

PHIL* 1000-01 INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY: MAJOR TEXTS [0.50]

Instructor: J. Russon

Brief Course Synopsis:

It is natural to us to investigate our own existence, and the history of human culture has been the history of changing interpretations of the nature of our personal and our political lives. In the first half of this course, we will study two of the most influential interpretations of human nature: the views of Plato and Hobbes. Plato, perhaps the most influential philosophical writer of all time, wrote in Athens in the 4th-Century B.C. Arguing that we must care for the health of the soul over the health of the body, his work studies the ways in which the different choices we make for how to live can either cultivate or pervert our nature.

Hobbes, an English philosopher from the 17th-Century A.D., on the contrary, denies the "higher life" of the soul, and interprets human life as a matter of power and calculation. With this context from the history of philosophy established, we will turn, in the second half of the course, to more contemporary approaches to interpreting the nature of our personal identities and the issues that define our political life. We will consider Marxist, existentialist, and feminist approaches to understanding the nature of the human condition. In addition to introducing important ideas, it will also be an introduction to some of the most important texts of human culture, and it will provide an opportunity for students to develop their own skills of critical evaluation.