

# Introductory Philosophy: Basic Problems (PHIL 1050) Winter 2011

Instructor: Dr. Mark McCullagh

## Course description

### Content

This course introduces several of the core problems in philosophy concerning knowledge, reasoning and the place of minds in the world. There will be two lectures each week, supplemented by one discussion section meeting which will give you the chance to ask questions, clarify points, and, later in the semester, discuss how to produce brief written works (either summaries or philosophical reactions).

I think of philosophy as aiming at clarity in our beliefs rather than conclusive proofs of them. So I think the slogan that all you can ask of a philosopher is consistency is on the right track. What makes philosophy interesting is that clarity requires more than just consistency!

### Work

The setup of this course is atypical. You will produce many small pieces of work, rather than a few large pieces of work. Initially these will be in-class *quizzes*, given both at the start of a lecture, which will draw upon your understanding of the reading, and at the end, which will draw upon your understanding of the lecture. (These are marked as "Q01" etc. on the schedule.) Then we will introduce brief *summaries*, submitted at the start of each lecture, the purpose of which is to develop clarity in your writing. (These are marked as "S01" etc. on the schedule.) Late in the course you will write some *reactions*, also submitted in lecture, which allow you to make some philosophical point of your own in response to the reading. (These are marked as "R01" etc. on the schedule.) Getting better at each of these sorts of thing prepares you for doing things of the next sort. In summary, you will

- do 18 in-class quizzes;
- write 6 brief summaries;
- write 5 brief philosophical reactions;
- write one mid-term examination (March 7);
- write one final examination (April 18).

For a good grade you need a good routine. Best to:

- carefully work through each reading in preparation for each class, making your own notes on it (especially if parts are confusing);
- come to the class, asking a question if something is not well explained either in the textbook or in the lecture;
- attend your discussion section—nothing solidifies ideas better than discussing them with others.

### Textbook

*Thinking Things Through* by Clark Glymour. MIT Press (ISBN 9780262571197). You are also required to buy a clicker, for doing the quizzes. These are for sale in the bookstore.

## Lectures

Monday and Wednesday, 8:30–9:20am in [Thornbrough 1200](#).

## Grading

*Item Value*

In-class quizzes

(all 22 are graded, best 16 count)

$(16 \times 3) / 4 = 12$

Summaries

(all 6 are graded, best 4 count)

$4 \times 6 = 24$

Responses

(all 5 are graded, best 4 count)

$4 \times 6 = 24$

Mid-term exam 15

Final exam 25

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