

2015

PHIL 290-10 Theory of Knowledge

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PHIL 290 THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE
Summer 2015
Dr. Timothy Sean Quinn

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By appointment

THEMES

The theory of knowledge is in a way a theory of authority, for throughout history many different convictions have claimed for themselves the authority of knowledge: in our century, science and political ideology; in earlier centuries, philosophy or theology. Our goal this semester is to investigate these various claims to authority, with an eye to differences between “ancient” and “modern” theories of knowledge. Among the questions we’ll raise: is there a difference between knowledge and opinion? What does knowledge have to do with human action? Are there limits to human knowledge, or special conditions for achieving it? What are the moral and political implications of knowledge and the ways we pursue it?

TEXTS

Plato, *Meno* (Hackett Press)

Descartes, Rene *Discourse on Method* (Hackett)

Bacon, Francis *The New Atlantis and Great Instauration* (Harlan Davidson)

Nietzsche, Friedrich *The Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life* (Hackett Press)

In addition, you are responsible for any material distributed in class.

Assignments and Grading

The assignments: 5 quizzes, a group outline and presentation, and a final exam.

Quizzes: These will be based on the reading due on the following days:

Plato’s *Meno*: May 11

Descartes’ *Discourse on Method*: May 13 and 15

Bacon’s *New Atlantis*: May 18

Nietzsche’s *Advantage and Disadvantages of History*: May 20

Your total quiz grade is worth 20%.

Group Outline/Presentation: Each class, beginning with the second meeting (May 12), will begin with a summary of the previous day's class. Working in groups of (about) 2, you will compose an outline of the previous day's material, and make copies for the class. Then, you will review the outline with the class, and be prepared to answer questions about the outlined material. Your outline and presentation are worth 20%.

Final Exam: The final exam will be comprehensive and essay in format. It is scheduled for the last class meeting, Friday May 22. The final is worth 50%.

Class Attendance and Participation: Because this is an intensive class, attendance is mandatory. Furthermore, attendance means participation, not just occupying a seat. If you must miss a class, tell me. More than three unexcused absences will result in failure for the course. Attendance and regular participation are worth 10%

A Note on Electronica: Don't text in class. If you do, you will be docked 5% of your total grade for the semester. And I get your phone.