

PHIL 30305: The Examined Life

MW 11:00am – 12:15pm

307 DeBartolo Hall

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Office Hours: 12:00-1:00pm Tuesdays, and by appointment

Course Description

In this course, we will consider what it means to live philosophically. We will first approach this question in a general way by exploring a range of historical and contemporary views of the nature of philosophy and its relationship to the rest of life. We will then take a more in-depth look at specific philosophical frameworks that aim to inform how we live. In particular, we will focus on the Samkhya and Yoga systems developed in India in the first several centuries CE, followed by the theory of morality and religion developed in the late writings of the French philosopher Henri Bergson (1859-1941). We will seek to understand and assess these frameworks in their own right, in light of the contexts in which they were produced, and will also discuss the extent (if any) to which they are adaptable as guides to our own lives. In the final part of the course, we will break into small groups, each of which will prepare a dialogue and an immersion experience about other philosophical frameworks for living well. Examples from previous semesters include pacifism, Epicureanism, and Orthodox Judaism.

This course also provides support and ongoing training to first-time dialogue leaders in the God and the Good Life Fellows program. To that end, our class meetings will be formatted in the same way as the dialogue meetings in GGL, and will include time for dialogue *about* the experience of facilitating GGL dialogues, including collaborative troubleshooting of any issues that may arise within or across GGL dialogue groups. The philosophical content we engage with in this course will also enrich the GGL dialogue experience by introducing perspectives that challenge and/or illuminate many of the positions that your dialogue group members will be exposed to in GGL. (For example, this content raises questions about the role of action and contemplation in a meaningful life, about what it really takes to “expand your moral circle” beyond your immediate community, and about the relationship between morality and rationality.)

Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, you will be able to

1. Analyze and compare philosophical texts from diverse intellectual traditions
2. Connect philosophical issues and positions to social and personal concerns through dialogue, journaling, and essay writing
3. Organize and moderate participant-driven philosophical dialogues between diverse individuals.

Texts

Henri Bergson: *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* (Notre Dame Press)

All other readings will be in the Google Drive folder for the course.

Assignments

Reading Questions/Comments (20%): The night before each seminar meeting, you should submit a post about the readings to our class Google Doc. This can consist in raising a question, posing an objection, drawing out an implication of an idea in the readings, or anything else that displays a serious engagement with the content of the readings. We will use these posts to structure our group discussion. You will get two points for an excellent example of a strong submission on a given day, one point for a reasonably good submission, and no points for no submission or for a submission that is not particularly relevant to the topic of the day. Your ten highest submissions will count as part of your overall grade.

Philosophical Essays (10% Each): For each of our two main units, you will write an essay reflecting more deeply on the philosophy we have been studying in the unit. One of these will develop one of your reading questions/comments from the unit into a detailed philosophical argument, drawing on at least one outside source and, if applicable, on points raised in our group discussion of your question or comment. The other will take the form of a philosophical op-ed translating the philosophy to a solution for a contemporary life problem. (For examples of this genre, see the New York Times's op-ed series "The Stone".) It is up to you which essay you write for which unit. To help you master clear, logically cogent writing, you will be able to rewrite your essays as many times as you like. The first essay is due **October 18** and the second is due **November 22**.

Yoga Experience Project (20%): At the end of our unit on classical Indian philosophy, we will spend one week immersed in the Yogic way of life. This will involve engaging in a series of directed activities, keeping a daily journal, and engaging deeply with the classic texts of Yoga and related traditions. The journal project and active participation in the project will serve as the midterm for our seminar.

Immersion Project (25%): You will form groups of three or four and design an "idea immersion" for the rest of us. This will be an experience involving readings, discussions, and a hands-on element that takes an important philosophical idea of your group's choosing and teaches us how to incorporate it in our lives. Half of the assignment will involve selecting relevant readings and leading a class dialogue around them. The other half will involve immersing the rest of the class in your group's idea.

Effective Dialogue Facilitating (15%): You will be graded on how well you discharge your duties as a GGL dialogue leader. This will include regular reports at our team meetings about the progress of groups, review of your self/group assessments, punctuality and accuracy with keeping track of graded assignments, and the creativity and care you give to lesson-planning with your partners. Lesson plans should be filed every week.

Conversion from numerical grades to letter grades:

93+ = A		87-89 = B+		77-79 = C+		60-69 = D
90-92 = A-		83-86 = B		73-76 = C		59- = F
		80-82 = B-		70-72 = C-		

Honor Code

Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated in this course. A violation of the University's honor code can seriously harm your grade for the course, and will remain on your permanent record. Because of the serious consequences associated with honor code violations, you should familiarize yourself with the University's honor code, which can be found at <http://honorcode.nd.edu/>. If you have any questions about what the code requires of you in a particular case, please ask.

Date	Class Agenda	Reading Assignment	Written Assignment
8/28	Course Introduction	None	
Philosophy and the Examined Life			
9/2	Teaching Workshop: Preparing your first dialogue	The Apology of Socrates	Lesson Plan: Opening Meeting
9/4		Edmund Gettier: "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?" Bernard Williams: "On Hating and Despising Philosophy"	
The Sāṅkhya-Yoga Tradition in Classical Indian Philosophy			
9/9	Introduction to classical Indian philosophy Teaching workshop: Dialogue about morality	None	
9/11		The <i>Sāṅkhyakārikā</i> of Iśvarakṛṣṇa, 1-16 Gerald James Larson: <i>Classical Samkhya</i> , pp. 154-167	
9/16		Karika 17-21, Larson 167-76	Lesson Plan: Dialogue #1
9/18		Karika 22-54, Larson 176-95	
9/23	Teaching workshop: Dialogue experiences	Karika 55-73, Larson 201-208	
9/25		Pierre Hadot: "Spiritual Exercises"	
9/30		The <i>Yoga Sūtras</i> of Patañjali, Book 1 Gerald James Larson & Ram Shankar Bhattacharya: <i>Yoga: India's Philosophy of Meditation</i> , pp. 74-91	Lesson Plan: Dialogue #2
10/2		Yoga Sūtras, Book 2, Larson & Bhattacharya 91-119	
10/7	Teaching workshop: Debate assignment/Dialogue about belief	Yoga Sūtras, Book 3, Larson & Bhattacharya 119-132	Lesson Plan: Dialogue #3
10/9		Yoga Sūtras, Book 4 Larson & Bhattacharya, 132-136 Eric Davis: "Is Yoga a Religion?"	
10/14		Pradeep P. Gokhale: "Is There a Moral Perspective in Patanjali's Yogasutras?"	
The Philosophy of Henri Bergson: Morality, Mysticism, and Human Rights			
10/16		Hadot: "Conversion"	Essay 1 due 10/18
10/21	FALL BREAK		
10/23	FALL BREAK		
10/28	Introduction to Bergson Teaching Workshop: Dialogue about religion	Emily Herring: "Henri Bergson, Celebrity" Bergson in the New York Times packet Recommended: Bergson, <i>The Two Sources of Morality and Religion</i> , pp. 9-33	Yoga Experience Journal due in class Lesson Plan: Dialogue #4
10/30	Immersion meetings	Bergson, <i>The Two Sources of Morality and Religion</i> , pp. 9-65	
11/4	Teaching Workshop: Dialogue experiences	Bergson, pp. 65-101	
11/6	Immersion meetings	Matthew 5-7 (Sermon on the Mount) Declaration of the Rights of Man Universal Declaration of Human Rights Bergson, pp. 209-227	
11/11		Bergson, pp. 227-265	Lesson Plan: Dialogue #5
11/13	Teaching workshop: Apology assignment/Dialogue about meaning	Bergson, pp. 266-292	
11/18	Immersion meetings	Bergson, pp. 292-317 Reinhold Niebuhr: "Henri Bergson on the Nature of Morality and Religion"	Lesson Plan: Insights Pub #1
Immersion Projects			
11/20	Group 1 discussion: Minimalism	Minimalism Packet -- click to access	Essay 2 due 11/22
11/25	Group 1 excursion: Minimalism		
11/27	THANKSGIVING BREAK		
12/2	Group 2 discussion: Existentialism	Readings on Existentialism -- click to access	Lesson Plan: Insights Pub #2
12/4	Group 2 excursion: Existentialism		
12/9	Group 3 discussion: Daoism	TBD by group	
12/11	Group 3 excursion: Daoism		
12/12	End-of-semester dinner		