Guidelines for Exam Preparation

The final exam will consist in two parts:

1. True/false or multiple choice questions for 75% of the exam. There will be about 100 questions covering the entire semester. All questions will be based on the course slides. Prepare using the final version of the slides, as these are updated before each lecture for the lecture material of that day.
2. Two essay questions based on major topics covered during the semester, for 25% of the grade. One question will be from China or India, and the other question from Greece or Modern European Philosophy (Renaissance to Enlightenment). For your preparation, outline the main ideas of each of the subtopics, including the larger historical conditions that illuminate the topic.
3. Each essay should be 3 to 4 pages long, hand-written. Focus on the central ideas or concepts of each philosophical position, with reasons for them, objections to them, and replies to the objections. A cheat sheet of two sides of 8 by11 inch paper is permitted, with font size no less than 6 points. The exam will take place May 14, 2019, 11:45-2:45, Fillmore 355.
4. Exam topics:
   1. China
      1. Confucianism (Confucius and Mencius)
         1. Explain the main lines of Confucian thought, expressed in the terms “jen” and “li,” the Confucian Golden Rule, and the doctrine of the Mean. How do these ideas support harmony in the world and in the individual’s self?
         2. What challenges arise within Confucianism, expressed in the arguments of Hsun Tzu that human beings are naturally evil, not good. How does Mencius respond to these challenges with his teaching of the four sprouts or beginnings of virtue.
         3. Explain how these ideas of Confucianism express the historical context of Chinese history and society, with special attention to the relation between the family and the state.
      2. Taoism (Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu)
         1. Explain the meaning of Yin and Yang, with its symbol, as an expression of Taoism
         2. How do the teachings of Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu differ. Use the example of Chuang Tzu’s “three in the morning parable.”
         3. Does Chuang Tzu teach “relativism”—i.e., that there is no truth, and all is relative to particular beliefs? Explain why one might think that this is his teaching, and why this would not be correct.
         4. Compare Taoism and Confucianism in general. How might they be complementary teachings?
   2. India: Explain the historical conditions of Indian philosophy, and how its development differs from that of China. What is the basic framework, with its six components. How are these expressed differently in each of the following schools. Try to see the following ideas a development from one level to the next.
      1. Nyaya and Vaisheshika: its general characteristics, expressed in its causal proof for the existence of God. Explain how our capacities for knowledge (Nyaya) make us capable of knowing the world as it really is (Vaisheshika).
      2. Samkhya and Yoga: its general characteristics, expressed in its proof for the existence of God—the “ontological proof.” How is its conception of Nature (Prakriti) different from that of Nyaya/Vaisheshika, and how does this lead to the concept of a witnessing consciousness (Purusha).
      3. Vidanta and Mimamsa: focus primarily on the Advaita Vedanta in the *Bhagavad Gita*, with Krishna’s argument for the unity of Atman and Brahman in relation to the concepts of being, non-being, and becoming. Why does God/Brahman create? Explain the concepts of Maya and Lila in this perspective.
      4. Buddhism and Zen. Explain the Four Noble Truths. How is the concept of “Anatman” or No-self justified, in relation to concepts of the human being as a “conglomeration” of “skandas,” and Nagarjuna’s concept of dependent origination. How is the concept of causality here different from what we see in Nyaya/Vaisheshika and Samkhya/Yoga? How does Zen simplify Buddhism with its basic ideas: We are Buddha-Mind, and “Mountains are mountains”?
   3. Greece. How are historical conditions similar and different from those of India, and how does this difference affect the general orientation of Greek thought?
      1. What is the basic framework from the Homeric legacy, and how does this play out in the theories of early philosophers. Explain Zeno’s paradox that Achilles cannot catch the tortoise, as a defense of the philosophy of Parmenides. How is Parmenides similar to Advaita Vedanta—the argument of Krishna in the *Bhagavad Gita*?
      2. Explain how Atomism and relativism breaks from the early philosophy by discarding the notion of justice. How does atomism solve reply to Zeno? How does relativism arise against atomism?
      3. Plato. Explain Plato’s response to both atomism and relativism, and his defense of the Homeric legacy with its emphasis on justice in human life and nature. How does Plato develop these ideas with his notion of matter and form—as a response to the atomists and the relativists. How does the Allegory of the Cave illustrate Plato’s thought. Give Socrates’ argument that the soul is immortal in relation to his example of the slave boy’s “recollection” of geometric truths in the *Meno*. What kind of immortality is this? Illustrate your answer with Plato’s account of the near-death experience of the soldier Er. How does this reflect the experience of the Greek Republic.
      4. Aristotle. How is Aristotle’s conception of matter and form similar and different from that of Plato? Explain Aristotle’s idea of four causes, and how explanation boils these down to just one that is really explanatory. What is Aristotle’s argument against Plato’s idea of the Forms? What is the relation between soul and body, for example in plants and ducks? How is the human soul different from the souls of plants and animals, capable of rational knowledge of intelligible forms of things, and God-like? Explain Aristotle’s argument that there must be fundamental substances in the world—his own argument for the existence of God. In the end, is Aristotle’s position that much different from that of Plato?
   4. Modern European philosophy: Follow the outline below in which you describe the historic context of the Renaissance with the main features of the cities in which this trend of thought first arose
      1. Main features of the Renaissance
         1. Historical context. What is different in comparison with the ancient Greeks, as illustrated by Plato’s Republic with its exclusion of merchants. Explain this reasoning, and how the new world changes this ancient way of thinking.
         2. Humanism and the return to Greek philosophies: is this a return to the Greeks, or something radically different? Explain what humanism means.
         3. Explain the three main themes of Renaissance thought, illustrated by Pico and Machiavelli. How can skepticism be used as an argument for religion? How does Pascal argue for human dignity on the basis of human fallibility? What is Pascal’s wager?
         4. The rise of modern science, with two approaches: Bruno’s holism and Bacon’s piecemeal approach. Explain Bacon’s three methods (ant, spider, and bee.) How does Bacon’s preferred method fit the Copernican revolution in science? Explain the nature of the new sciences of Copernicus and Galileo compared with the older science of Plato (spider) and Aristotle (ant).
      2. Enlightenment philosophy
         1. The nature of the new sciences of Copernicus and Galileo compared with the older science of Aristotle: how does this new development form the background to Descartes?
         2. Descartes’ dualism of spirit and matter: Explain how Descartes’ method of doubt responds to the central features of the new sciences. How does he find certainty in the new uncertainty, by providing central concepts of spirit and matter. Explain his three proofs for the existence of God.
         3. Why is God important for Descartes’ “rationalist” approach to science? Explain his method of analysis and synthesis. Explain his provisional moral theory. Apply scientific knowledge to practical life: how is it possible to change our desires?