COURSE OBJECTIVES:

You will study some famous philosophers' attempts to answer some very difficult philosophical questions. For example, is the mind something different from the brain or can mind be reduced to brain activities? Do our perceptions correspond to the way the world actually is? Is morality relative to cultures? Is morality even possible? Is there one conceptual framework that is adequate to guide moral decisions and, if so, what is it? If God is omnipotent and benevolent, why is there evil in the world? Can the existence of God be proved?

You will be asked to read about, think about, and write about questions such as these. You should learn something about the nature of argumentation in the process.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

1. Course grade is primarily determined by three essay type hour exams, 20% each. The first hour exam will be in class on Monday, June 4, 2001. The second hour exam will be on Monday June 18, 2001. The third hour exam will be Thursday, June 28. All three exams are required for a passing grade in the course.

2. You should submit a discussion question based on the readings, along with a suggested answer, as these are assigned. Discussion questions may be submitted in class only on the date they are due. At least two discussion questions may be missed to allow for excused absences. Flippant or irrelevant questions (or suggested answers) will be regarded as a non-submission. In addition, there will be occasional in class writing assignments which can be turned in only at the end of the class period. In class writing assignments will be checked for completeness and appropriateness. The discussion questions and in class writing assignments are worth 20% of the course grade. A solid record of in class writing assignments is needed to earn this portion of the course grade. In class writing assignments will require you to refer to your textbook, so you should bring your text to each class meeting.

3. At least two out of class writing assignments on assigned topics are due on the date announced in class. Quality of out of class writing assignments will be judged on the basis of quality of argumentation, logical organization, appropriateness to the assignment, degree of effort, completeness, etc. Out of class writing assignments are worth 10% of the course grade. Details on length, etc., will be given when the assignments are made.

4. Regular class attendance and participation in discussion is expected. If you miss class, you are responsible for finding out what was assigned, covered or discussed in your absence. Class attendance and participation is worth 10% of the course grade.
READING SEQUENCE:

Chapter 1  What is Philosophy?
Chapter 2  A Little Logic
Chapter 13  God and Reason, pp. 309 - 317
Chapter 12  God and the World, pp. 290 - 297
Chapter 15  God & Evil
Chapter 16  Challenges to Morality
Chapter 17  Hedonism
Chapter 18  Utilitarianism
Chapter 19  The Role of Duty
Chapter 5  Mind and Matter
Chapter 6  Idealism
Chapter 9  The Way of Reason
Chapter 10  The Way of Experience
Chapter 21  Liberalism vs. Marxism
Chapter 22  The Question of Justice

The professor reserves the right to revise the syllabus as the course progresses.

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PHILOSOPHICAL INVENTORY

This set of statements should help you identify your own "world view." Please respond to each statement positively ("agree") or negatively ("disagree"). If you think the statement is generally true, but there are a few exceptions to it, give it a positive response anyway and note that there are exceptions. Examples of exceptions would be helpful. If you have comments, make them on a separate page.

1. All religions worship the same God.

2. Everything real (i.e., actually exists) is made of matter.

3. Human beings have free will (i.e., the ability to choose between genuine options).

4. Only humans are aware of their own existence.

5. Humans have minds as well as brains.

6. Everyone ought to pursue their own pleasure or happiness to the max.

7. Everything humans know is based on, or derived from, experience (evidence).

8. There is a higher moral law which transcends the laws of humans (governments and societies).

9. Mental phenomena (ideas, thoughts, decisions, sensory perceptions, emotions, experience of pain, etc.) cannot be reduced to physical events or processes (i.e., brain events, etc.)

10. It is possible for humans to acquire knowledge independently of experience or evidence (e.g., pure thought, insight, or perhaps divine revelation).

11. Everything real is mental in nature (i.e., is in someone's mind).

12. One's moral obligations are established by one's society or culture.

13. Every event has a cause (i.e., is the inevitable result of prior conditions).

14. Factory owners have to pay their workers as little as possible in order to maximize their own profits.

15. Only humans are aware of having a future.

16. Any claim that cannot be confirmed by evidence is nonsense.

17. God created the physical universe.
18. Theoretical entities (e.g., electrons) are real.
19. Only humans are aware of having a future they can shape.
20. God is omnipotent, omniscient, and supremely wise and benevolent.
21. Every human being has a basic right to life which cannot be justifiably violated by any government.
22. Morality is impossible without free will.
23. Everyone ought to promote the greatest happiness of the greatest number of people.
24. Miracles (events contrary to the laws of physics and chemistry) are possible.
25. Human beings evolved from less complex life forms.
26. Theoretical entities (e.g., electrons) are mere human inventions.
27. Human behavior is determined by past experience.
28. Mystical experiences can be explained away as hallucinations, wishful thinking, fraud, etc.
29. Humans survive death with their intellect, consciousness, and memories intact.
30. Even if there is a God, the evil in the world shows that God cannot be benevolent.
31. The physical universe spontaneously began with the Big Bang.
32. There is some set of properties by virtue of which a thing is what it is.
33. Everyone ought to be paid at least a subsistence wage.
34. Species never change (like breeds like).
35. Everyone always tries to promote their own interests.
36. Nothing is known for sure.
37. Government ought to guarantee the basic rights and liberties of the individual, and nothing else.
38. Everyone deserves to be treated in a way that respects their individual dignity and worth.
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