200-13 Philosophical Perspectives: Faith and Reason

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PHIL 200 Philosophical Perspectives: Faith and Reason

Spring 2016

Instructor: Daniel Dwyer, Ph.D. (dwyerd@xavier.edu, 745-3035)
Time: Section 13, 10-11:15am (Alter 001)
    Section 17, 2:30-3:45pm (Alter 307)
Office Hours: M 4:30-5:45pm, T 4-5:30pm, & anytime by appt. (Hinkle 220)

DIGITAL-FREE ZONE: Unless you can prove hardship during the first week of class, you may not use ANY digital or electronic devices during class sessions. Text, paper and pen only. The policy is to meant to liberate your eyes, your ears, and your mind for intense philosophical discussion.

In this course, you will further pursue fundamental human questions about topics such as knowledge, faith, and reason by investigating how great philosophers have addressed these questions. You will have the chance to read, discuss, and critique classic works of philosophy. In this way, you will be invited into a long tradition of reflection on the meaning of our shared humanity, of the world, and of our relation to it. The main questions in the course are: What counts as a genuine instance of good reasoning? What is faith, and does it have any epistemic value? Are reason and faith compatible, or at odds with one another, especially in the case of science and interpretation of the Bible? We will be reading texts specifically by Christian philosophers (not theologians) who have thought long and hard about these issues and propose answers for our acceptance or rejection based on rational scrutiny. In this class on faith and reason there will be absolutely no preaching, and only as much theology as needed to understand the philosophical premises. It is a class in that branch of philosophy called the philosophy of religion, and as such is suited to people of open minds of any or no faith.

This course is part of the Xavier Core Curriculum, which aims to develop people of learning and reflection, integrity and achievement, in solidarity for and with others. The course addresses the following core learning objective at the intermediate level:

1a: Students recognize and cogently discuss significant questions in the humanities, arts, and the natural and social sciences.
2a: Students find, evaluate, and logically convey information and ideas in written and oral presentations.
3b: Students examine the nature of beauty, truth, and virtue as means of gaining a sense of the divine.
5b: Students examine the interconnections between humans and the natural environment.

Reading: You must read each text at least twice before coming to class the first day of the week. I suggest reading rather quickly the first time, marking up with pencil what you think are important terms and arguments. Then, a slower second read, with more attention to detail.
**Writing Center:** Everyone needs help with his or her writing. Even great authors need an editor or second pair of eyes. I strongly suggest that you visit the writing center before you turn in each paper. Your grammar will improve, your prose will become crisper, and your argument stronger. Overall, your writing skills and course grade will very likely increase. There is really nothing to lose, and everything to gain. For more information, see: [http://www.xavier.edu/writingcenter/](http://www.xavier.edu/writingcenter/) I will be happy to work with you on drafts, but only if we go over them in office hours, with hard copies (one for you, one for me), with you taking notes on my suggestions. *No drafts will be looked at if sent as attachments or within 48 hours before the due date.* This policy is meant to encourage you to organize your ideas as early as possible.

**Plagiarism:** Plagiarism will result in the failing of the assignment, and it may result in the failing of the course. All cases of plagiarism will be reported to the Dean of your College and a written statement will be put in your student file. TurnItIn will be used for all papers, using Canvas.

**Participation:** Participation is required. Participation can take place in a number of ways: asking questions, responding to questions, raising objections, and making points. I do recognize that for some students talking in class and discussing philosophy can be intimidating. Discussing the philosophical content of the readings or class discussion by email or during office hours will count toward your participation grade. *Socratic method* will be practiced during class time (calling on students at random in a brainstorming fashion), but I don’t want to put anyone on the spot, so you always have the option of saying “pass” without any shame.

**Papers:** You will write three papers. For each paper I will provide a handout detailing the assignment and the expectations. A late paper will be lowered a full grade for each day (not each class day) it is late.

**Attendance:** You are allowed three unexcused absences. Each unexcused absence after three will result in a lowering of your final grade by a full grade. If your final grade is an A- and you have 4 absences, then your grade for the course will be a B-. This policy will be strictly followed. Excused absences require an official note from a doctor or student affairs—of course, I am happy to discuss upcoming conflicts with you. If you have more than 7 absences then you will fail the course. If you do miss a class you must (a) get notes from another student, (b) ask me for handouts I might have distributed and (c) ask for instructions for the next class. If you are absent, do not assume that you know where we are in the readings. *This instructor takes mental health issues quite seriously.* Please feel free to approach me with any issues on this count, and be assured of absolute discretion.

Please: **no eating** during class.
Readings (subject to revision)

January
Week 1: Descartes *Discourse on Method*, Part 6
T 12
Th 14

Week 2: Descartes, *Discourse*, Parts 1-2, 4
T 19
Th 21

Week 3: Descartes, *Discourse*, Part 5
T 26
Th 28

February
Week 4: John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, Introduction, chs. III & V
T 2
Th 4 Paper 1 due

Week 5: Plantinga, *Where the Conflict Really Lies*, Preface and Ch. 9
(skip bot 287-mid 290)
T 9
Th 11

Week 6: Plantinga, chs. 1 and 2 (skip 26-30, bot 49-top 52)
T 16
Th 18

Week 7: Plantinga, chs. 3 and 4 (skip mid 80-mid 83, top 88-top 89, 108-110)
T 23
Th 25

March
Week 8: Plantinga, ch. 5 (skip bot 143-144)
T 1
Th 3 Paper 2 due

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7-11 March Spring Break
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**Week 9: *Fides et Ratio*, pp. 94-98, 100-113**

T  15  
Th 17

**Week 10: *Fides et Ratio* (cont.)**

T  22  
*Th  24*  *no class Easter break*

**Week 11: Sokolowski, *Christian Faith and Human Understanding*, ch. 2**

T  29  
Th  31

April

**Week 12: Sokolowski, pp. 46-50 & 76-79**

T  5  
Th  7

**Week 13: Sokolowski, ch. 10**

T  12  
*Th  14*  *no class (makeup assignment due on the following Tuesday)*

**Week 14: Pieper, *Leisure the Basis of Culture*, pp. 15-41**

T  19  
Th  21

**Week 15: Pieper, *Leisure the Basis of Culture*, pp. 43-51 & 65-74**

T  26  
Th  28

**Final Exam = Paper 3 due**

10am class: Thursday, May 5, 10:30am

2:30 class: Tuesday, May 3, 3pm