*, selections

F 1/30 – *Republic*, selections

Week 4 – Aristotle

M 2/2 – Knowledge: *Metaphysics* I.1, *Nichomachean Ethics* VI.3-8 (~7 pgs)

W 2/4 – The Good: *Nichomachean Ethics* I.1-4, I.7-9, X.7-8 (~11 pgs)

F 2/6 – Education and the State: *Politics* VII.13, VIII.1-3 (~5 pgs)

2. Enlightenment-Era Thinkers on Knowledge, Identity, and Education

Week 5 – Locke

M 2/9 – Paragraphs 1, 3, 4 from Book II, Ch. 27, “Of Identity and Diversity,” from *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. ***First short paper due.**

W 2/11 – “Of Identity and Diversity,” paragraphs 9-11, 16-20, 22, 25-26

F 2/13 – NO CLASS

Week 6 – Kant

M 2/16 – NO CLASS (Presidents’ Day)

W 2/18 – *Critique of Pure Reason*, selections from Editor’s Introduction and “On the Original Synthetic Unity of Apperception” ***Blog Post due today.**

F 2/20 – *Critique of Pure Reason*, “On the Basis of the Distinction of All Objects as such into Phenomena and Noumena”

Week 7 – Hegel

M 2/23 – Selections from “Sense-Certainty,” from *Phenomenology of Spirit*

W 2/25 – Class Cancelled, Snow Day

F 2/27 – Selections from “Lordship and Bondage,” from *Phenomenology of Spirit*

Week 8 – Hegel, cont. & Misc.

M 3/2 – “Lordship and Bondage,” continued

W 3/4 – Special Assignment: Questions and Connections

F 3/6 – Writing Workshop

Spring Break 3/9 – 3/13

3. Education, Oppression, and Power

Week 9 – Rousseau

M 3/16 — *Emile*, selections * **Short Paper #2 Due**

W 3/18 — *Emile*, selections

F 3/20 — *Emile*, selections

Week 10 – Progressive Education

M 3/23 — John Dewey, *Experience and Education*

W 3/25 — *Experience and Education*, continued

F 3/27 — *Experience and Education*, continued

Week 11 – Liberatory Education

M 3/30 — Paulo Friere, Ch 2 of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (17 pages)

W 4/1 — Ivan Illich, “Phenomenology of School,” from *Deschooling Society* (8 pgs)

F 4/3 — John Taylor Gatto, “The Seven-Lesson Schoolteacher,” in *Dumbing Us Down* (20 pgs)

Week 11 – Education and Control

M 4/6 — Foucault, “Method,” from *History of Sexuality Vol. 1* (4 pgs); “Discourse and Power” from *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: An Introduction* (2 pgs)

W 4/8 — Foucault, “Docile Bodies,” from *Discipline and Punish* (35 pgs)

F 4/10 — Foucault, continued. Writing Workshop.

4. Psychoanalytic Identity

Week 12 – Psychoanalytic Conception of the Self

M 4/13 — Foucault, cont. * **Third short paper due.**

W 4/15 — CLASS CANCELED.

F 4/17 — Freud, “A Note Upon the Mystic Writing Pad.”

Week 13 – Psychoanalytic Conception of the Self, cont.

M 4/20 — Freud, *An Outline of Psychoanalysis*, Ch. 1 “The Psychological Apparatus,” and Ch. 9 “The Internal World”

W 4/22 — Freud, *An Outline of Psychoanalysis*, Ch. 2 “The Theory of the Instincts”

F 4/24 — Freud, cont.

Week 15 – Course Conclusion

M 4/27 — Final Paper Writing Workshop

Long Paper Due: Wednesday, 5/6 at Midnight.

End of Term: Mon 5/11

* I reserve the right to alter this reading list at any point throughout the semester. Any changes to this list will be announced in class and via email.