

# Introduction to Philosophy (Problems)

## Syllabus Précis

**Instructor:** Dr. Aaron Smuts

### Description

This course will introduce students to an array of topics that have occupied philosophers for two millennia. Rather than a historical survey, this class is an introduction to a living discipline. We will be reading several historical works, but our chief concern is to examine the best thinking on the issues. We will explore a wide variety of problems, including: What is love? Can we rationally justify our love for another? Do we have any reason to think that there is a god? Is the existence of evil compatible with God's goodness or greatness? What is it that makes you, you? Is it rational to fear death? Is any conceivable form of immortality desirable? Are there any moral truths? Why should we be moral? If there is no god, is anything permitted? What makes a life good for the one who lives it? What's the meaning of life?

### Texts

1. *Reason and Responsibility*, eds. Joel Feinberg and Russ Shafer-Landau.
2. Plato. *Euthyphro, Apology, Crito*. Trans F. J. Church (Prentice Hall, 1948).
3. Plato. *The Symposium*. Trans. Alexander Nehamas and Paul Woodruff (Hackett 1989).
4. David Hume. *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*. (Hackett 1980).
5. Numerous articles posted on Blackboard. [BB]

### Schedule

#### Topic I: Love

**Week 1:** Rational Justification of Love — Sappho, "Hymn to Aphrodite" [BB] | Frankfurt, "Autonomy, Necessity, and Love" [BB] | Baier, "Unsafe Loves" [BB]

**Week 2:** The Nature of Love — Plato, *The Symposium*

#### Topic II: The Existence of God

**Week 3:** Ontological — Anselm "The Ontological Argument" | Rowe, "The Ontological Argument" [RR]

**Week 4:** Cosmological and Design Arguments — Hume, *Dialogues* I-IV

**Week 5:** Problem of Evil — Hume, *Dialogues* V-X | Mackie, "Evil and Omnipotence" [RR] | Van Inwagen, "A Theodicy" [RR]

#### Topic III: Personal Identity

**Week 6:** Soul — Perry, *Dialogues*, first and second nights [RR]

**Week 7:** Body or Personality — Perry, *Dialogues*, third night [RR] | Williams, "The Self and the Future" [BB] | Dennett, "Where am I?" [RR]

#### Topic IV: Death

**Week 8:** Immortality — Borges, "The Immortal" [BB] | Williams, "The Markopoulos Case" [BB] | Fischer, "Why Immortality is Not So Bad" [BB] | Smuts, "Immortality and Significance" [BB]

**Week 9:** Rational Fear of Death — Plato, *Apology* | Epicurus, "Letter to Moneceus" [BB] | Feldman, selections from *Confrontations with the Reaper* [BB] | Nagel, "Death" [BB]

#### Topic V: Morality

**Week 10:** Relativism and Subjectivism — Midgley, "Trying Out One's New Sword" [BB] | Shafer-Landau, "Ethical Subjectivism" [RR]

**Week 11:** Why be Moral? — Plato, "The Immoralist's Challenge" [RR] | Feinberg, "Psychological Egoism" [RR]

**Week 12:** Religion and Morality — Plato, *Euthyphro* | Wielenberg, "God and Morality" [BB]

#### Topic VI: The Good Life

**Week 13:** Well-being — Nozick, "The Experience Machine" [BB] | Parfit, "What Makes Someone's Life Go Best" [BB]

**Week 14:** Meaning of Life — Taylor, "The Meaning of Life" [BB] | Wolf, "Happiness and Meaning: Two Aspects of the Good Life" [BB]