Syllabus and Reading Questions for

Introduction to Philosophy, Fall 2009

Dr. Hoyt, Loyola University

Note: Each week is usually broken into three sections. Do all the sections for each week. Be sure to turn the page to see if the sections continue. I indicate whether reading is in the “packet” or the “book”. Always bring reading material to class with you.

Reading Topic

Week One: Introduction to class.

Article by MA Casey, A Problem of our Times

packet, pp. 1 - 4

“Individualism: Gone too Far”? Pay no attention to the contrast between Clinton and Bush. Skip section titled “Religion’s Influence Today”

Reading questions:

1) Briefly describe what the author means by “individualism junkies”.

For this question, you’ll need to understand “natural virtue”. Virtue is natural if one becomes a good person by nature, without any help from tradition, culture, or family.

2) Briefly describe the “error of Americanism”. This is stated in the reading, and the answer doesn’t come from your reflection alone.

TO THINK ABOUT: Socrates tells us that philosophy is about learning how to die. Some have said that the most important idea in both Greek philosophy and Christianity is that we discover how to live through a certain kind of dying to self. I want you to notice that the deeper claims about life are also very abstract. But this abstraction doesn’t mean that they are unimportant. Reflect on what this claim about “dying to self” might mean. We will be looking for clues given by various writers on this. To start thinking about what “dying to self” means in this article, consider: What does the author of this article say we fear? How does our society make us fearful of this? It turns out that what he says we fear is closely related to what is meant by ‘dying to self’.

Week Two:

“Does the Pope Love America”, An American Problem and a Possible Solution

packet, pp. 8 - third col. p. 9

Before reading the article, understand these two terms:

‘Determinism’: This has nothing to do with conviction as in ‘being determined to do something’, as in “having conviction”. If the way I live is very influenced by things apart from the spirit or free will, e.g. by the external, material world, we would say that my life was caused by them. I would thus be very influenced to live as I do in the sense that I do not choose by my inner freedom, but by a kind of compulsion to let these externals ‘determine’ my choices. Determinism as a philosophic concept is the opposite of free will.

The second term is closely related in meaning to the first.
‘Materialism’: The philosophy that everything in life can be explained or is caused by the material, or physical, world alone. The relevant contrast is a belief in God, reason, and/or free will.

1) How do you think the average person in America today would define freedom? How does the Pope define freedom?

2) What does the author argue is the irredeemable problem at the root of our society? This is explicit in the text. In one sentence only, what do you think of this criticism? Why do you think he is or is not on track in this critique? Don’t just say “yes he is right because people are materialistic”. This isn’t giving me a reason you think he is write, but merely repeating the claim.

TURN OVER
3) What is it that the Pope says we are to understand the deep meaning of? If something in the article has a deep meaning, there must be something which is shallow. What might that be? “Does the Pope Love America”, An American Problem and a Possible packet, third col. p. 9 - end, p. 10 Solution

4) Most philosophic question of this set: What are the two sorts of materialism in the world? Briefly explain both of them in such a way that you make the distinction clear in your own mind.
5) What does the Pope argue is the problem with both?

West “Introduction”, packet, excerpt, pp. 5 - 7, Socratic philosophy

6) Briefly discuss what Socrates stands for. How is this different from what the author believes people will mistakenly think Socrates stands for? This is an important distinction I will keep bringing up. Be sure you understand it. Students themselves often make the same mistake the author points to.
7) What idea or ideas held by many academics today does the author seem to disagree with?
8) The author hints that philosophy can be a destructive activity, when it brings individuals to question the beliefs of society. Does he say that Socratic philosophy is merely negative in this way? In what way is it also constructive?
9) What is it that Socrates knows? Can you think of why might this attitude be important to democratic society?

Week Three:

Apology of Socrates, pp 33 - top of 50 Philosophy
in Hakim book and society

The charges against Socrates are repeated two or three times in the three reading of the Apology. Make a mark each time you see it repeated.

1) Briefly discuss why Socrates is getting in trouble in Athens. What are the charges against him? Which of these do you think will cause the most trouble for him? Why?
2) Plato wants to argue that the relation between the individual and society can be understood as a kind of creative tension. Furthermore, this tension always exists to some degree. The creative tension increases when a single individual seriously seeks the truth. By calling this relationship a “creative tension” we mean that a kind of creation comes out of the conflict between the society and this type of person. Jesus and Socrates are two great examples. On the other hand, this tension and thus creativity diminishes if the individual simply assumes or accepts the dominant opinions of his society in an unthinking way. Give two examples which show Socrates making an argument about certain ways of living or beliefs. In a short sentence, state how Socrates says they are living or believing, and then state how he thinks they ought to live or believe.
3) Here I want you to make the same kind of contrast you did in question 2 in the last set.

What does Socrates say the Athenians often care about in their lives? What does he say they should care about? What does he say they do fear? What should they fear?
4) The point in discussing fear is that it motivates us to do the wrong thing, or in relation to deep spirituality, it makes us remain on the surface of life. We modern Americans cannot identify with what Socrates says the Athenians fear. But can you think of anything else that might create fear and that might motivate us in the same way that the fear of the Athenians motivated them?
5) Based on this reading, give a brief summary of what matters for Socrates to living a good life?

Week Four:
1) Plato has Socrates in mind as the model philosopher. What does Plato say the philosopher has a passion for? What distinction is clear in the mind of the philosopher? OR: What distinction does Plato make in this reading?

2) What realm does ignorance correspond to? What realm does knowledge correspond to? Opinion/belief?

3) Briefly explain why the philosophers should rule? For thought: America’s founders were very influenced by Greek philosophy. While philosophers do not rule today, someone does take their place. Who do you think this is, as a category of “job holder” or personality type?

**Week Five:** Plato, *Republic* Allegory of the Cave

Pp. 481 - 483, packet (pp. 15, 3rd col. - pp. 16 whole page)

1) In one half to one page, interpret the story Plato tells. What might the various parts in the Cave represent? Discuss at least one way the seeking of the individual as such stressed. What is a deep good he attains? Simply state what Plato says about it, and add a little bit of your own.

Also: On this web page, scroll down to “Plato’s Republic” and check out the links on the Matrix and Plato. http://www.practicalphilosophy.net/booklist.htm

Plato, *Republic* Allegory of the Cave

Pp. 484 - 486, packet (Pp. 17 - 18 first two columns.)

2) Here I follow up on the question above where I asked about the deep good of the individual who left the cave. Now we’ll refer to the political aspect of the Allegory. What does Plato say is the political role of the single individual who has gained Enlightenment? What is the purpose of the journey of that single individual from the cave to the light, according to Plato? Is it for his own well being? Is it for good government? Why do you think Plato highlights that these goals when held by one individual are in conflict with each other.

3) Follow up. Deep issue for semester and possible essay topic: If any single individual is supposed to take the journey from the cave to the light, or that is, to seek the truth and live it - then is the purpose of this journey supposed to be a) the salvation of that individual’s soul, or b) the well-being of society as a whole. Can you see any possible paradox in the way Plato discusses this issue? What tension exists for the single individual in the story?

**Week Six:** Movie: *The Razor’s Edge* Philosopher and society

Assignment for this week due the following week. This means you’ll have two things to do next week. Short-essay for movie.

In 400 words, discuss how Larry is similar to Socrates. Among other things, you should touch on the following: What is the relationship between Larry and those around him? What tensions exist in those relationships, and what are the reasons for them? How do others see him? How does Larry judge the opinions of the others about happiness? Does he judge them? How is Larry’s attitude different from Uncle Elliot’s as regards assumptions about whose opinion is deeply right? What is the highest good for Larry? Is it the same as it is for most of the others?

**Week Seven:** From book. 92 “In early Greek...” - 98. Introduction to Aristotle.

From the *Physics* The Prime Move: The One and Eternal
1) From the introduction to Aristotle. Define final cause. Define efficient cause. What kind of cause is the first cause, or God?

2) Explain the argument behind Aristotle’s claim that there must be a first unmoved cause of the universe? Why is this first cause unmoving? Is it that he CANNOT move?


3) How does Aristotle characterize God. What are his main attributes?

Aristotle, from the *Nicomachean Ethics* Bk. I. Middle 107 - 109 Happiness and Man’s Good

Quote from Aristotle:

*For men are good in one way but bad in many.* To think about: What does this mean?

4) What is the end of human life said to be? In other words, what ought our goal in life be?

5) What is the function of being human, generally stated?

**Week Eight** Aristotle, pg. 109 - 113 and p. 19 in *Moral Virtue and the Mean. packet*

1) What does virtue aim at in all things?

Following questions are from Addendum in the packet.

**PAGE 19 in Packet** ‘Section 9’ is very important.

2) How does A. say we will recognize our own weaknesses or vices? Be specific.

3) What does he say we should do once we know our own weaknesses or vices? Be specific.

Deep issue: The vices and virtues of the average person are fairly obvious. But I want to say that Plato and Aristotle are also thinking of the “philosopher type” as a potential leader. If so, then they must have a “virtue” and a “vice”.

If the vice of the philosopher who gets involved in politics is to expect too much of politics, what is his virtue? My claim: This virtue ends up being the most important virtue for the founders of the United. If you understand this, you understand an important thing about the US.

Aristotle, from the *Nicomachean Ethics* Pp. 113 - 116 Contemplation as the Pp. 113 - 116 Highest Good.

4) What does Aristotle argue is the activity which leads to the highest good? (Although the text says “happiness”, this is not the answer. Happiness is not itself an activity. What “activity” does he say makes one happy? That’s the issue.)

5) Why is this said to be better than involvement with society?

6) What is required due to our being human? What do we have to do in addition to the activity which leads to the highest good?

**Week Nine:** Mid-term during first hour. This will be given to you on Blackboard approximately one week before you take it in class. **Please bring clean copy of the test, quotes you want to use, as well as a Blue Book.** Buy the Blue Book in the bookstore for $.25.

**The Medieval Period**


**Turn over.**

153-160

1) What was the main concern of the church fathers?

2) What was the goal of the later church fathers?
3) What questions did Medieval Philosophy, working within theology, deal with?

4) Was Augustine always devout? What line first indicates that he went through a conversion?

5) Describe briefly the scene Augustine describes in the garden with Alypius. What does he say prompts him to begin reading the bible?

**Week Ten:** Continued, St. Augustine, 161 - 163

1) Does Augustine describe God directly in this reading? How does he describe God? Why do you think he describes God in terms of what he is not? What does Augustine say that it is not that he loves when he loves God?

2) What question is repeated at the beginning of Bk. Two?

3) We saw Aristotle discuss the theme that the ‘irrational part’ of the soul consists of two parts: The merely desiring part and the desiring part that can obey reason. As philosophy develops, this leads to the idea of freedom. What does Evodius think it should not be possible to do with free will?

4) What does Augustine try to show Evodius regarding free will?

5) What does Augustine say God is not responsible for?

**The Modern Period**

**Week Eleven:**

Hobbes: from *Leviathan*


1) What are the primary motives, or reasons for, humans to seek order in society, or peace?

2) What are the principle causes of quarrel among people?

3) How does Hobbes define a natural law?


4) What are the first and second natural laws?

5) What is entailed in signing a contract? (*entailed* = implicitly included in.)

Locke: from *Second Treatise*

Top 325-327, "John Locke’s influence... And Bot. 347 - 351

State of Nature, First and Second Natural Laws.

6) Is the state of liberty a state of unlimited freedom (license) for Locke? What does he say about this issue?

7) When is there a civil society? What act is necessary? Be specific.

**Week Twelve:**

Kant Introduction

No reading

from *Critique of Pure Reason*, Intelligible causes.

467 - top 475, packet Physical (sensible) effects.

**TURN OVER**

This is perhaps the hardest reading of the semester. If you understand the terms, it will make it that much easier to grasp what Kant is trying to say.

The following terms are used in similar contexts in Kant.

All things in nature except human being = appearance = phenomenon = empirical = sensible = determined = = natural necessity = empirical causation = physics = immanent = within the forms of space and time
The next set is in contrast to the prior set of terms

Anything outside nature except human being = reality = noumena = intelligible = intelligible causality = free will = transcendent = beyond the forms of space and time

Question: In this reading, Kant discusses intelligible and sensible causality. Discuss in 1/4 - 1 page the following:
Are things in the sense ream free? What determines, or causes them? What about the intelligible realm? How does Kant argue that this realm is free?

from *Critique of Pure Reason*

**top 475 - bot. 479, packet**

Telling ourselves what we ought to do.

1) Is man only in the sense realm for Kant, or in the intelligible realm as well? In other words, is he totally determined by things in the physical realm? What makes him also have free will, or how is it possible that he is also free?

From *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, pp. 114 - middle 118, **packet**

From the *Groundwork*. **Packet.**

2) How do all things in nature operate? What kind of cause makes them do what they do? Is man determined by natural causes alone?

3) Why is it necessary for Kant to be able to argue this if he wants to say the will is good?

**Contemporary Period**

**Week Thirteen:**

Kierkegaard
449 - 452
453 - 458

Introduction
The Contemporary Period
Kierkegaard’s Main Ideas

1) What are the three stages of self-actualization.
2) Why is the third stage better than the second? Kierkegaard has specific reasons for saying this is so, but understanding them is difficult since he is does not say very much about it, but just stresses that it is so.

Kierkegaard
458 - 461

What Count’s In Life as Important? Search for Personal Meaning.

3) What is the contrast Kierkegaard makes in the first sentence of this reading?
4) What does Kierkegaard say is the most important thing to him? How does the answer to (2) in Class 35 relate to this answer?

Kierkegaard
461-464

The Paradox of Faith.
And Spiritual Trial

After finishing the Kierk. readings, choose one of the following and briefly discuss in a half page or less.

a) What does Kierkegaard mean when he says that the “ethical is the universal”?

b) What is the “paradox of faith”?

c) What constitutes a “spiritual trial”?