Philosophy 125: Great Philosophers

Contact Information

Professor Brandon N. Towl
Email: btowl@artsci.wustl.edu
Phone: (314) 276-6500
Office hours: M and W 1-2
Office: Wilson Hall rm 109

TA Jan Plate
Email: jplate@wustl.edu
Office hours: T 2-4
Office: Wilson Hall rm 116

What to Expect

This semester, we are doing something a little different for class. Five philosophers, considered some of the greatest in the Western tradition, will be put on trial to see if they really do deserve the title “Great”.

Please note that this format is experimental, and that it requires a lot of students in terms of time commitment and workload. If you think scheduling group meetings, reading hundreds of pages of text, analyzing arguments, and working with others might too difficult or not worthwhile for you—this might not be the course for you.

The outlines of the class will be given in the first two class periods. Please try to make an add/drop decision by Friday evening of this week so teams can formed for the first trials.

If you do decide the join us… great! Get the books, and get to reading!

Texts

Texts are available at the campus book store. These include:

Plato, *The Republic* (translated by Bloom)
West and West, *Four Texts of Socrates* (OPTIONAL)
Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*
Aristotle, *Politics*
Berkeley, *Principles of Human Knowledge* and *Three Dialogues* (Two texts in one book)
Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*
Hume, *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*
Dennett, *Kinds of Minds*
Dennett, *Consciousness Explained* (OPTIONAL)
Dennett, *Darwin’s Dangerous Idea*

Handbooks for each trial will be made available on Telesis, and are specific to the roles played in the trial.
Evaluation

Your final grade will be an average of your individual grades, which in turn depend on your role in any given trial:

- Members of the Prosecution and the Defense receive one grade for their pre-trial brief, one grade based on peer evaluation, and possibly a third grade based on quiz performance.

- The Judges receive a grade based on their final decision for a trial.

- The Expert witnesses receive one grade from the professor based on their in-class lectures, and one grade reflecting the median average of the Gallery’s performance on the quiz.

- Members of the Gallery receive a grade based on an in-class quiz, and can receive extra credit for making statements in the trial.

In addition, everyone will have to complete a final paper, due Monday, December 19th. This also counts as one grade.

Class Policies

1) Students suspected of plagiarism or any other form of academic dishonesty or misconduct will be reported to the Dean. Sadly, I have had to do this in the past. What happens afterwards is not fun.

2) If you are part of a team and have to miss class, please inform your group members. If you email them, cc: me on the email as well.

3) If it becomes apparent that you are missing multiple classes and/or appointments for no good reason, there will be consequences, up to and including ejection from the course.

4) If you miss class or arrive late, you are still responsible for announcements and material missed.

5) Students taking to course Pass/Fail are expected to participate fully on the activities for the course. You must receive a 70 for a “pass” grade.

6) Incompletes and grade changes are awarded only under exceptional circumstances, and only if arrangements are made ahead of time.