

2013

290-05 Theory of Knowledge

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A.M.D.G.
Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam
To the Greater Glory of God

Theory of Knowledge: PHIL 290 05
Monday, Wednesday, Friday 12:00 P.M.-12:50 P.M.
Smith Hall G 29
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The Course in a Nutshell

"Do you know what time it is?" "Do you know what knowing is?"

To answer "the bigger" question, we draw on what you learned from Plato's Republic, but come at these questions primarily from the position of Rene Descartes, often called the Father of Modern Philosophy, and his Discourse on Method. But, before, we turn to Descartes, we study Aristotle and his theory of knowledge and compare and contrast this theory with Plato's theory.

We discuss modern philosophy's understanding of itself as more a means to freedom and less a search for wisdom. The freedom in question was freedom from the Church and its medieval rationality. While, to attain such freedom, modern philosophers could not attack the Church openly, they could work to undermine the philosophy of Aristotle and put in its place a line of thought that could not be taken over, as Aristotelianism had been, by revealed religion.

We discuss both positive and negative effects this effort had on the natural sciences and politics and on human beings' desire to dominate nature and control their own destiny. We study the loss of substance, the loss of "things" as having their own innate wealth and worth that is known and willed by God and that are thus able to be known and loved by human beings.

Some Goals of the Course

We formulate clear and arguable theses, supported by evidence drawn from appropriate sources. We evaluate the strength of an argument or claim and its evidence. We discuss fundamental questions that arise from the human condition, such as questions about the grounds of morality, the essence of justice, the nature of reality, the possibility of certainty, the nature of beauty, and the reasonableness of a basic rudimentary faith (necessary for their to be any kind of society at all) and of the writing of a great philosopher. We relate our knowledge and skills in a reflective and constructive way to our life experiences and the challenges confronting today's world. We shall be intellectually, morally, and spiritually educated and formed individuals capable of critical reflection on ethical and/or religious questions of social significance.

Required Texts

- (1) Readings from the works of Plato and Aristotle (provided)
- (2) Discourse on Method Rene Descartes
- (3) Epistemology: Becoming Intellectually Virtuous by W. Jay Wood
- (4) Readings from Dietrich von Hildebrand's The Heart, Joseph Ratzinger's University Open to

Reason, and Michael Craig Rhodes' Mystery in Philosophy (provided)

Attendance, Class Preparation, Quality of Work

You are required to be in every class. I expect you to excuse yourself from class by e-mailing me. Your final score will be reduced by five points for every unexcused absence.

Correct grammar, punctuation, capitalization, paragraph structure, and all other skills we educated people are expected to possess and to use will be employed by the teacher and the students. You cannot expect an A if your work is not well done.

Grading and Course Requirements

There will be two two-page papers. The precise topic for each will be given to you. Each paper will consist of a statement of Aristotle's or Descartes' position on a subject, a thesis of your own, a statement of what you will do to defend the thesis, an argument that defends the thesis, an explanation of why the thesis is important at all and to you in particular (20%, 10% each). There will be one one-page paper. The directions for this paper will come later, but it, too, will consist of a thesis and statement of position (5%).

There will be two tests (20%, 10% each).

There will be five quizzes (20%, 4% each)

There will be student participation (5%).

There will be a final examination (30%).

Assignments

8/26 Introduction, Syllabus, Quotations Above as Focus

8/28-9/20 Plato, rational epistemology; Aristotle, empiricist epistemology

9/18 **Quiz I**

9/20 **First Paper Due**

9/20-10/25 Discourse on Method

10/16 **Quiz II**

10/23 **Quiz III**

10/25 **Second Paper Due**

10/30 **Test I**

11/1-12/9 Epistemology: Becoming Intellectually Virtuous

11/13 **Quiz IV**

11/25 **Quiz V**

12/6 **Test II**

12/9 **Paper III Due**

12/11 Summation

Preparation for Final Exam and Completion of Evaluations

Final Examination from 12:00 P.M. to 1:50 P.M., Monday, December 16, 2013