

Phil 390, Seminar in Philosophy: The Philosophers of Lightness and Weight

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University of South Carolina, Fall 2019
Tu, Th: 2:50-4:05 SJMC 310

Office hours:
CLOSE-HIPP 514
Mon: 1:00-2:00 & Thurs: 4:30-5:30
& by appointment

Philosophy used to be the keystone of a liberal education, of a well-considered life, and of broader intellectual culture. In the beginning of the 20th century, philosophy broke into two halves. One, “analytic philosophy,” is increasingly hegemonic within philosophy departments, the other, “continental philosophy,” became increasingly influential in other branches of the humanities. With this split, the philosophy done within philosophy departments has, in many respects, abdicated its once fundamental task of reflecting on the subjective, perspectival, and individual dimensions of various forms of a human life. In this class we are going to work to reclaim this task for philosophy by reading three philosophers who took there to be fundamental dimensions of human life that were both individual and particular, while also (somehow, maybe) being universal. In this respect, the practice and project of philosophy is much closer to and more continuous with that of literature. Specifically, literature has often provided an opportunity for presenting forms of life, worldviews, ethos, cosmologies, mythologies, aesthetic sensibilities, value systems, kinds of characters, etc. and explored how these interact in lived concrete human life. In this course students will be introduced to, and will engage in, this more literary activity of philosophy that often tends to be absent, or suppressed, in philosophy today.

COURSE OBJECTIVES AND REQUIREMENTS:

Reading Comprehension: Students will learn to identify claims and arguments in a text, i.e. to identify the conclusions that authors are arguing for and the considerations they are offering in support of those conclusions. Students are expected to carefully complete all the required reading before class. Readings should also be brought to class so that they may be consulted during discussion. The focus of the in-class discussion will be on the texts, and students should be absolutely sure to have read the assigned texts for each meeting.

Assessment: Students should take notes while they are doing the readings. This is critical for reading the texts in this class properly. These should include points that you were especially interested in, questions that you have, things you think it would be fruitful for us to discuss as a class, key terms that need definition or investigation, attempts to summarize key arguments, critical claims that the author has made, outlines of the overall argument the author is making, etc. This should be anything that you find useful in your own struggle to understand the texts, in preparing for class discussion, and in taking notes to prepare you to write your next tutorial essay. These will be a major tool of the course.

Bring these notes to class. You will want to keep the main copy, so bringing a Xerox or print out is acceptable, even encouraged. The notes need to exhibit a substantive engagement with the text and will be graded on a pass/fail basis. These notes are worth 10% of the final grade. Grading works as follows. You begin the semester with a score of 100. If you fail to turn in

one set of notes, your score is penalized one point. For each additional set of notes you miss, the penalty doubles. No late notes are accepted. Notes are collected in class. The following table is for illustration:

100	All notes turned in, A+.
$100 - 1 - 2 - 4 = 93$	All notes turned in but 3, A-.
$100 - 1 - 2 - 4 - 8 - 16 = 69$	All notes turned in but 5, D+!

In case of a prolonged illness or other extreme extenuating circumstance, you will need to contact me as soon as possible.

Conversational Competence: Students will learn to discuss the texts of the course with each other. This involves (1) asking questions, (2) answering questions, (3) making suggestions, and (4) listening to others. Emphasis is placed on treating one another respectfully while engaging in these activities.

Assessment: With respect to these four activities, students will be assessed for (A) attendance, (B) respect for others, and (C) participation. Achieving a decent participation score (85+) requires you to be continually present, attentive, and respectful in class, while participating in a serious and engaged way. Achieving a good score (93+) requires in addition that you frequently make helpful contributions to open-forum class discussion in the majority of class meetings. **Respectful participation** is worth **10%** of the final grade. Missing a large number of classes will severely negatively effect this portion of your grade. **When you hand in your reading questions at the end of class, I ask that you write down the number of times you participated that day at the top.** (Active participation in tutorials will also be a component in this portion of your grade, but more on that below.)

Writing competence: Students will become familiar with the claims, arguments, and world-views of the philosophers we discuss each week. This understanding will be assessed through five short writing assignments. In these assignments, students will be able to write on a topic of their choosing, or will have the option of responding to a question or series of questions that I provide. (If you choose your own topic, please talk to me briefly after class or come by office hours to make sure that I think it will work.) Generally, you should write a philosophical essay of the sort that you would write for any philosophy class. These essays will be turned in electronically on Blackboard and later, in hard copy, in triplicate, in the tutorial session. The **first** will be shorter, between **three to four** pages, the remaining four will be **four to six** pages in length. This length is a rough guide. Within reason, say no more than you have to: but take longer if you think the subject requires it. (Remember that there is a limit to how much can be read and discussed in a single tutorial session).

Anonymity: In order to facilitate fair and responsible grading, the version you hand in to blackboard must not include your name or other identification. **Failure** to do so will result in a **penalty of one letter grade.**

What Happens at the Tutorial. The two students each come with *three copies* of their essay: one for you, one for your partner and one for myself. We flip a coin at the beginning of the tutorial session, and on that basis, one of the students will read their essay aloud. I will interrupt

you to talk about what you are saying. After around twenty minutes we will shift to the second paper. I hope that in the final ten minutes we'll be able to have a conversation that integrates the themes of the two essays. (I may change this structure, depending on the specifics of the writing assignment, and how things go).

If for any reason you have to cancel at the last minute, be sure you let me know right away. If possible, e-mail me the day before your tutorial is scheduled. Failure to contact me **before** your tutorial will result in a grade no higher than a C on the writing assignment, as will missing the tutorial entirely. Obviously, you will need a serious and unforeseeable reason to cancel if your partner and I are going to be expected to reschedule.

Grading: The grade on each essay will be based on the written anonymous version that you hand in to blackboard. What happens during the tutorial is not graded. The point of the tutorial is purely educational. Active participation will be reflected in your participation grade, and failure to show up will negatively affect your paper grade, but the content of the discussion is not graded. Do not regard the grade as some sort of final judgment on your intelligence, the amount of work you put into a subject, or your potential. It is only a judgment on what you wrote, and even then, I am trying to balance different factors (care, clarity, well-structuredness, originality, depth of engagement, and so forth).

Because of the nature of the tutorial, and because I will be attempting to grade all of the essays before the tutorial, written comments will tend to be at a minimum. *I advise you to arrange to take some time after the tutorial to make notes on what happened in the tutorial.* These will constitute your written comments.

When you come to your tutorial: if you have a class or other appointment immediately following your scheduled tutorial, please tell me that this is so at the beginning of the tutorial. It is difficult to stop tutorials from running over a bit. In general, it is a good idea, where possible, to schedule yourself at a time when you do not have a class immediately afterwards.

Format: All page guidelines for papers are based on a standard **12-point** font such as Times New Roman and a **double-spaced** page layout. Please (a) **number your pages**. And with (b) the hard-copy print versions that you bring to the tutorial session, please **have your name** on the top. (Also number these pages.) I expect papers to be in this format.

Literary engagement: Over the course of the class, I would like you to read either Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* or Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*. (If you'd like to read both, you are welcome to). Both are masterpieces. Our final tutorial session will be devoted to them. I suggest that you start the one you'd like to read now, and read it slowly over the whole course of the semester. Each one should give a different color to the other material of the course, and it will be useful to have students reading both. **I will ask you to have chosen by the end of next week.**

RESOURCES:

There are a number of useful online guides on how to go about writing a philosophy paper. See:

Pryor guide: <http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>

Monash guide: <http://www.monash.edu.au/lis/lionline/writing/arts/philosophy/index.xml>

Please read Pryor's essay and/or spend a few hours working through the Monash guide.

There are also helpful books on writing philosophy essays. Two are:

Martinich, A.P. *Philosophical Writing: An Introduction*, Blackwell. 2005/2015.

Vaughn, Lewis. *Writing Philosophy: A Student's Guide to Writing Philosophical Essays*, Oxford, 2006.

GRADING: In class participation: 10%
Reading notes: 10%
First Tutorial essay: 8%
Tutorial essays 2 to 5: 18%

OVERALL RUBRIC

A = 92–100%,	C = 72–76%,
B+ = 87–91%,	D+ = 67–71%,
B = 82–86%,	D = 62–66%,
C+ = 77–81%,	F = 0–61%

LATE POLICY: If for reasons beyond your control you are unable to submit your written work by the assigned deadline, you should request an extension *before* the deadline. Late papers without an extension may be penalized by a fraction of a grade point per day (e.g., a B+ paper one day overdue may receive a B; two days overdue, a B–; etc.). **If notes are late for any reason, they will not be accepted.**

ELECTRONIC DEVICES: Please do not use cell phones in this class. I would really prefer if you did not use any electronic devices at all. If you do use a laptop during class, please only use it to take notes. Finally, if you are using a laptop, please sit in the back of the class.

PLAGARISM: Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of someone else's work as one's own in all forms of academic endeavor (such as essays, theses, examinations, research data, creative projects, etc), intentional or unintentional. Plagiarized material may be derived from a variety of sources, such as books, journals, internet postings, student or faculty papers, etc. This includes the purchase or “outsourcing” of written assignments for a course. A detailed definition of plagiarism in research and writing can be found in the fourth edition of the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, pages 26–29. The penalty for plagiarism is failure for the course. Students are required to familiarize themselves with the University's Honor Code: <http://www.sc.edu/policies/ppm/staf625.pdf>

DISABILITY NOTICE: The University of South Carolina is committed to providing accommodations and/or services to students with documented disabilities. Students who are seeking support for a disability or a suspected disability should contact Disability Resource Center at 803-777-6142. The Disability Resource Center is responsible for approving all disability-related accommodations for U of SC students, and students are responsible for providing faculty members with formal documentation of their approved accommodations at least two weeks prior to using those accommodations. I will accept Disability Resources forms by email and personal delivery. If you have already been approved for accommodations, I request that you provide me with a copy of your forms within the first two weeks of the semester.

TEXTS:

Required: Calvino, Italo, *Six Memos For Next Millennium*. Penguin, 1988. (9780679742371)

Kierkegaard, Soren. *Fear and Trembling*. Trans. Evans & Sylvia. Cambridge, 2006.

(9780521612692)

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*. Trans. Cowan. Gateway, 1996.

(9780895267108)

— . *Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*. Trans. Speirs. Cambridge, 1999. (9780521639873)

Weil, Simone. *Gravity and Grace*. Trans. Crawford & Ruhr. Routledge, 2002. (9780415290012)

— . *Waiting for God*. Trans. Craufurd. Harper Collins, 2009. (9780061718960)

Required choose one (or both):

Dostoevsky, Fyodor. *Brothers Karamazov*. Trans. Pevear & Volokhonsky. Picador, 2021.

(9781250788450)

Bulgakov, Mikhail. *Master and Margarita*. Trans. Pevear & Volokhonsky. Penguin, 2016.

(9780143108276)

Recommended (but sadly we will not have time to read it together):

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *On the Genealogy of Morality*. Trans. Diethel. 2006. (9780521691635)

Some things you might consider on the side (in addition to the ones suggested for each unit):

Calvino, *Why read the classics?*, (Literary essays on many of Calvino's favorites.), *The Uses of Literature* (More literary essays. Some overlap.), *The Challenge of the Labyrinth*

Ovid, *Metamorphoses*

Kafka, especially the *Short Stories*, especially the *Bucket Rider*.

Jorge Luis Borges, *Collected Fictions*, *Selected Non-Fictions*

Grimm's Fairy Tales, esp. "The Faithful Servant."

Sophocles, The whole *Oedipus Rex* cycle.

Shakespeare, *King Lear*, *Richard III*, *Hamlet*

Old Testament: esp. The book of Job, The book of Tobit

Goethe, *Faust*, *The Sorrows of Young Werther*

Just Mathias Thiele, *Danske Folkesagn*, Esp. Agnete and the Mermaid

Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*. Esp. "The Good and Conscience"

Wagner, *Tristan and Isolde* (opera)

Wagner, *The Ring Cycle* (operas)

David Foster Wallace. *Infinite Jest*.

Elena Ferrante, The Neapolitan novels.

Phil Klay. Non-fiction and fiction. (Ex-Marine, with a Weilian sensibility.)

Some movies:

P. T. Anderson, *There will be Blood*

Lars Von Trier, *Breaking the Waves*

Lars Von Trier, *Antichrist*

Wim Wenders, *Wings of Desire*

Roberto Benigni, *Life Is Beautiful*

Gaspar Noe, *Enter the Void*

Andrei Tarkovsky, *Stalker*
Clair Denis, *White Material*
Yong-Kyun Bae, *Why Has Bodhi-Dharma Left for the East*
Wong-Kar Wai, *Fallen Angels* (sequel to *Chungking Express*, but makes sense independently)

Some Philosophy:

Plato. All of it. Esp. *Phaedo*, *Republic*, *Theatetus*.
Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics*. (The lesser-known *Ethics*. In the background of *The Birth*.)
Aristotle, *Poetics*
Kant. Especially the Practical Philosophy and the *Third Critique*. (Next year!)
Schopenhauer, *On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason*
Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*
Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, esp. Vol 1.
Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History”

Of course, our authors will be referring to lots of texts. Basically, all are worth a look....

SCHEDULE: This schedule is aspirational. This time, more than others, I really aspire to stick to it. This means that we will not exhaustively discuss any of the texts we are reading.

Dates Readings

8/18 Introduction

CALVINO, SIX MEMOS FOR THE NEXT MILENIUM

Also try: Calvino, *Invisible Cities*. Dante, *Inferno*. Cavalcanti, *A lady asks me*.

8/23 Lightness, pp. 1-29

8/25 Quickness & Exactitude, pp. 31-80

8/30 Visibility & Multiplicity, pp. 81-124

9/1 **DOSTOYEVSKY:** The Grand inquisitor. (Link on BB)

9/3 **1ST Tutorial essay is due to Blackboard at 4:00pm**

9/6 **1ST Tutorial**

KIERKEGAARD, FEAR AND TREMBLING

Also try: Paul, letter to the Romans. Sophocles, *Oedipus Rex*. Euripides, *Iphigenia at Aulis*.

9/8 Selection from *Genesis & Hebrews* (on BB), Preface, Tuning up, A tribute to Abraham, pp. 1-20

9/13 A Preliminary Outpouring from the Heart, pp. 20-46

9/15 Problem I, pp. 46-59

9/20 Problem II, pp. 59-71

- 9/22 Problem III, & Epilogue, pp. 71-end
 9/24 **2nd Tutorial essay is due to Blackboard at 4:00pm**
 9/27 **2nd Tutorial**

**NIETZSCHE, *THE BIRTH OF TRAGEDY* &
*PHILOSOPHY AND THE TRAGIC AGE OF THE GREEKS***

Also try: Sophocles, *Antigone*. Aeschylus, *Oresteia*, *Prometheus Bound*. Euripides, *The Bacchae*

- 9/29 Göthe, *Prometheus* (on BB). BT: Forward through §4, pp. 13-28.
 10/4 BT: §5 to §7, pp. 28-40. *Philosophy and the Tragic Age of the Greeks* §1-5, pp. 27-56
 10/6 BT: §8 to §10, pp. 41-54. PTAG: §6-9, pp. 57-74
 10/11 BT: §11 to §15, pp. 54-75. PTAG: §10-end, pp. 74-117
 10/13 FALL BREAK
 10/18 §15 to end, pp. 76- 116.
 10/20 An attempt at Self-Criticism, pp. 3-12; wrap up discussion of BT & PTAG
 10/22 **3rd Tutorial essay is due to Blackboard at 4:00pm**
 10/25 **3rd Tutorial**

WEIL, *GRAVITY AND GRACE*, etc.

Also try: The Gospels. *The Iliad*. Moliere, *The School for Wives*.

- 10/27 “The *Iliad* or the Poem of Force” (on BB); *Optional*: GG: pp. 1-11;
 11/1 “The *Iliad*” cont., “Human Personality” (on BB). *Optional*: GG: pp. 12-21
 11/3 “Human Personality” (on BB). *Optional*: GG: pp. 22-68
 11/8 VOTE! No class
 11/10 “Human Personality” (on BB). *Optional*: GG: pp. 69-91
 11/15 WfG: “The Love of God and Affliction” pp. 67-82.
Optional: WfG: “Implicit Forms of the Love of God,” pp. 83-99; GG: pp. 92-133
 11/17 WfG: “The Love of God and Affliction” pp. 67-82.
Optional: WfG: “Implicit Forms of the Love of God,” pp. 99-117; GG: pp. 134-181
 11/22 WfG: “The Love of God and Affliction” pp. 67-82.
Optional: WfG: “Implicit Forms of the Love of God,” pp. 117-142.
 11/24 THANKSGIVING
 11/26 **4th Tutorial essay is due to Blackboard at 4:00pm**
 11/29 **4th Tutorial**

12/1 Wrap-up discussion

**DOSTOEVSKY, *THE BROTHERS KARAMAZOV* or
BULGAKOV, *THE MASTER AND MARGARITA***

12/3 **5th Tutorial essay is due to Blackboard at 4:00pm**

12/5-12/10 **5th Tutorial**