

# WHAT PHILOSOPHY IS

80-100, FALL 2008

## GENERAL COURSE INFORMATION

*Time:* Monday and Wednesday 1:30–2:20 PM

*Room:* Hamburg Hall 1000

## INSTRUCTOR

*Name:* David Emmanuel Gray

*Office:* Baker Hall 135-F

*Email:* [degray@andrew.cmu.edu](mailto:degray@andrew.cmu.edu)

*Office Hours:* Monday and Wednesday 2:30–4:00 PM or by appointment

## RECITATION LEADERS

*Name:* Jayna Bonfini

*Office:* Baker Hall 135-F

*Email:* [jbonfini@andrew.cmu.edu](mailto:jbonfini@andrew.cmu.edu)

*Office Hours:* Tuesday 12:00–1:00 PM  
and Friday 9:30–10:30 AM

*Name:* David Infortunio

*Office:* Baker Hall 161-A

*Email:* [dinfortu@andrew.cmu.edu](mailto:dinfortu@andrew.cmu.edu)

*Office Hours:* Thursday 3:00–4:00 PM  
and Friday 12:30–1:30 PM

## RECITATION INFORMATION

SECTION I: Bonfini

*Time:* Friday 10:30–11:20 AM

*Room:* Porter Hall A19D

SECTION K: Infortunio

*Time:* Friday 1:30–2:20 PM

*Room:* Porter Hall A21

SECTION J: Bonfini

*Time:* Friday 11:30 AM–12:20 PM

*Room:* Baker Hall 154A

SECTION L: Infortunio

*Time:* Friday 2:30–3:20 PM

*Room:* Porter Hall A19

## ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPDATES

Important course information will be posted on the Blackboard for this class on the web. Please routinely check for updates at:

<http://www.cmu.edu/blackboard/>

## REQUIRED TEXTS

All articles are available in PDF format on Blackboard. You will be expected to print them out and bring these hardcopies to class the day they are discussed.

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

“Wonder is the feeling of a philosopher,” said Plato, “and philosophy begins in wonder.” In this course, I hope to share the feelings of wonder that have affected philosophers for millennia. In particular, we will explore classical and contemporary works that address a few representative philosophical problems concerning God, the Good and the Beautiful. While this course’s approach may be more rigorous than you are used to, the problems we address should not be. For as long as there have been people, adults and children (*especially* children) have asked these questions. You have undoubtedly asked some of them yourself.

There is no simple and precise definition of the subject-matter for philosophy, as it covers many different topics and disciplines. For this course, we will look at three branches within philosophy and some basic problems they each address. We will begin with the theological question of whether it is possible to demonstrate that God exists. Then we will move into the domain of ethics, which concerns the nature of morality and questions of right and wrong. Following that, we will return to theology and examine the relationship between reason and religious faith. Finally, we will conclude with aesthetics, focusing on whether judgments of a work of art are susceptible to rational deliberation.

Throughout the course, you will not merely learn about philosophy, but you will also actively practice it. I encouraged you to critically examine and develop your own views on these issues. While these problems may initially appear obscure and irrelevant, our responses to them profoundly shape how we understand ourselves and our place in the world.

## COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of this term, I expect that you will be able to

- Describe those problems in philosophy that we cover in class,
- Clearly articulate the arguments that attempt to address these problems,
- Critically evaluate these arguments, and
- Communicate all the above through both verbal and written discourse.

Each course requirement is designed with these objectives in mind.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Journal Assignments	= 35%
Homework Assignments	= 10% (8 @ 1.25% each)
Analytical Analyses	= 15% (2 @ 5% for the first and 10% for the second)
Critical Position Papers	= 40% (2 @ 20% each)

Philosophy is a full-contact sport, but conducted as a cooperative process. Together we wrestle with arguments and not attack those advocating them. Classes will follow an interactive lecture format, with time left at the end for discussion, and recitations will typically follow a seminar format. As a result, the quality of the course depends critically on the quality of

each individual's attention during lecture and participation during recitation. The purpose of us coming together as a class is to engage in philosophical activity together.

To help in your learning, I strongly encourage you to also discuss this course's issues outside of class with your instructor, recitation leaders, fellow classmates, friends, and family. However, all written work must be done independently, unless otherwise noted. Students are expected to be familiar with the university policies on cheating and plagiarism. If you have any questions, please ask; do not assume.

## GRADING SCALE

Each assignment will be graded on a 100 point scale. Unless you are notified of otherwise, the grading distribution will be as follows:

90–100	A	60–69.9	D
80–89.9	B	0–59.9	R
70–79.9	C		

Your final course grade will be on the same 100 point scale, with each assignment weighted as indicated in the course requirements section above.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

### INTRODUCTION – PHILOSOPHY AND ARGUMENTATION

August 25: Course Introduction.

August 27: Irving M. Copi and Carl Cohen, "Propositions and Arguments".

August 29: Introductory Recitation.

September 1: No Class.

September 3: Plato, *Apology*.

September 5: Recitation: First homework assignment due.

### PART I – PROVING THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

September 8: Saint Anselm, "The Ontological Argument".

William L. Rowe, "The Ontological Argument".

September 10: Saint Thomas Aquinas, "Five Ways to Prove that God Exists".

Michael Martin, "The Cosmological Argument".

**First analytical analysis topic assigned.**

September 12: Recitation: Second homework assignment due.

September 15: David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*.

**First analytical analysis due by 11:59 PM via TurnItIn.**

September 17: William Paley, "The Argument from Design".

**Second analytical analysis topic assigned.**

September 19: Recitation: Third homework assignment due.

September 22: Stephen Jay Gould, “The Panda’s Thumb” and “Senseless Signs of History”.  
**Proto-journal due.**

## **PART II – THE NATURE OF MORALITY**

September 24: Ruth Benedict, “Anthropology and the Abnormal”.  
James Rachels, “The Challenge of Cultural Relativism”.

September 26: Recitation: **Second analytical analysis rough draft and argument map due.**

September 29: David Hume, “Morality as Based on Sentiment”.  
James Rachels, “Subjectivism in Ethics”.

October 1: Plato, *Euthyphro*.

October 3: Recitation: **Peer reviews and fourth homework assignment due.**

October 6: Ayn Rand, “Value Yourself”.  
James Rachels, “Ethical Egoism”.

**Second analytical analysis due by 11:59 PM via TurnItIn.**

October 8: Jeremy Bentham, “The Principle of Utility”.  
Robert Nozick, “The Experience Machine”.

October 10: Recitation: **Fifth homework assignment due.**

October 13: John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*.  
E.F. Carritt, “Criticisms of Utilitarianism”.

**First critical position paper topic assigned.**

October 15: Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*.  
**Sixth homework assignment due.**

October 17: No Recitation.

## **PART III – REASON AND RELIGIOUS FAITH**

October 20: Richard Swinburne, “Why God Allows Evil”.

October 22: J.L. Mackie, “Evil and Omnipotence”.

October 24: Recitation: **First critical position paper rough draft and argument map due.**

October 27: Blaise Pascal, “The Wager”.

William G. Lycan and George N. Schlesinger, “You Bet Your Life: Pascal’s Wager Defended”.

October 29: *Genesis* 22: 1–14.

Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*.

October 31: Recitation: **Peer reviews and seventh homework assignment due.**

November 3: Friedrich Nietzsche, “The Death of God”.

**First critical position paper due by 11:59 PM via TurnItIn.**

## **PART IV – ÆSTHETIC JUDGMENT**

November 5: Plato, *Republic*.

November 7: Recitation: **Eighth homework assignment due.**

November 10: Aristotle, *Poetics*.

November 12: David Hume, *Of the Standard of Taste*.

November 14: Recitation: **Ninth homework assignment due.**

November 17: Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*.

**Second critical position paper topic assigned.**

November 19: Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*.

November 21: Recitation: **Tenth homework assignment due.**

November 24: Leo Tolstoy, *What is Art?*

November 26: No Class.

November 28: No Recitation.

### **EPILOGUE – WHAT PHILOSOPHY IS (AND ISN'T)**

December 1: Harry G. Frankfurt, “On Bullshit”.

December 3: Plato, “The Allegory of the Cave”.

Voltaire, “The Good Brahmin”.

December 5: Recitation: **Complete journal due.**

December 10: **Second critical position paper due by 11:59 PM via TurnItIn.**

### EXPLANATION OF ASSIGNMENTS

Reading: Every day of lecture there will be an assigned reading (see the course schedule) that you will be expected to have read and thought about before class. This will allow us to devote more of lecture and recitation to collaborate in understanding the arguments in these texts. Hence, you need to do more than merely peruse the readings: you must endeavor to understand the author’s position and how the author justifies it. In some cases, this may take multiple readings to accomplish. However, reading assignments are relatively short so that this is feasible. In addition, it is good to take notes while reading, so that you can remember the author’s main points. Finally, feel free to bring questions to class. This material is hardly obvious and, despite a tremendous amount of scholarship, it still challenges the most intelligent of people.

Journal Assignments: The journal assignments will help you become a more active reader of philosophy. At the **BEGINNING** of each lecture, a short (1 typed page or 1–2 neatly handwritten pages, whichever you prefer) journal entry will be due concerning the reading being discussed that day. The point of this is to deepen your understanding of the reading, and prepare you to discuss it intelligently. Each entry should: (a) summarize the main ideas of the reading in your own words, and (b) respond to these ideas with observations, insights, questions and reflections of your own. Reading questions will be provided with each reading assignment that may give you ideas for things to write about in your journal. Engage the readings closely and critically; explore the terrain of ideas in ways that deepen and enrich your thinking. Depending on your attitude, this will be either busy-work or the most rewarding part of the course—find a way to make it the latter, seeing your recitation leader or me for help if necessary.

Your recitation leader will initial your journal entries in order to mark that you turned it in on time, and later return it during recitation. A few weeks into class (see the course schedule for the exact date), you will turn in your proto-journal, which consists of all your journal entries up to that date. The journal will not be graded, but your recitation leader will leave you feedback in order to give you a sense of how you are doing so far in the course.

Your complete journal will be due at the **BEGINNING** of the course's last recitation (see the course schedule for the exact date). It will be assessed according to whether it (1) engages closely with the readings, (2) identifies the reading's main ideas, (3) poses questions and challenges to test the reading's claims, and (4) explores the ideas in interesting, thought-provoking ways. Your journal will be graded on the 100 point scale as follows:

95	Consistently engages the readings with care. Picks out main ideas and expresses them succinctly. Raises interesting questions and objections. Inspired, stimulating read.
85	Frequently reads and reflects with care. Usually identifies important ideas. Sometimes raises interesting points and questions. Inconsistently inspired.
75	Missing entries. Distinct signs of careless or superficial reading. Often misses key ideas. Inconsistently critical. Bland, uninteresting, or uninspired.
65 or lower	Significant numbers of missing entries. Sloppy work with few signs of having engaged closely with the readings. Fails to use opportunity to extend and deepen thinking.

Truly outstanding journals may receive a perfect 100. Failure to turn in a journal will result in a 0. **EACH** missing entry results in an automatic 10 point deduction. However, **YOU ARE ALLOWED FOUR LATE ENTRIES** (a late entry is an entry not turned in when originally due, but is submitted with the completed journal) at no penalty, but each additional late entry results in an automatic 3 point deduction. Late completed journals will be accepted but with a penalty.

*Class Participation:* Class attendance and participation are very important in understanding and retaining the class material. You are expected to participate thoughtfully, to take notes, and to have a grasp of what was accomplished in each meeting. I recognize that not everybody is comfortable speaking in class, but active class participation can increase your final grade if you are in a borderline situation.

*Homework:* There will be ten homework assignments, with the lowest two grades being dropped, so your highest eight will each count for 1.25% of your final course grade. There will be about one per week (see the course schedule for exact dates), due at the **BEGINNING** of class the day they are due. Their purpose is to provide you with skills that will aid your critical thinking and paper-writing abilities. In particular, they involve organizing ideas and claims into a structure called an argument diagram. We will discuss argument diagrams in great detail in class and you will see many examples of them throughout the course.

Your homework will be assessed according to (1) the effort put into it, (2) the plausibility of the answers, and (3) the creativity of those answers. They will be graded on the 100 point scale as follows:

95	Demonstrates solid effort. Answers are all plausible and/or creative.
85	Demonstrates solid effort. Answers are somewhat plausible and/or creative.
75	Demonstrates basic effort. Answers are neither plausible nor creative..
65 or lower	Demonstrates little or no effort. Some questions are unanswered. Answers are neither plausible nor creative.

Truly outstanding assignments may receive a perfect 100. Failure to turn in a homework will result in a 0. Given that solutions to the homework will be discussed the days they are due, **LATE HOMEWORK WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.**

Analytical Analyses: There will be two analytical analyses, the first of which will count for 5% of your final course grade and the second to count for 10%. These will involve communicating, in your own words, the ideas we have studied. The first analysis will concern the presentation of just one argument. The second analysis will have you describe two opposing arguments on the same issue. In both cases you will explain arguments found in the reading, but not critically evaluate them. More details concerning each analysis will be announced and discussed in class (see the course schedule for the exact date). Late analyses will be accepted, but with a penalty.

Each analytic analysis will be graded on the 100 point scale, based on a traditional A–F scale with +/- gradations, according to the following distribution:

A+ 100	B+ 88.5	C+ 78.5	D 65
A 95	B 85	C 75	F 55 (or lower)
A- 91.5	B- 81.5	C- 71.5	

Failure to hand in an analysis will result in a 0.

Critical Position Papers: There will be two critical position papers, each of which will count for 20% of your final course grade. In these will you be asked to explain and then critically evaluate two opposing arguments on the same issue. In doing so, you will defend one of the arguments by providing it a reasoned defense against the other one. More details concerning the critical position paper will be announced and discussed in class (see the course schedule for the exact dates). Late position papers will be accepted, but with a penalty. Critical position papers will be graded on the 100 point scale in the same manner as the analytical analyses.

Films: Depending on student interest, I will show some films outside of class time that explore the subject matter we are covering in the course. You will not be required to attend these, but you can complete a journal entry to count as extra credit towards your overall journal assignment grade.

## REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS

I recognize that most students are human beings with occasional human problems associated with human finitude. Illness, family emergencies, job interviews, Other Professors, etc. . . will inevitably lead to legitimate conflicts over your time. If you expect that you will be missing class or be unable to turn in an assignment on time, please notify me (either in class or via email) **IN ADVANCE** and we can agree on a reasonable accommodation. Arrangements after the fact will only be made in extraordinary, documented circumstances.

## CHALLENGING AN ASSIGNMENT GRADE

I also recognize that I and your recitation leaders are human too: mistakes will occasionally occur when grading your papers. Therefore, you have **ONE WEEK** after an assignment is handed back to challenge its grade. To do so, you must return the assignment plus a clearly written explanation of your reason for challenging the grade to whomever graded it. We will promptly and seriously consider all such challenges and meet with you, if necessary, to resolve them. Assignments without a written explanation will not be considered. After one week, no challenges will be accepted, except in extraordinary, documented circumstances. Of course, if you are not satisfied with your grade, but recognize that it was not due to a fault in the grading, I encourage you to talk with either your recitation leader or me to learn how to improve on future assignments.

## EXTRA CREDIT

Opportunities for extra credit will be provided at my discretion. If provided, extra credit will only count towards your overall journal assignment grade. If there are any community lectures, documentaries, television specials, news reports, web content, etc. . . on topics related to course material, please bring them to my attention. I may provide extra credit opportunities for the class based upon them.

## A NOTE ON CLASSROOM COURTESY

Classes begin on the half-hour. Students are expected to be seated by that time and to remain seated until the class is dismissed. If you must leave before the class ends because of a medical appointment, or similar commitment, notify me before class begins and sit near the door. Students who leave without providing such notice and have not suddenly taken ill will be expected to file a drop form and not to return.

## VIDEO TAPING AND AUDIO RECORDING

Under Pennsylvania state law, consent is required to record any communication uttered by a person who has an expectation that it will not be recorded by any electronic device. Your classmates, your recitation leader, and I have a reasonable expectation to not be recorded in this course. Therefore, video taping and audio recording are prohibited without the expressed permission of both your classmates, your recitation leader, and myself.



## CELL PHONES, LAPTOPS, AND OTHER RELATED TECHNOLOGIES

Student interactions with portable technology devices can harm the dynamics of the classroom. Therefore, I expect you to silence your cell phones prior to class and to not text message during class. **ALL LAPTOPS SHOULD BE CLOSED UNLESS YOU HAVE MADE PRIOR ARRANGEMENTS WITH ME AND HAVE DEMONSTRATED THAT USING A LAPTOP IS NECESSARY FOR YOUR LEARNING.**

## CHEATING AND PLAGIARISM

**plagiarism** (plā'jĕ-rîz'ĕm) *n* 1: a piece of writing that has been copied from someone else and is presented as being your own work. 2: the act of plagiarizing; taking someone's words or ideas as if they were your own.

Plagiarism is bad. Do not do it. It amounts to lying, cheating, and stealing. Anyone caught doing it can fairly assume that they will not pass this course.

To encourage proper citing of sources, [www.turnitin.com](http://www.turnitin.com) will be used for submitting your assignments. Beyond this, it is the responsibility of each student to be aware of the university policies on academic integrity, including the policies on cheating and plagiarism. This information is available at <http://www.cmu.edu/policies/documents/Cheating.html> and in the section on "University Policies" in the most recent edition of *The Word: Undergraduate Student Handbook*.

Students who cheat or plagiarize face serious sanctions at both the course level, and the university level. At the course level, faculty at Carnegie Mellon University have significant discretion to determine the sanctions that are appropriate to individual cases of cheating and plagiarism. Within the Philosophy Department, it is customary to give plagiarized assignments a failing grade and, where appropriate, to fail students for the course. Additionally, a letter is sent to the Dean of Students indicating that the student in question has submitted plagiarized material and received a course-level sanction. Plagiarism is also a violation of the community standards of Carnegie Mellon University. As such, allegations of plagiarism may be brought before a University Academic Review Board, which will determine whether a violation of community standards has taken place and level additional sanctions if appropriate. Although this body also has significant discretion over the sanctions that it levels, plagiarism can result in academic probation, suspension, and even expulsion.

## SETTING UP YOUR TURNITIN ACCOUNT

### 80-100 - WHAT PHILOSOPHY IS

For this course your instructor will be using [turnitin.com](http://turnitin.com) to check each of your papers for their originality. For each paper, you will be expected to submit a copy to turnitin (no hardcopies need be submitted). If you have trouble submitting please email a copy to your instructor or recitation leader.

Before you can turn anything in, you must set up an account on turnitin and get it connected to this course. This is a relatively painless process so don't be scared. Of course, you are a CMU student, which means you should already be friendly with technology and have already hacked into this website and are capable of making it do your bidding. On the other hand, if computers frighten you then you just may wish to reconsider your choice in colleges. I hear the Amish are quite welcoming this time of year with their green bean casseroles and whatnot.

Regardless, follow these simple instructions in order to begin your journey on the path of originality:

1. Get a computer with Internet access.
2. Open up a web browser and go to: <http://www.turnitin.com>.
3. Look at the top right of the webpage and click on NEW USERS.
4. On the next screen, click on STUDENT from the choices.
5. On the next screen, enter the following information based on what section you are in:

Turnitin class ID (sections I and J only):	<b><u>2349107</u></b>
Turnitin class ID (sections J and L only):	<b><u>2349110</u></b>
Turnitin class enrollment password:	<b><u>plato</u></b>

Enter your (real) first and last name, along with your *andrew email address (or whatever email address you actually check)*.

Make up a password (*and write it down! No serious, write it down right now! Just write it here:* \_\_\_\_\_) and enter it into the two fields.

Select a “secret question” from the pull down menu and then type the answer in the field provided.

Finally, pretend you read and understand everything there, or (like your instructor) just skip it and click on SUBMIT.


6. On the next screen it should say yippy, you are done. And so you are. Ignore the instructions it gives you—you do not need to turn anything in (yet).

## TURNING IT IN WITH TURNITIN

### 80-100 - WHAT PHILOSOPHY IS

Now that you have set up your turnitin account (see the previous handout on this), you are now ready to submit your highly original papers. Please note that you are expected to submit all papers via the turnitin website by their respective due date/time in order to avoid a late penalty. Turning in a hardcopy in class is not required as long as the paper has been successfully submitted to turnitin.

In order to turn in your first analytical summary, please follow these monkey-approved instructions:

1. Finish the assignment. Make sure it is all in a *single* text file (acceptable formats are MS Word, WordPerfect, PostScript, PDF, HTML, RTF, and plain text) on a computer.
2. Find a computer with Internet access and somehow put your paper's file on it.
3. Open up a web browser and go to: <http://www.turnitin.com>.
4. Look at the top of the webpage and enter your email address and password (which you had better have written down) and then click on LOGIN.
5. On the next screen, click on 80-100 - WHAT PHILOSOPHY IS.
6. On the next screen, click on the submit icon () next to where it has the name of the assignment you wish to turn in.
7. On the next screen, for SUBMISSION TITLE enter "My Assignment" (or "Plato Approved" or something else witty and clever). Then click the BROWSE... button to find the location of the assignment's file on the computer. Then click the SUBMIT button.
8. On the next screen, make sure this is the file you wish to submit and then click SUBMIT PAPER.
9. On the next screen it should say zip-a-dee-doo-dah and that you are done. And yes you are. Almost. Please save a copy of this "Turnitin Digital Receipt" so that, in case anything goes wrong, we can verify that you turned it in on time. **IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO DO THIS.** Failure to do so means that you will not be absolved of any late penalties. Now you are really done. Congratulations.

If any problems occur when trying to submit, please email a copy of your assignment to your instructor or recitation leader. They can then submit it for you. If you cannot do this before the due date/time, then you must submit a hardcopy in the instructor's mailbox (in Baker Hall 135) to avoid a late penalty.