

KNOWLEDGE, REALITY, SELF

PHI 1000-001

Villanova University

Tolentine Hall 214

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Office Hours: M, W 10:30-12:20

or by appointment.

The sorts of things we will talk about in this course and why they matter:

Our time together this semester will be divided into three sections, each of which explores a different kind of philosophical discourse. These three forms of speech or writing deal with different kinds of ideas and are constructed in very different formats. We will consider how the structure of a text or speech is as important as what is being said. In other words, the way individuals represent themselves, others and their world through language offers a distinct picture of what we can know about ourselves and about reality. The primary goal of this course is to give you the opportunity to encounter different kinds of linguistic representation, specifically throughout the history of philosophy. In so doing, each of you will have the opportunity develop a deeper sensitivity to the kinds of discourse being used around you and to become more conscious of how you use language to represent yourself and your views of the world.

Section One, Erotic Dialogues: Speaking Erotically

The three dialogues that we will study in this section are from Ancient and Medieval philosophy. Each of these three dialogues focuses on a conversation between at least two people who are deeply committed to thinking about a certain set of ideas or problems together. We call these couples *interlocutors* and the sort of conversations they have *dialectic*. While the relationships between the interlocutors we will study are intimate (close friends, teacher and student, lovers), we will focus on their conflicts and consider how new insights can be born out of diverging positions about ourselves and about reality. The goal of this section will be for us to approach philosophy (and ideas in general) as a “living language.” We will discuss how ideas are communal works in progress that are never completed and oppose this to the view of philosophy as a body of knowledge already written by the “great thinkers” of history.

Section Two, Soliloquies: Talking to My Shadow

In contrast to dialogues, which represent the often conflicting perspectives of two people, soliloquies are a form of linguistic representation that express the desires, will, emotions, spirituality or ideas of a single individual. These sorts of notions that describe the inner personal life of an individual make up what is called one’s *interiority*. The three soliloquies in this section show how, like quarreling lovers, I can also have disputes with myself. I am one, but at times it seems as though I am divided into two. The goal of this section is to give an account of the experiences of tension and contradiction within the self, which at times may seem to contain multiple and conflicting personas.

Section Three, Manifestos: the Ironic Dream of a Common Language

Manifestos are intended to provide political or social representation for a whole community. Yet while manifestos are often an attempt to express the needs, rights and identity of all the members of a group, such representation often neglects certain members of the community. The goal of this section will be to identify ways in which our identities, especially in terms of the groups we are associated with, are at least partly formed by a social and historical context. By considering those who have been historically underrepresented, we will also analyze how the project of gaining knowledge about ourselves and our world demands an attentiveness to the voices of those from other periods/cultures (or our those within our own culture) that are not immediately available to us.

Why this course is good for you even if you don't plan on becoming a philosophy professor:

Because I respect your time and know that you will do great things with it this year, I will never assign you "busy work." Your assignments are designed to help you develop the a number of skills that are fundamental, not only to your success in this course, but also to your success in college, your success in whatever profession you will eventually take up, and life in general (I swear!)

- the ability to listen carefully to others and respond in a thoughtful manner
- the ability to do the appropriate background research that is required before starting a reading or writing assignment
- the ability to read a text closely by getting developing the habit of re-reading, marking key passages, looking up words or concepts you don't understand, and taking detailed notes
- the ability to offer a clear and accurate explanation of an argument that has been presented to you
- the ability to think critically about an argument by analyzing, not only what is being said (the content or position), but also how it is being said (the formal structure and tone).
- the ability to develop your own ideas and express them in a way that allows them to be heard

Materials:

You will need a three-ring notebook binder, a folder to keep inside the binder, access to a hole puncher, computer and printer.

Plato. *Phaedo*. Trans G. M. A. Grube (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1977)

ISBN-10: 0915144182 / **ISBN-13:** 978-0915144181

Plato. *Symposium*. Tans. Alexander Nehamas and Paul Woodruff (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1989)

ISBN-10: 0872200760 / **ISBN-13:** 978-0872200760

Boethius. *The Consolation of Philosophy*. Trans. P.G. Walsh (NY: Oxford, 2007)

ISBN-10: 0199540543 / **ISBN-13:** 978-0199540549

Abelard and Heloise. *The Letters and Other Writings*. Trans. William Levitan (Hackett, 2007)

ISBN-10: 0872208753 / **ISBN-13:** 978-0872208759

Augustine. *Soliloquies: Augustine's Inner Dialogue*. Trans. Kim Paffenroth (NY: New City Press, 2008)

ISBN-10: 1565481429 / **ISBN-13:** 978-1565481428

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (Cambridge: Cambridge, 2008)

ISBN-10: 0521602610 / **ISBN-13:** 978-0521602617

Baldwin, James. *If Beale Street Could Talk*. (NY: Vintage Books, 2002)

ISBN-10: 0307275930 / **ISBN-13:** 978-0307275936

PRINT your own copies of the following texts during the first week of this course and bring them to every class in your three-ring notebook binder.

Descartes, Rene. *Meditations of the First Philosophy*. First and Second Meditations. Trans. Jonathan Bennett. http://www.earlymoderntexts.com/f_descarte.html

Haraway: *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women*, "A Cyborg Manifesto"
<http://www9.georgetown.edu/faculty/irvinem/theory/Haraway-CyborgManifesto.html>

Deleuze and Guattari: *A Thousand Plateaus*, Introduction
<http://danm.ucsc.edu/~dustin/library/deleuzeguattarirrhizome.pdf>

Grade Assessment:

25% Attendance, Preparation, and Participation

25% Paper One

25% Paper Two

25% Final oral exam

Attendance, Preparation, and Participation

Your physical presence is not enough to achieve full credit for attendance, which will count for 25% of your overall grade for this course. You will also be evaluated on how well you prepare for class and your participation in class. Being a good participant in class entails being an attentive listener to the professor and your classmates, responding to others in a thoughtful and respectful manner, and having the courage to offer your own ideas to our class discussions. Always come to class with the appropriate texts and materials.

Most of your reading assignments will not be long but will nevertheless be challenging in content. In order to have a sophisticated grasp of these texts, you will need to read them slowly and carefully, re-read them multiple times, look up words or ideas you are not familiar with, highlight key passages or points and take detailed notes.

I will help you prepare for class by giving you questions that will guide your reading. You are expected to give thoughtful answers to these questions and bring two copies to class: one to keep for yourself to use in our discussions and one to hand into me at the beginning of class.

If you miss more than 6 classes, you will fail the class. If you do need to miss a class 1) email me with an explanation of your absence (preferably in advance) 2) email me any papers or assignments that happen to be do that day (absences do not mean automatic extensions) 3) meet with me or a classmate to review what you missed during the lecture and class discussion

Short Papers:

We will devote several days of class to discussing how to write your two papers for this class. You will be required to take a rough draft of each paper to the Writing Center: This is an excellent resource Villanova has for you to get assistance on your written work, and there are even Philosophy graduate students there to assist you that you can request specifically. <http://www.writingcenter.villanova.edu>

Other Policies:

- Statement on Disabilities: Villanova seeks to make reasonable academic accommodations for students with disabilities. If you are a person with a disability, please contact me outside of class, and make arrangements to register with the Learning Support Office by calling 610/519- 5636; or sending an e-mail to nancy.mott@villanova.edu.
- Technology: Generally speaking, you may not use laptops, phones, or other electronic devices during class sessions.
- Statement on Academic Integrity: This course will enforce strictest standards of academic integrity. All papers must have scrupulous documentation of any sources you use, following the MLA format. You also are expected to follow any other rules given by the instructor regarding acceptable and unacceptable collaboration on any given assignment. Again, please ask for clarification if you are the least bit unsure. When doing tests and quizzes, be sure you do not attempt to give or receive unauthorized information. Violations of the academic integrity code will typically result in a failure for the course. For further details about Villanova's academic integrity policy, please consult www.vpaa.villanova.edu/academicintegrity.
- Please keep copies of all of the work you submit throughout the semester. Also, check on BlackBoard for your grades.
- Grade Questions: Villanova grading policies can be found at: <http://www.villanova.edu/enroll/registrar/grades/policy/defined.htm>. If you have concerns about a grade, please resubmit your work to me, with a written explanation of your concern or question. I will reread your work and return it to you with written comments. If a grade change is warranted, I will also change your grade. Under no circumstances will your grade be lowered as a result of this process. If you still have concerns or questions, please make an appointment to meet with me in person to discuss the work. Do not discuss the work with me until after you have resubmitted it and it has been returned to you.
- Late Work: Late papers and assignments will be docked a full letter grade for the first late day, and a fraction of a grade (say from C to C-) for each subsequent day. However, if you

know in advance that you will need and extension, please contact me as soon as possible to see what can be done.

I. DIALOGUES: speaking erotically

Week 1: January 13, 15, 17

M: Introduction to course; review syllabus

W: Plato, *Symposium*, “Introductory Dialogue” (1-8), “The Speech of Aristophanes” (25-31)

F: Plato, discussion groups on *Symposium*

Week 2: January 20, 22, 24

M: MLK day, NO CLASS

W: Plato, *Symposium*, “Socrates Questions Agathon” (40-44), Speeches of Diotima (45-60)

F: Plato, *Phaedo* (1-15)

Week 3: January 27, 29, 31

M: Plato, *Phaedo* (16-35)

W: Plato, *Phaedo* (36-50)

F: Plato, *Phaedo* (51-67)

Week 4: February 3, 5, 7

M: Boethius, “Book One”

W: Boethius, “Book Three”

F: Boethius, “Book Five”

Week 5: February 10, 12, 14

M: Boethius, “Book Five”

W: Abelard and Heloise, First and Second Letter

F: Abelard and Heloise, Third Letter

Week 6: February 17, 19, 21

M: Paper Workshop, **Rough draft due**

W: Abelard and Heloise, Fourth Letter

F: Abelard and Heloise, Fifth Letter

II. SOLILOQUIES: talking to my shadow

Week 7: February 24, 26, 28

M: MIDTERM, **FIRST PAPER DUE**

W: Introduction to soliloquies

F: Soliloquy Presentations

[March 3-9: SPRING BREAK]

Week 8: March 10, 12, 14

M: Augustine

W: Augustine

F: Augustine

Week 9: March 17, 19, 21

M: Descartes

W: Descartes

F: Descartes

Week 10: March 24, 26, 28

M: Nietzsche, Prologue

W: Nietzsche, Section One

F: Nietzsche, Section Two

Week 11: March 31, April 2, 4

M: Paper Workshop, **rough draft due**

W: Nietzsche, Section Three

F: Nietzsche, Section Four **SECOND PAPER DUE**

III. MANIFESTOS: the ironic dream of a common language

Week 12: April 7, 9, 11

M: Introduction to Manifestos

W: Baldwin

F: Baldwin

Week 13: April 14

M: Baldwin

W: Baldwin

[April 16-21: EASTER RECESS]

Week 14: April 21, 23, 25

M: NO CLASS

W: ORAL EXAMS

F: ORAL EXAMS

Week 15: April 28, 30, May 2

M: ORAL EXAMS

W: Concluding Remarks, SELF-EVALUATION, CATS

W: Reading Day, NO CLASS