290-16H Theory of Knowledge

Michael Sweeney

Follow this and additional works at: http://www.exhibit.xavier.edu/philosophy_syllabi_spring_2014

Recommended Citation
http://www.exhibit.xavier.edu/philosophy_syllabi_spring_2014/36

This Restricted-Access Syllabus is brought to you for free and open access by the Philosophy Syllabi 2014 at Exhibit. It has been accepted for inclusion in Philosophy Syllabi Spring 2014 by an authorized administrator of Exhibit. For more information, please contact exhibit@xavier.edu.
THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE
PHIL 290-16 (Honors)
Spring, 2014
T/TH 11:30-12:45
Hailstones, 7

Prof. Michael Sweeney
Hinkle Hall 205
745-2035
sweeney@xavier.edu

Office hours
T/Th 9:30-10:00
T/Th 1:00-2:15
W 9:30-11:30
Also by appointment and by chance

Requirements and Tentative Schedule
Exams
Midterm: 30% (Tentatively Tuesday, February 27st)
Final: 30% (Certainly Tuesday, May 6th, 10:30-12:30)
Criteria for grading
   Accuracy: Views of the philosopher truly represented
   Quantity: With sufficient breadth and depth; nothing essential excluded
   Quality: With clarity, understanding, insight
Exam questions will be chosen from a list provided in advance.
Paper: 25% (Tentatively Tuesday, April 15th)
   10 page minimum
   The class after the midterm will be devoted to further explanation of the paper.
   Plagiarism will result in an “F” for the course and a letter to the dean.
Class participation: 15%
   Participation refers to discussion: it presumes attendance.
   Six or more unexcused absences will result in an “F” for the course.

Texts
   Plato, Theatetus (Hackett Press)
   Plato, Republic [V 472d-VI] (Hackett Press)
   Thomas Aquinas, Introduction to St. Thomas Aquinas (Modern Library)
   Rene Descartes, Discourse on Method (Hackett Press)
   Jean-Francois Lyotard, The Postmodern Condition (University of Minnesota Press)

Tentative Schedule
   Plato: 5 classes
   Aquinas: 8 classes
   Midterm exam
   Descartes: 9 classes
   Lyotard: 4 classes
   Final exam
PAPER ASSIGNMENT

Requirements
1. Due: Tuesday, April 15th
2. Length: 10 pages
3. Submission: hard copy to me and electronic copy to turnitin.com

Methodology
1. Summarize the position, i.e. the conclusion, of either Aquinas or Descartes (only one) on some topic taken from the reading assignments.
2. Using the text, explain the arguments by which the philosopher arrived at that conclusion.
3. Discuss the strength of those arguments and objections that could be raised against them.
4. State how that philosopher or could have replied to those arguments, and on that basis determine whether you think the position is true or false.

Secondary source
1. You must find, read, and intelligently quote at least once an article about your topic from a philosophical journal.
2. These articles can be found using the Philosopher’s Index in the Xavier Library database.
3. You must include a printed copy of your article with the paper.

Format
1. Title page (not included in numbering)
2. Number all pages.
3. One inch margins.

Stylistic rules
1. A paragraph should have at least five interrelated sentences.
2. Correct grammar and punctuation are necessary to communicate clearly your thought.
3. Avoid contractions, slang, and use of the slash.

Quotations
1. You must use passages from the author’s writing to support your interpretation.
2. Put a quoted passage into your own words and explain it: the quote is meant to support your interpretation of the author.
3. Never begin or end a paragraph with a quote.

Topics
1. Role of sensation in knowledge
2. Innate knowledge
3. Purpose of knowledge
4. Role of consensus in knowledge
5. Whether there is only one method for knowledge
6. Role of mathematics in knowledge
7. Self-knowledge
8. Goodness, truth and being

**Plagiarism**
1. Use of another person’s words or ideas must be referenced.
2. Plagiarism will result in an “F” for the course and a letter to the dean.

**Study questions for midterm exam**

1. In the *Theatetus*, how does Socrates explain Protagoras’ “man is the measure,” and how does Socrates argue against it?

2. How is knowledge defined in the *Republic*? What does Aquinas think that Plato’s account is idealist?

3. What is Aquinas’ account of abstraction and the return to imagination (judgment)?

4. For Aquinas, what is the purpose of knowledge? Explain briefly how Aquinas’ position differs from that of Protagoras and Plato.

5. What makes Aquinas’ account of goodness and truth realist? How does the standard of truth differ for natural and artificial things?

**Study questions for the final exam**

1. Is there only one method of knowledge for Aquinas? What are the mistakes that Aquinas makes with regard to method in physics?

2. What is Descartes’ *cogito* and how does he arrive at it? Why is it the first principle of his philosophy? Compare the view of the self in Part IV with Descartes’ view of the self in Parts V and VI.

3. How and why does Descartes eliminate form from matter? What is the role of Descartes’ method in the elimination of form from matter?

4. Explain in detail the purpose of knowledge according to Descartes, and briefly compare it to that of Aquinas.

5. Why does Lyotard think that a new account of knowledge is necessary, and what is that account? How does it lead to a change in education?