
History of World Philosophy

Course syllabus

PD Dr. Tobias Henschen
Winter Semester 2018/2019

Times and rooms:

Mondays 16:15-17:45h, AU 01 042
Wednesdays 16:15-17:45h, KG 1034

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Office hours: Tuesdays 13-14h, AU 01071

Course website: ILIAS (password: meditatio)



Overview and goals

This course will offer a comparative introduction to the history of the philosophical traditions of Europe, America, Asia and Africa. We will consider the most important questions that have been debated in these traditions: How should we live? What is the self? How does the self relate to others? What is the ultimate nature of reality? How can we come to know that reality? Do divine entities or a hereafter exist? When considering these questions, we will also analyze the more general question of whether morality and truth are relative to culture. Central readings will include works by Confucius, Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Maimonides, Ibn Sina (Avicenna), Descartes, Leibniz, Hume, Kant, Nietzsche and Hindu and Buddhist writings.

Learning goals:

- Become acquainted with a substantial body of the Western and Eastern philosophical canon;
- develop the vocabulary and analytical skills to understand, evaluate and debate historical documents of (Western and Eastern) philosophical thought;
- move toward a reflective individual position on the possibility of the cultural relativity of truth and morality.

Requirements

To complete the **pass/fail** requirements (*Studienleistung*) in this course you need to attend class and actively participate in the discussion, which is key component of this course. You may miss up to three sessions without explanation and without being sanctioned, excluding the session in which you are scheduled to present. In the case of sickness, further sessions may be missed if you demonstrate progress and engagement with the course material and are demonstrably not falling behind. Absences need to be announced prior to the session. Compensatory work for missed sessions may be requested.

The **examination** (*Prüfungsleistung*) in the course consists of 25 very brief response papers, 1 presentation, 1 very short essay and 1 short essay.

Response papers (20% of the grade): Response papers represent very brief one-sentence responses to teasing questions that are meant to test your reading of the literature that will be discussed in each session. The teasing questions will be distributed at the beginning of each session and can be dealt with in less than two minutes. The response papers are also meant to record your regular attendance, which means that you have to work on at least 22 of them. You may, however, fail up to 7, and in case you passed at least 15, your overall achievement will be graded by 1.0.

Presentation (20% of the final grade): The primary purpose of the presentation is to introduce a text from the Western or Eastern philosophical canon. It should (1) briefly inform about the biography of the author and his time, (2) capture the main

thesis (or theses) of the text and reconstruct its main argument(s), (3) point to passages that seem difficult to understand (don't sweep these passages under the rug, assuming e.g. that you are the only one failing to understand them), (4) evaluate the text as much as possible, i.e. critically assess the validity of its argument(s) and the truth of its main thesis (or theses), and (5) formulate questions that seem to remain open or appear most suitable for discussion among the course participants. When giving your presentation, you should use a handout or slides (but not both). Handouts and slides should be well-structured, readable, and easy to understand. When using slides, you need to distribute hard copies of them before class. Your presentation shouldn't take longer than 20 to 25 minutes. But as the participants are allowed to ask questions, it might take up to 45 minutes. In order to enhance an atmosphere of intellectual equality, the student giving the presentation will remain seated in the front during the whole session. In each session, there will be exactly one slot for a presentation. Check the description of the general and specific topics below to find out which topic interests you most and which slot is, accordingly, most suitable for you. You might also want to consult the text that will be discussed in each session before making your choice. In order to get a slot for your presentation, you need to register through ILIAS in the wiki called "presentations". Note that slots are assigned on a first come, first served basis. Don't be disappointed if someone else takes the slot that you are most interested in. All participants are expected to be able to present any of the specific topics of the course. Also note that you might no longer be able to get a slot if you register too late, i.e. if you haven't registered and all remaining slots are taken. If you register too late, you will have to do the re-sit (see below). You won't be allowed to do a co-presentation with someone else.

Very short essay (20% of the final grade): The very short essay is an essay of 1500 to 2000 words that responds to an assignment that asks you to consider a thesis or argument contained in any of the texts that we will be studying. Given this thesis or argument, the assignment will ask you, more precisely, to argue for or against it, to explain it, to offer an objection to it, to defend it against an objection, to discuss its possible consequences, to determine whether another thesis can be held consistently with it and so forth. When responding to such an assignment, your essay should begin by (1) stating your precise thesis (get to the point quickly and without digression, a florid preface or reference to a grand historical narrative is not required), (2) defining technical or ambiguous terms that are relevant to your thesis or argument, and (3) briefly explaining how you will argue for your thesis. In case the assignment asks you to evaluate someone else's argument, you should also (4) briefly explain that argument. The main body of your essay is supposed to (5) make an argument to support your thesis. Make the strongest possible argument instead of offering several weak arguments. Do not skip any steps, and do not rest your arguments on premises that the reader might find doubtful. If you use claims that the reader might find doubtful, you must try to give convincing reasons for accepting them. Say precisely what you mean and elaborate only if necessary. Make sure that your argument is valid, and that you make adequate use of logical indicators ("either ... or", "consequently",

“therefore”, “all”, “not all”, “some”, “because” and so on). The main body of your essay should also (6) anticipate and answer possible objections to your argument or thesis. Refrain from making up unconvincing objections that you can reply to easily. Instead, always raise and answer the strongest objections that you can think of. Your very short essay will need to be submitted by 12/14/2018, 23:59h, through ILIAS. Late submissions will **not** be accepted. The assignments for your very short essay will be announced through ILIAS on 12/5/2018.

Short essay (40% of the final grade): The short essay is an essay of 2000 to 3000 words that like the very short essay responds to an assignment by observing points (1) to (6), and that, in addition, (7) concludes by briefly explaining what you think your argument has established. Your short essay will need to be submitted by 2/15/2019, 23:59h, through ILIAS. Late submissions will **not** be accepted. The assignments for your very short essay will be announced through ILIAS on 1/30/2019.

The re-sit in this course will be a long essay of 5.000 words on a topic assigned by the instructor, due on 4/5/2019 at 23:59h (strict deadline). The topic will be assigned on 3/22/2019 through ILIAS.

Important formalia

The completion of the Studienleistung (SL, in this course - attendance) is the prerequisite for the admission to the Prüfungsleistung (PL).

The UCF policy on plagiarism and cheating applies to the response papers, presentations and essays. Failing to indicate sources and correctly reference all ideas and quotes from other authors or your work in other assignments will result in failing the course component and possibly the course as a whole. Cases of suspected plagiarism will be reported to the Examination Board.

Cell phones and social media must not be used during classes.

SCHEDULE

General topic	Date	Specific topic	Mandatory readings: excerpts from
Introduction	Mon 10/15	Information, requirements, policies, schedule	
Epistemology	Wed 10/17	Chinese theories of knowledge	Chuang Tzu, <i>The Identity of Contraries</i> ; Wang Chong, <i>Balanced Inquiries</i>
	Mon 10/22	Plato's internalism	Plato, <i>Meno</i> ; <i>Theaethetus</i>
	Wed 10/24	Phyrrhonic skepticism	Sextus Empiricus, <i>Outlines of Phyrrhonism</i>
	Mon 10/29	Descartes' foundationalism	Descartes, <i>Meditations</i> (first meditation)
	Wed 10/31	Hume's empiricism	Hume, <i>Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding</i>
Ethics	Mon 11/5	Daoism, Confucianism, Hinduism	Laozi, <i dao-de-jing<="" i="">; Confucius, <i>The Analects</i>; <i>Bhagavad Gita</i></i>
	Wed 11/7	Ancient Greek virtue ethics	Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i>
	Mon 11/12	Medieval Jewish virtue ethics	Maimonides, <i>Guide of the Perplexed</i>
	Wed 11/14	Deontological ethics	Kant, <i>Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Morals</i>
	Mon 11/19	Utilitarianism	Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i>
Mind and Self	Wed 11/21	Chinese and Zen Buddhism	Xuanzang, <i>Consciousness only</i> ; <i>Heart Sutra</i> ; Yixuan, <i>Conversations</i>
	Mon 11/26	Plato on the eternal soul	Plato, <i>Phaedo</i>
	Wed 11/28	Descartes' dualism	Descartes, <i>Meditations</i> (second meditation)
	Mon 12/3	Locke on personal identity	Locke, <i>Essay Concerning Human Understanding</i>
	Wed 12/5	Hume on the self	Hume, <i>Treatise of Human Nature</i>
Essay 1	Mon 12/10	<i>No session</i>	
	Wed 12/12	<i>No session</i>	
	Fri 12/14	<i>Very short essay due</i>	
Theology	Mon 12/17	Good and evil	Augustine, <i>Confessions</i> ; <i>Enchiridion</i>
	Wed 12/19	Medieval Islamic Theology	Avicenna, <i>On the Nature of God</i> ; Averroes, <i>The Incoherence of the Incoherence</i>
	Mon 1/7	Descartes' ontological argument	Descartes, <i>Meditations</i> (third meditation)
	Wed 1/9	Leibniz on the problem of evil	Leibniz, <i>Theodicy</i>
	Mon 1/14	Kant on ontological arguments	Kant, <i>Critique of Pure Reason</i>
Metaphysics	Wed 1/16	Categories and causes	Aristotle, <i>Categories</i> ; <i>Metaphysics</i> ; <i>Physics</i>
	Mon 1/21	Primary and secondary qualities	Locke, <i>Essay Concerning Human Understanding</i>
	Wed 1/23	Empirical idealism	Berkeley, <i>Three Dialogues</i>
	Mon 1/28	Absolute idealism	Hegel, <i>Phenomenology of Spirit</i>
	Wed 1/30	Perspectivism	Nietzsche, <i>Human, All Too Human</i> ; <i>The Gay Science</i>
Essay 2	Mon 2/4	<i>No session</i>	
	Wed 2/6	<i>No session</i>	
	Fri 2/15	<i>Short essay due</i>	

General and specific topics

In the West, there has been the tendency to reduce the philosophical canon to the work of Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Hume, Kant, and a few others. But philosophers standing in the Western tradition become increasingly aware that there are other more or less continuous philosophical traditions that are at least as ancient and probably just as important. They in particular identify a Hindu, a Chinese, and a Buddhist tradition.

In this semester, we will be reading 25 excerpts from philosophical works that arguably make up a substantial body of the Western and Eastern philosophical canon. They belong to the philosophical core areas of epistemology, ethics, philosophy of mind, theology, and metaphysics. We will the excerpts from these core areas in this order: we will start with epistemology and then turn to ethics, philosophy of mind, theology and metaphysics, in this order. We will accordingly start with the least theory-laden areas of philosophy and then work toward the more abstract ones, with metaphysics arguably being the most abstract one. This order also roughly complies with the order of the three questions that Kant believes philosophers need to pose and answer in the first place: What can I know? What should I do? What may I hope? Within each philosophical core area, the order will be both chronological and geographical.

Two reasons why our readings cover the Western and Eastern canon only incompletely: we won't be able to study all authors whose work is usually understood to belong to the canon of either Western or Eastern philosophy (e.g. Aquinas, Spinoza, Kierkegaard, the Buddha himself); and we won't be able to study all philosophical works that are usually understood as belonging to the canon (e.g. Plato's *The State* with its famous cave allegory).

A note on diversity: the canon of Western and Eastern philosophy does not (yet) include the work of any female, African, native American etc. authors. Maybe this should be changed. But changing this requires deep insights into the history of philosophy and is beyond the scope of this course.

Timeline

Laozi	580-510 BCE	Averroes	1126-1198
Confucius	551-479 BCE	Maimonides	1135-1204
<i>Bhagavad Gita</i>	around 400 BCE	René Descartes	1596-1650
Aristotle	382-322 BCE	John Locke	1632-1704
Chuang Tzu	380-320 BCE	G. W. Leibniz	1646-1716
Wang Chong	27-97	George Berkeley	1685-1753
Sextus Empiricus	170-230	David Hume	1711-1776
St. Augustine	354-430	Immanuel Kant	1724-1804
Xuanzang	596-664	G. W. F. Hegel	1770-1831
Yixuan	800-867	John Stuart Mill	1806-1873
Avicenna	980-1037	Friedrich Nietzsche	1844-1900

Bibliography (titles appear in the order in which they will be studied in class; they are all available for download through ILIAS; you are required to bring hard copies into class)

- Chuang Tzu, *The Identity of Contraries*. Trans. H. A. Giles. London: Quaritch, 1889, pp. 13-32.
- Wang Chong, *Lung-Heng (Balanced Inquiries)*. Transl. A. Forke. Leipzig: Harrassowitz, 1907, pp. 92-3, 166, 103, 138-140, 191-2, 194-6.
- Plato, *Meno*. In: B. Jowett (ed. and transl.), *The Dialogues of Plato*. Vol. II. Oxford: OUP, 1931, 96d – 98c.
- Plato, *Theaetetus*. In: B. Jowett (ed. and transl.), *The Dialogues of Plato*. Vol. IV. Oxford: OUP, 1931, 200d – 202d, 206a – 210d.
- Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Skepticism*. Ed. and transl. J. Annas and J. Barnes. Cambridge: CUP, 2000, Book 1: chapters i, vi, xi, xiii, xiv (pp. 12-17, 22-35), xvi (pp. 43-44).
- René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*. In: E. S. Haldane and G. R. T. Ross (ed. and transl.), *The Philosophical Works of Descartes*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911, pp. 144-149 (*First Meditation*).
- Jonathan Bennett, *Objections to the meditations and Descartes' replies*.
<https://www.earlymoderntexts.com/assets/pdfs/descartes1642> (2017), pp. 42, 84-5.
- David Hume, *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*. Ed. S. Buckle. Cambridge: CUP, 2007, section 2; section 4, part I (pp. 28-32); section 4, part II (pp. 34, 36-7, 39); section 5, part I (pp. 42-5); section 7, part I (pp. 58-60); section 7, part II (pp. 68-72); section 12, part III (pp. 142-4).
- Bhagavadgita*. In: F. M. Müller (ed.), *Sacred Books of the East*, volume VIII, transl. K. T. Telang. Oxford: Clarendon, 1898, pp. 37-52 (excerpts).
- Confucius, *The Analects*. Transl. J. Legge. London, New York: Colonial Press, pp. 7-93 (excerpts).
- Laozi, *Dao-de-Jing*. In: F. M. Müller (ed.), *Sacred Books of the East*, volume XXXIV, transl. J. Legge. Oxford: OUP, 1891, pp. 45-113.
- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*. Ed. L. Brown, transl. W. D. Ross. Oxford: Oxford University Press, Books I+II (excerpts).
- Moses Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed*. Ed. and transl. M. Friedländer. New York: Dutton and Company, 1904, Book III, chaps. XXVII, XXVIII, XXXI, XXXIII, XXXIV, XXXV.
- Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*. Ed. and transl. A. W. Wood. Yale: YUP, 2002, pp. 9-10, 30-33, 37-42, 45-49, 51-4.
- Mill, J. S. (1863). *Utilitarianism*. London: Parker, Son and Bourn, 1863, pp. 9-38 (excerpts).
- Xuazang, *Treatise on the Establishment of the Doctrine of Consciousness-Only*. In: W.-T. Chan (ed. and transl.), *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*. Princeton: PUP, 1963, pp. 374-7, 386-7 (sections 1. + 6.)
- Heart Sutra*. In: *Buddhist Wisdom Books: Containing the Diamond Sutra and the Heart Sutra*. Transl. Edward Conze. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1958.

- Yixuan, *The Recorded Conversations of Zen Master Yixuan*. In: W.-T. Chan (ed. and transl.), *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*. Princeton: PUP, 1963, pp. 444-9.
- Plato, *Phaedo*. In: B. Jowett (ed. and transl.), *The Dialogues of Plato*. Vol. II. Oxford: OUP, 1931, 63d – 73b.
- René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*. In: E. S. Haldane and G. R. T. Ross (ed. and transl.), *The Philosophical Works of Descartes*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911, 149-157 (*Second Meditation*).
- John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Philadelphia, PA: James Kay Jun. & Bro, 1844, Book II, chap. 27: sections 1, 5-10, 13-23, 26.
- Hume, D. (1789). “Of personal identity.” In: *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. Selby-Bigge, L. A. Oxford: Clarendon, pp. 251-163.
- Augustine, *Confessions*. Ed. and transl. F. J. Sheed. New York: Sheed & Ward, 1943, Book VII: chaps. 3-5, 12, 13.
- Augustine, *Enchiridion*. Ed. and transl. J. F. Shaw. London: Religious Tract Society, 1889, chaps. X-XIV.
- Avicenna, *On the Nature of God*. Ed. and transl. A. J. Arberry. London: Murray, 1951, pp. 24-6, 32-3.
- Averroes (Ibn Rushd), *The Incoherence of the Incoherence*, Bibliotheca Arabica Scholasticorum. Ed. M. Hozien, transl. M. Bouyges. Beyrouth: e-text, 1930, fourth discussion (pp. 216-229, 231).
- René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*. In: E. S. Haldane and G. R. T. Ross (ed. and transl.), *The Philosophical Works of Descartes*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911, pp. 157-171 (*Third Meditation*).
- Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Philosophical Works*, Abridgment from *Theodicy*. Ed. and transl. G. M. Duncan. New Haven: Tuttle, Morehouse and Taylor, 1890, pp. 194-204.
- Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, “On the impossibility of a cosmological proof of God’s existence”. Ed. and transl. P. Guyer and A. W. Wood. Cambridge: CUB, 1998, pp. 563-9.
- Aristotle, *Categories*. In: J. Barnes (ed.) and W. D. Ross (transl.), *Complete Works*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991, §§ 4, 5.
- Aristotle, *Metaphysics*. Ed. and transl. T. Taylor. London: Davis, Wilks and Taylor, 1801, book IV: chaps. I, II; book VII: chaps. I-IV.
- Aristotle, *Physics*, In: J. Barnes (ed.) and W. D. Ross (transl.), *Complete Works*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991, book II: §3.
- John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Philadelphia, PA: James Kay Jun. & Bro, 1844, book II, chap. VIII: sections 7-23; chap. XIII: sections 2, 9-12; book III, chap. III: sections 6-9, 11-13, 15-16.
- George Berkeley, *Three Dialogues*. Chicago: Open Court, 1906, pp. 31-4, 40-1, 48-9, 52-7.
- Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Transl. A. V. Miller. Oxford: OUP, Introduction.
- Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*. Transl. H. Zimmern. Edinburgh: Morrison and Gibb, 1910, First Division (First and Last Things): sections 1-3, 5-10, 16, 17.

Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*. Ed. B. Williams and transl. J. Nauckhoff.
Cambridge: CUP, 2001, Book III: 108, 124, 125.