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200-03-05H Philosophical Perspectives: Faith, Reason and Science

Daniel Dwyer
Xavier University

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Recommended Citation

Dwyer, Daniel, "200-03-05H Philosophical Perspectives: Faith, Reason and Science" (2020). *Philosophy Syllabi*. 808.

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Daniel Dwyer

Syllabus Fall 2020

PHIL 200-03 & PHIL 200-05H Philosophical Perspectives: Faith, Reason, and Science

[These 2 course sections have the same syllabus, with some extra reading, a few longer assignments, and more intensive discussion at a higher level for the Honors section. They are being taught 100% synchronous online per the FWA I signed with David Mengel on 7/15/20. For all courses, all class notes are posted to Canvas and include transcriptions of class discussions immediately after each class. Discussion boards and small groups in Breakout Rooms are being used as I catch up with the technology and as based on student feedback.]

[This syllabus is cut and pasted entirely from Canvas Modules.]

REQUIRED TEXTS

1. Aristotle, *Introductory Readings*, trans. Terence Irwin and Gail Fine (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1996) 978-0872203396

2. Rene Descartes, *Philosophical Essays and Correspondence*, ed. Roger Ariew (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2000) 978-0872205024

3. Stacy A. Trasancos, *Particles of Faith: A Catholic Guide to Navigating Science* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2016) 978-1594716577

[HONORS ONLY: 4. Jonathan Lear, *Aristotle: The Desire to Understand* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) 978-0521347624]

Zoom Office Hours: T/W 4-5:30pm and any other time convenient for you. All Office Hours will take place in “Daniel Dwyer’s Personal Meeting Room. Email: dwyerd@xavier.edu

Readings

Week 1 (August 17-21): Reading: Excerpt from D.C. Schindler, *Love and the Postmodern Predicament*

Week 2 (August 24-28): Reading: Schindler (cont.)

Week 3 (August 31-September 4): Reading: Schindler (cont.)

Week 4 (September 7-11) [Reading: Aristotle, Physics, Book II.1-3 & 7-9, in Introductory Readings \(Honors: Read also Lear, ch. 2\)](#)

Week 5 (September 14-18) [Reading: Aristotle, De Anima, in Introductory Readings, pp. 76-86 & 86-87 \(Honors: Read also Lear, Ch. 4.1-3\)](#)

Week 6 (September 21-25) [Reading: Aristotle, De Anima, in Introductory Readings, pp. 90-95 \(Honors: Lear, Ch. 4.1-3 cont.\)](#)

Week 7 (September 28-October 2) [Reading: Aristotle, De Anima, in Introductory Readings, pp. 96-103 \(Honors: Lear, Ch 4.1-3 cont.\)](#)

Week 8 (October 5-9): Relaxed Discussions on Aristotle

Week 9 (October 12-16): [Reading- Descartes, Discourse \(click here to see the page numbers and guide\).docx](#)

Week 10 (October 19-23) Reading: Descartes' Discourse, Part 5, pp. 64-67 & 71-73 only

Week 11 (October 26-30): Reading: Descartes' Discourse, Parts 1-2

Week 12 (November 2-6): Reading: Descartes' Discourse Part 4 (esp. 60-mid-62) & top 228

Week 13 (November 9-13) Reading: Trasancos' Particles of Faith, Ch.2 (click here for Reading Guide)

Week 14 (November 16-20) Reading: Trasancos' Particles of Faith, Ch.2 (cont.)

Week 15 (Monday, 11/23=Last Class Day) Reading: Trasancos' Particles of Faith, p. 120 (Pope Leo XIII quotes) & p. 20

Assignments & Grading

Reading Summaries Best 3 of 4 (Complete/Incomplete) (30%)

Final Essay (35%) On the Relation between Faith, Reason, and Science in Trasancos' *Particles of Faith*

Participation 1 of 2: Weeks 3-8 (15%)

Participation 2 of 2: Weeks 9-15 (20%)

Grade Breakdown:

1) **first half of semester in-class participation and discussion assignments:** 15 percent of final grade. The grade will assigned midway through the semester; you can always ask if you're meeting class expectations by asking me for a rough estimate at any point during this first half of the semester.

2) **second half of semester in-class participation and discussion assignments:** 20 percent of final grade(grade assigned at end of semester)

3) **Reading Summaries:** 30 percent of final grade. There are 4 short essays (with Word Count: 350-425). Only the best 3 of these 4 will count; and they will be graded only as Complete/Incomplete (the nice new way of saying Pass/Fail!). For example, if you get 3 Completes, you'll get the full credit for this part of the final grade.

4) **Final essay:** 35 percent of final grade. You can be working on this essay during the entire semester with minimal stress if you 1) reach out to me for any help you need, and 2) pay attention throughout the first half of the semester, that is, before the prompt is posted, for major course themes.

Reading Summary (RS) Instructions

Preface: Why Reading Summaries?

I joined the Xavier Philosophy faculty in 2004. I had lunch a few months ago with one of my first students, who was a business major, graduated in 2008, and only came to appreciate the value of the Xavier Core Curriculum philosophy requirement until after he took the courses. This student, named Tim, told me at this lunch that the kind of clear, crisp, and concise writing he learned in our class has been praised by his business associates, even to this day (he works for an insurance company, and now works on his own in the same field). His professional colleagues don't usually see the kind of quality writing that Tim still produces. Tim's writing has been honed by writing RS just like these. So consider the skills of clear, crisp, and concise writing as applicable and necessary to all of your career paths, not just to this class.

By the way, it was Tim (and not me) who told me to relate this anecdote to all of my future students.

Overview of Reading Summaries

Reading summaries should be **clear, crisp, and concise writing exercises** that concentrate on understanding the text based solely on the author's argumentation in the text, and not on your own subjective feelings or opinions. (So phrases like "I feel like, according to me, I think that" should not be in a RS.) In a course like this, we have to (a) get clear about the author's arguments before we (b) set out tentatively to critically evaluate them in class discussion.

This kind of writing is called **explicative**, that is, it explains the arguments without injecting our own opinions. Don't worry, the time to engage freely in argumentative critique of the author's views (positive, negative, neutral, and perhaps best of all, with questions) will take place in class discussion and the final essay. You can think of these assignments as "**executive summaries**" that you would write for, say, your boss and colleagues in the first few years in your profession. Your boss or colleagues won't have a long time to read the whole text in question, but they want the gist of it.

Jump right into your reading summary. No introduction to the author or any overview of the entire book is needed. Use one paragraph for one main idea. Do not write these summaries in just one long rambling paragraph: you will lose your reader's concentration and understanding.

Word Count for each Reading Summary: 350-425 words; failing to meet the minimum of 350 words will result in an automatic Incomplete. You may, however, go up to 500 words without explicit permission if you feel constrained by the 425 maximum upper limit, but if you do so, make sure the writing is still concise and clear.

Each RS assignment will be **posted** at least one week before it is due. The RS will usually be **due** the night before the first class of the week at 11:59pm. Any late submissions without the professor's explicit approval beforehand will not be accepted. In a *reasonable* situation in which you need **an extension**, please ask me at least 3 days before the due date; but of course *unpredictable* situations beyond your control may pop up at any time, in which case you can contact me at any time. **No re-writes** are allowed, because your best effort should be manifest in the first submission.