

**UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY**

PHIL 3910
Indian Philosophy

Instructor: K. Dorter

Fall 2010

Extension: 53218

Email: kdorter@uoguelph.ca

Office Hours: whenever I'm there (except the hour before class when I'm preparing), which is most of the time I'm not teaching. My teaching schedule is in CourseLink and next to my door at 353 MacKinnon.

Description: The primary readings for class discussion will deal with selected readings in 1) Radhakrishnan and Moore (eds.): *A Source Book in Indian Philosophy* (Bookstore), 2) Dorter (ed.): *Five Upanishads* (CourseLink), and 3) Nagarjuna's *Mulamadhyamakakarika* (CourseLink). If time remains we'll also read Shankara's *Vivekachudamani* (CourseLink).

Assignments: In addition to the final exam (50%) you may write **either** two 1250 word essays (25% each) **or** one 2500 word essay (50%). 1250 or 2500 words are minimum lengths—**essays may be longer if justified by the content**. You can also use the first 1250 word essay as a trial run for the 2500 word essay, or you can expunge the grade for your first essay by submitting a 2500 word essay later—in both cases resubmit the original essay along with the final version. **Submit on paper**—electronic submissions will not be accepted. See the attached Essay Guidelines for due dates.

Essays: Essay topics may be of two kinds. 1) Discussion of a general problem in Indian philosophy (see next page for suggested topics). 2) Explication of a philosopher or text **not dealt with in class** (see Radhakrishnan & Moore, chapters V-VIII and XVI-XVII).

Final Exam (Monday 12/13/10, 11:30-13:30): The exam will consist of three essay questions (25 marks each) on the material covered in class (to be selected from a list handed out at the last class, which will be a review class), and five identification questions (5 marks each) from: Carvaka, Jainism, Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Sankhya, Yoga, Purva-Mimamsa, and Vedanta. For the identification questions you need only read Radhakrishnan & Moore's introductions to chapters VII, VIII, X-XV.

Pronunciation of Sanskrit terms: Transliterations from Sanskrit are not always pronounced the way they look in English. See the pronunciation guide on pp. 638-9 of Radhakrishnan and Moore.

Readings for class discussion:

1) From *Five Upanishads* (download from CourseLink):

Isha

Katha

Chandogya: Book 1 ch.1; Book 5 ch. 3-18; Book 6 ch.1-3, 8-16; Book 7 (all); Book 8 ch. 7-15

Mandukya

From *Source Book in Indian Philosophy*:

2) *Bhagavad Gita*: 3 chapters per class

3) Buddhism:

a) 274-286: Early texts

b) 292-325: *Dhammapada* (7 chapters per class)

c) *Mula-madhyamaka-karika* (CourseLink): chapters 1, 24, and 18.

d) 333-337: *Trimshika*.

4) Advaita Vedanta: Shankara's *Vivekachudamani* (download from CourseLink).

Essay Topics (relate your discussions both to Indian texts and your own judgement): You may write on an Indian philosophical text that isn't part of the readings for class discussion, or you may write on a general problem in Indian philosophy. Here are four possibilities.

1. A central concept in many Indian philosophies is *ahimsa* or non-violence (see R-M's index under "*ahimsa*", "harmlessness", "non-violence"). Discuss the pros and cons of this way of life.

2. Reincarnation is an important feature of several Indian philosophies (see R-M's index under "cycles of births and deaths", "rebirth", "*samsara*"). It is a powerful incentive for moral behavior, but it is hard to reconcile with the contribution that the body makes to our individuality, and also with belief in heaven and hell. How convincing is this theory? What difference does it make if we believe it, and what does it imply about the relation between the soul, the body, and the individual that I am at present? (The following books by Ian Stevenson are on 3-day reserve – there's no need to consult more than one: *Cases of the Reincarnation Type* BL515.S746, *Children Who Remember Previous Lives* BL515.S747, *The Evidence for Survival from Claimed Memories of Former Incarnations* BF1311.R35 S88, *Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation* BL515.S75. If you use Stevenson's books, also look at the articles on Stevenson in CourseLink.)

3. What is the nature of the self or soul? (There are numerous entries in R-M's index under "Self", "self", "Soul", "soul".)

4. It sounds plausible to say that bodily desires interfere with the mind's ability to see reality, and that therefore strict asceticism is important. But it also sounds plausible to say that the body is natural, and that any attempt to cut the mind off from it leads to an unnatural and sterile intellectualism. Is asceticism an advantage or disadvantage for our effort to discover truth? (See R-M's index under "asceticism", "*sannyasa*", "*sannyasin*").

GUIDELINES FOR ESSAYS

Also see “7 Standard Statements” on Courselink.

1. Deadlines: 2500 word essay: Monday, November 8th; **or** two 1250 word essays: Monday October 18th and Monday, November 8th. **Label your essays** “First Essay”, “Second Essay” or “Long Essay” because short essays and long essays are graded differently. Late essays will be penalized one mark (out of 100) per weekday. The “day” ends at 4:30—if it’s in my mailbox in MacKinnon 343 the next morning I’ll count it as submitted yesterday; if it’s under my door I’ll count it as today. After the last class meeting it must be accompanied by a telephone number where you can be reached to answer any questions that may arise (if I can’t reach you it won’t be marked). No essay will be accepted after **9 a.m. the weekday before** the final exam. Keep a copy in case it gets lost. Students will not normally be required to answer questions about their essay, but may in some cases.

2. Subject: Any philosopher in the subject area of the course who **isn’t studied in class**, or any relevant issue not studied in class. Check with me to make sure. There’s nothing wrong with referring to works studied in class as long as they appear in a supporting rather than starring role.

3. Sources: If the essay deals with a philosopher focus on **primary texts** (texts of the original author), although secondary sources (works *about* the original author’s texts) may be used as a supplement. **Quotations in a secondary source don’t count as primary texts.** You need to be able to see the whole context. The point is to develop skill in exegesis and evaluation; reporting the results of other people’s exegesis and evaluation does not accomplish this. If not enough primary material exists use at least three secondary sources.

4. Content: Combine scholarship and creativity, i.e. both attentiveness to the text (where applicable) and a personal response of your own. If you’re interpreting a particularly difficult text it may be enough just to give a clear explanation of it. Where the interpretation is more straightforward your creativity can take the form of considering objections to the author’s views and how the author might reply to them; explain why you think the author can or cannot withstand the criticisms. Also consider possible objections to your views. The more challenging you can make these issues, the better: treating answers as obvious is not worth as much as seeing how they are controversial and difficult.

5. Format: Double spaced, full sized font (12 point). It can be hand-written if it’s easy to read. Use page numbers.

6. Style: Use “I” rather than awkward and outdated circumlocutions like “the author.” And use inclusive language like “humankind” instead of “mankind”, “people ... they” instead of “a person ... he.” Other possibilities: “he or she”, “she or he”, “s/he”, etc.

7. Footnotes: Footnote all information and ideas taken from someone else, even if they aren’t direct quotations. Otherwise it may be plagiarism (when in doubt ask). Listing your sources in a bibliography isn’t enough since it doesn’t show where you make use of them. Footnotes should list the **author** that you’re citing first. For example, if you use a book called John Green (editor), *The Philosophy of Ramanuja*, and your footnote is to something Ramanuja wrote, it should say, “Ramanuja, in John Green (editor), *The Philosophy of Ramanuja*, p. 12”, **not** “Green, John, *The Philosophy of Ramanuja*, p. 12”. Only if you cite something the editor wrote would you use the latter format. Only the first citation need be complete; after that you can abbreviate, e.g. “Green 12”.

Sample philosophy essays are available on Courselink.