

**Philosophy 1000: Philosophy of Human Nature**  
***Eloquentia Perfecta***  
**Fordham University**  
**Fall 2017**

<b>CRN#/Section#</b>	<b>10056/R24</b>
<b>Day</b>	Tu/Wed/Fri
<b>Time</b>	11:30-12:20
<b>Location</b>	Faculty Memorial Hall (FMH) 320

**Instructor Information**

Dr. Philip J. Walsh

Office hours: Collins B26 9:30-10:20; 12:30-1:30 Tu/Wed/Fri

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**Course Description**

What are we, and how do we know? Are we souls created by a supreme being? Are we just bodies? Is the “conscious mind” identical to the brain? Are you just a product of your environment? Is it possible to have knowledge with absolute certainty? Is it possible to have knowledge at all? Are humans intrinsically good? Evil? Both? Neither? This course seeks to understand (and perhaps even answer) these questions by studying some classic and contemporary philosophical writing.

**Learning Objectives**

- To develop critical reading and thinking skills
- To familiarize students with foundational texts in the history of thought
- To confront some of the big questions about living as a human being
- To develop academic and professional writing skills
- To practice the art of oral communication

**Required texts**

1. Plato. *Republic* (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition). Translated by G. M. A. Grube. Revised by C. D. C. Reeve. Hackett Publishing: 1992. Paperback.  
**ISBN: 978-0872201361**
2. Descartes. *Meditations on First Philosophy* (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition). Translated and Edited by John Cottingham. Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy: 2017. Paperback.  
**ISBN: 978-1107665736**
3. Ta-nehisi Coates. *Between the World and Me* (1st edition). Spiegel & Grau: 2015. Hardcover.  
**ISBN: 978-0812993547**
4. *District 9* (2009). You are responsible for finding a way to watch this film outside of class. Cheap rental options are available on Youtube, Amazon, Google Play, and iTunes.

Additional reading assignments and course content will be made available on the course website.

### **Grading**

Letter Grade	Numerical equivalent	Meaning of the Grade
A	94-100	Excellent. Honors-level work, outstanding.
A-	90-93	Still excellent.
B+	87-89	Very good. High Level of performance.
B	83-86	Good. Solid and above average level of performance.
B-	80-82	Good. Still above average.
C+	77-79	Average level of performance.
C	73-76	Satisfactory. Acceptable level of performance.
C-	70-72	Minimally acceptable.
D	65-69	Passing, but unsatisfactory. Below average performance.
F	<65	Failure. Inferior performance.

Standards for Distinguishing between Excellent, Good, Average and Poor:

- Professionalism: Papers should demonstrate good grammar as well as good spelling. They should also be copy-edited to reduce or eliminate typos.
- Writing Quality: Writing should be clear and exhibit good structure. Paragraphs should be cohesive and build towards a complete essay with a substantial thesis (as opposed to a string of disconnected thoughts).
- Accuracy and Understanding: Papers should be able accurately to re-create an argument or a position. They should find the relevant issues and argument(s) worthy of analysis.
- Argument: Papers should argue for or against a position rather than merely exchange opinions. Is the argument for or against a position constructed persuasively within the confines of the paper? (Note: I am not looking for your argument to be true — there is no need to guess my opinion. What I want to see is *persuasion.*)

### **Grade Breakdown**

Writing assignments: 35% total

- Paper #1 (6 pages): 15%
- Paper #2 (7 pages): 20%

Midterm exam: 15%

Final exam: 15%

Quizzes: 15%

Oral presentation (including 2-page written summary): 15%

Participation: 5%

**Total: 100%**

### **Writing Assignments**

You will write two papers for this class, one due at the end of week 5 and the other due at the end of week 15. Each paper will include a multi-stage drafting, revision, and consultation process. You are required to schedule a 20-minute consultation with me

for each of your papers. We will also discuss writing strategies in class and evaluate writing samples. You will receive a detailed prompt for each paper, and we will discuss writing in more detail at the time each paper is assigned. It is worth noting here, however, that writing mechanics *matter*. Spelling, punctuation, grammar, etc. are an essential part of written communication. If you struggle with mechanics, seek help with proofreading at the campus writing center.

### **Exams**

There will be a midterm and final exam consisting of short answer questions (a few sentences) and essay questions (a few pages). See our course schedule below for exam dates.

### **Quizzes**

I give relatively frequent short (about 5 minutes to complete) and easy (just summary, no interpretation) in-class pop quizzes on the reading assignments. These quizzes will be easy if you do the reading. I drop the two lowest quiz grades for the semester. If you miss a quiz due to *unexcused* lateness or absence, you receive a zero for that quiz.

### **Oral Presentation**

Each student will give a 15 minute presentation in which they lead class discussion on an assigned topic. You must also submit a 2-page write-up of your presentation on the day you present. On student presentation days, three students will give three separate 15 minute presentations. Students presenting on the same day will peer-review each other's 2 page write-ups before presenting. More details on presentations, as well as topic sign-up, to follow on a separate hand-out.

### **Participation**

Your participation grade is based on:

- timely submission of paper drafts
- timely submission of presentation drafts for peer-review
- timely feedback comments on fellow student presentation drafts
- making and keeping consultation appointments

### **Plagiarism:**

The course rule for plagiarism is simple: plagiarizers will receive an "F" for the entire course.

From Fordham's student handbook:

Violations of Academic Integrity:

A. Plagiarism: Plagiarism occurs when individuals attempt to present as their own what has come from another source. Plagiarism takes place whether such theft is accidental or deliberate. Examples of plagiarism include but are not limited to:

- Failing to acknowledge the ideas of another person, whether or not such ideas are paraphrased, from whatever source including oral, print, broadcast or computer-mediated communication.
- Attempting to rewrite borrowed material by simply dropping a word here and

there, substituting a few words for others, or moving around words or sentences.

- Failing to place quotation marks around borrowed material in the approved style. It is no defense to claim that one has “forgotten” to do so.
- Presenting as one’s own an assignment, paper or computer program partially or wholly prepared by another person, whether by another student, friend, or by a business or on-line service that sells or distributes such papers and programs.

Some advice on plagiarism and paraphrasing from Joe Williams and Larry McEnerney, "Writing in College," in *Engaging the Humanities at the University of Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 206-207.

Here is a simple test for inadvertent plagiarism: be conscious of where your eyes are as you put words on paper or on a screen. If your eyes are on your source at the same moment your fingers are flying across the keyboard, you risk doing something that weeks, months, even years later could result in your public humiliation. Whenever you use a source extensively, compare your page with the original. If you think someone could run her finger along your sentences and find synonyms or synonymous phrases for words in the original in roughly the same order, try again. You are least likely to plagiarize inadvertently if as you write, you keep your eyes not on your source, but on the screen or on your own page, and you report what your source has to say after those words have filtered through your own understanding of them.

### **Class policies**

- “A friend is one before whom I may think aloud” –Emerson

My fundamental policy in this class is to have a class environment of mutual respect where we help one another achieve our course objectives. The course policies in this section are designed to help achieve that environment.

### **Correspondence**

- Email is the best way to reach me. I will reply to all emails within one business day.
- Class announcements and other information about the course readings, schedule changes, due dates, etc. will all happen through Fordham email and our course website. It is your responsibility to check your Fordham email daily and have access to the course website.
- General tip for emailing college professors: always error on the side of formality. You would be amazed how many emails I get that begin with “Hey” or no greeting at all. Email is a form of professional communication and has different rules than texting. When emailing a professor or TA or generally *anyone* other than your close friends and family, begin the email with “Dear Professor...,” and end it with “Sincerely...” or “Best...”.

### **Electronic Devices**

- Laptops and tablets are permitted for course readings and note-taking. I reserve the right to ask you to close your laptop if it is becoming an obvious distraction.
- Silence your phone. Don’t look at it.

## **Food and Drink**

- If it requires utensils or smells, don't bring it.

## **Attendance**

- A general note: success in this course highly depends on regular attendance. You will not receive points for simply showing up, but doing well on quizzes, exams, and papers will be exceedingly difficult if you frequently miss class.
- Per the student handbook: if you miss more than 6 classes you fail the course
- My policy: I allow each student 2 unexcused absences, no questions asked. For each subsequent unexcused absence you will lose a full percentage point from your final grade.
- Excused absences: If you miss class for a medical reason or some serious reason, you must provide me with verifying documentation.
- In the case of both excused and unexcused absences, it is the student's responsibility to inquire after any material they may have missed. Office hours is an appropriate place to do this; an email reading "Hey professor what did I miss?" is not.

## **Late work policy**

- Late work will be penalized one full letter grade per day late.
- Extensions are granted at the instructor's discretion.
- Requests for extensions must be made well in advance of the deadline.
- When requesting an extension I expect you to provide a rationale and a concrete plan for finishing the work.

## **Required Readings & Viewings**

- You should complete the assigned reading or viewing on the course schedule *before* class meets.
- My personal advice is to complete the reading before class and write down questions you have or things you don't understand. After class, go back and review the reading once more.

## **Disability Statement:**

Fordham University, in compliance with state and federal laws and regulations, does not discriminate on the basis of disability in administration of its education related programs and activities. We have an institutional commitment to provide equal educational opportunities for disabled students who are otherwise qualified. Students seeking services should meet with Disability Services staff for an initial intake meeting to develop an accommodation plan directly with the student in accordance with Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. For more information please visit: [https://www.fordham.edu/info/20174/disability\\_services](https://www.fordham.edu/info/20174/disability_services)

**Course Schedule** (subject to change at discretion of instructor)

Week 1	8/30	Introduction, review syllabus (no reading)
	9/1	Plato, <i>Republic</i> Book 2: 357a-368b
Week 2	9/5	Plato, <i>Republic</i> Book 2: 368c-383c
	9/6	<b>No class</b> (classes follow a Monday schedule)
	9/8	Plato, <i>Republic</i> Book 4 (whole chapter)
Week 3	9/12	Plato, <i>Republic</i> Book 5: 473a-480a; Book 6: 503b-511e
	9/13	Plato, <i>Republic</i> Book 7: 514a-520d
	9/15	<b>Paper #1 assigned</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In-class writing tutorial</li> <li>• Schedule draft consultations</li> </ul>
Week 4	9/19	<b>No class</b> (Dr. Walsh traveling for conference)
	9/20	Emerson, "Self-Reliance": pp. 1-11 (paragraph finishes at very top of p. 12)
	9/22	Emerson, "Self-Reliance": pp. 12-21 <b>Paper #1 draft due @11:59PM</b>
Week 5	9/26	Descartes, <i>Meditations</i> : First and Second Meditation Consultations
	9/27	Descartes, <i>Meditations</i> : Third Meditation Consultations
	9/29	Descartes, <i>Meditations</i> : Sixth Meditation Consultations <b>Paper #1 due Sunday Oct. 1 @ 11:59PM</b>
Week 6	10/3	McWeeny, "Princess Elisabeth and the Mind-Body Problem"
	10/4	Ryle, "Descartes' Myth"
	10/6	Chalmers, "Consciousness and its place in nature": pp. 1-27 (stop at end of section 7)
Week 7	10/10	Chalmers, "Consciousness and its place in nature": pp. 27-46
	10/11	Review: the mind-body problem Student presentations (1-3)
	10/13	Review: the mind-body problem Student presentations (4-6)

Week 8	10/17	<b>Midterm exam</b>
	10/18	Aquinas, <i>Summa Theologiae</i> : 1a, q. 2 (The Five Ways)
	10/20	Aquinas, <i>Summa Theologiae</i> : qq. 75-76 (Human Nature)
Week 9	10/24	Genesis 22: 1-19 (“The Binding of Isaac”) Augustine, (selected excerpts on faith and reason)
	10/25	Zagzebski, “Self-trust and the Diversity of Religions”
	10/27	Review: God, Faith, and Reason Student presentations (7-9)
Week 10	10/31	Sartre, <i>Being and Nothingness</i> : 86-101 (stop at paragraph that begins “Let us consider this waiter...”)
	11/1	Sartre, <i>Being and Nothingness</i> : 101-116
	11/3	Sartre, “Existentialism is a Humanism”: pp. 345-360 (end at middle of page)
Week 11	11/7	Sartre, “Existentialism is a Humanism”: pp. 360-369
	11/8	Review: Sartre’s Existentialism Student presentations (10-12)
	11/10	<b>Paper #2 Assigned</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In-class writing tutorial</li> <li>• Schedule draft consultations</li> </ul>
Week 12	11/14	Coates, <i>Between the World and Me</i> : pp. 1-71
	11/15	Coates, <i>Between the World and Me</i> : pp. 72-132
	11/17	Coates, <i>Between the World and Me</i> : pp. 133-152
Week 13	11/21	Review: Coates’ Existentialism Student presentations (13-15) <b>Paper #2 Draft due Tuesday Nov. 21 @11:59PM</b>
	11/22	<b>No class</b> (Thanksgiving recess)
	11/24	<b>No class</b> (Thanksgiving recess)
Week 14	11/28	Mencius: 1A7 (King Xuan and the ox); 2A6 (The child at the well); 6A10 (the beggar refusing food) Xunzi: “Human Nature is Bad” Consultations
	11/29	Background materials on Arendt’s <i>Eichmann in Jerusalem</i>

	12/1	Arendt, <i>Eichmann in Jerusalem</i> : “An Expert on the Jewish Question” Consultations  Arendt, “‘Holes of Oblivion’: The Eichmann Trial and Totalitarianism. From a letter to Mary McCarthy” Consultations
Week 15	12/5	<i>District 9</i> Student presentations (16-17)
	12/6	<i>District 9</i> Student presentations (18-19)
	12/8	Final exam review <b>Paper #2 due Sunday Dec. 10 @11:59PM</b>
Finals Week		<b>Check exam schedule.</b>