

SYLLABUS FOR PHILOSOPHY OF BEING

PHI 3311
Fall 2009 MWF 12:00-12:50pm
University of Dallas

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Office Hours

MW 2:15-3:15pm (Braniff Third Floor)
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Course Description

3311. Philosophy of Being. A brief synopsis of major topics in the history of philosophical speculation on being. The beginnings of metaphysical thought in Greek philosophy. Act and potency; essence and existence; the transcendentals; causality; the ontological foundations of logic; substance, properties, and accidents; the metaphysical understanding of the human person; the existence of God. Selections from Plato, Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, the whole of Aquinas' *De Ente et Essentia*, and some texts from Kant or Heidegger. Prerequisites: PHIL 1301 and 2323.

Texts

- Plato, *Republic*, *Parmenides* (any edition)
- Aristotle, *Basic Works*
- Dionysius the Areopagite, *On the Divine Names*
- St. Thomas Aquinas, *On Being and Essence*
- Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* (Hackett, 1977)
- Other notes, outlines, and articles are available at www.philofbeing.com

Please bring the appropriate text to class meetings.

Objectives

After completing this course, you will be able to:

- identify the metaphysical questions raised by the philosophy of being
- locate pivotal thinkers in the history of the philosophy of being
- be conversant in basic metaphysical terminology (for example, know the difference between essence and existence)
- analyze and synthesize the various solutions posed by philosophers (explain things in your own words)

Assessment – 25/25/50

I will assess your achievement of these goals as superior, good, satisfactory, merely passing, or failing based on the following considerations:

Final Paper (25%)

You will submit a typed five-page reflection paper demonstrating your mastery of the terms concepts, and philosophers covered in the lectures. This will require you to attend class and take notes during the semester. I will choose essay prompts so that common websites such as Wikipedia won't help you. I hope to discover whether you are conversant (not necessarily fluent) in the concepts of the Philosophy of Being.

5-6 pages, double-spaced, 12-point font, New Times Roman, standard margins, stapled or paper-clipped.

Midterm Examination (25%)

The midterm exam will test your mastery of all topics covered up until the midterm exam, and will include: A) basic multiple choice, matching questions; B) short answer questions; C) essay questions.

Cumulative Final Examination (50%)

This exam will test your mastery of all subjects covered in the *entire* semester, and will include: A) basic multiple choice, matching questions; B) short answer questions; C) essay questions.

Academic honesty: As in all classes, the University of Dallas' policy on academic honesty is to be strictly followed.

Revision: Everything in this syllabus is subject to revision as necessary.

Schedule of Lecture Topics for the Semester

Sept 2: "Introduction to the Philosophy of Being – Identifying the Questions"

Sept 4: "Earth, Wind, and Fire (and Water)" The Pre-Socratics

Sept 7: "What is the best thing to study?" Plato's Republic 504a-524e

Sept 9: "Descending into the Cave" Plato's Republic 525a-535a

Sept 11: "Ascending from the Cave" Plato's Republic 514a-535a (Last Day to Add/Drop)

Sept 14: "The Third Man Argument" Plato's Parmenides 131e-133a

Sept 16: "Synonymous and Homonymous Words" Aristotle's Categories

Sept 18: "The Basics of Predication" Aristotle's Categories

Sept 21: "The Ten Categories" Aristotle's Categories

Sept 23: "The Problem of Change" Physics I

Sept 25: "Defining Nature" Physics II

Sept 28: "The Four Causes" Physics II

Sept 30: "Potency and Actuality" Physics III

Oct 2: "Metaphysics as the First Philosophy" Metaphysics 1 (Big Alpha)
Oct 5: "Previous Attempts at First Philosophy" Metaphysics 2 (Little Alpha)
Oct 7: "Aporiai in Metaphysics" Metaphysics 3 (Beta)
Oct 9: "Logic and Metaphysics" Metaphysics 4 (Gamma)
Oct 12: "Aristotle's Dictionary" Metaphysics 5 (Delta)
Oct 14: "The Science of Philosophy" Metaphysics 6 (Epsilon)

Oct 16: NO CLASS Fall Reading Day

Oct 19: MIDTERM EXAMINATION

Oct 21: "Introducing Substance" Metaphysics 7 (Zeta)
Oct 23: "What's the Matter?" Metaphysics 8 (Eta)
Oct 26: "Potency and Actuality" Metaphysics 9 (Theta)
Oct 28: "Unity" Metaphysics 10 (Iota)
Oct 30: "Aristotle's Review Course" Metaphysics 11 (Kappa)

Nov 2: "The Prime Mover" Metaphysics 12 (Lamda)
Nov 4: "Introduction to Neo-Platonism"
Nov 6: "Plotinus the Pagan Neo-Platonist"
Nov 9: "Proclus the Last of the Pagan Neo-Platonists"
Nov 11: "Christianity and Neo-Platonism" Dionysius's *Divine Names*
Nov 13: "Is God above goodness, being, and life?" Dionysius' *Divine Names*
Nov 16: Saint Thomas Aquinas' De Ente et Essentia 1
Nov 18: Saint Thomas Aquinas' De Ente et Essentia 2
Nov 20: Saint Thomas Aquinas' De Ente et Essentia 3
Nov 23: Saint Thomas Aquinas' De Ente et Essentia 4
Nov 25: Saint Thomas Aquinas' De Ente et Essentia 5
Nov 27: NO CLASS Happy Thanksgiving
Nov 30: Saint Thomas Aquinas' De Ente et Essentia 6

Dec 2: Saint Thomas Aquinas' De Ente et Essentia 7
Dec 4: "Can metaphysics even be possible?" Kant's Prolegomena, (Preface thru Part 3)
Dec 7: "The Modern Dilemma" Kant's Prolegomena, (Conclusion & Solution)

Dec 9: PAPER DUE: Conclusion and Course Review

Final exam to be announced in accord with official Academic Calendar Dec 28 Grades due