

Know Thyself: Philosophy 202 [3]

Spring 2007 TR 9:30-10:20 location: Cabell Hall 345

Instructor: Mitch Green Teaching Assistant: Ayca Boylu

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office hours: T11-12, R11-12, or by appointment

The Delphic Oracle is said to have had two premier injunctions: NOTHING IN EXCESS, and KNOW THYSELF. This course will be an examination of the latter injunction. Our central questions fall into two categories. First *What is it?* We shall inquire into just what self-knowledge is: Is it a form of inner perception, somewhat like proprioception, by virtue of which our minds (and hearts) have internal scanners of their own states? Or should we construe self-knowledge in a way not crucially relying on a perceptual model? In that case, what other model might we use? Second, *Why is it such a big deal?* We shall inquire into the question why self-knowledge should be thought so important. Just what, if anything, is missing from a person lacking in self-knowledge that makes her significantly less wise, virtuous, or able than others who have this capacity? Our exploration will take us into research in Western philosophy, psychoanalysis, current experimental psychology, neuroscience, aesthetics, and Eastern philosophy as well. In aid of these investigation we will become students of our own dreams, and cultivate some meditative practices. Course requirements are two papers, a midterm and final examination, and active participation in discussion section.

Expected enrollment: 60

Prerequisites: None but a passion for self-knowledge.

Course requirements: (i) active participation in discussion section, (ii) two brief papers, (iii) a midterm, and (iv) a final examination.

Preparing for class: Expect to do between twenty and forty pages of reading for each lecture. Be forewarned that reading philosophy, even when the reading assignment is short, can be hard work. Often the author assigned will be developing a sophisticated and subtle line of reasoning that requires your closest attention. It is for this reason a good idea to read each article or chapter at least twice, being sure to write down your questions for discussion during class or an office hour.

Some ground rules for the course: (i) Please come to each lecture with the reading assigned for that day already completed. (ii) Please do not read newspapers, magazines, etc., in class. (iii) No food or drink unless it can be consumed quietly and discreetly. (iv) Turn off all cell phones and pagers. (v) I strongly encourage everyone's participation. Please be respectful of others' desire to speak and of the variety of opinions and perspectives likely to be expressed by students in the course.

Grading: Class participation: 20%; paper #1 (3 to 5 pages): 20%; Paper #2 (4 to 6 pages): 20%; midterm examination: 20%, and final examination: 20%.

Using the class homepage: The class homepage on Toolkit will be an integral part of our work for this term. Please be familiar with it. There you will find paper topics, study questions, readings and more.

Communicating with one another: Please use msg6m@virginia.edu to contact me directly. If you wish to send an e-mail to the entire class, please use instead phil202-1@toolkit.virginia.edu

Discussion sections: A vitally important aspect of this course is the discussion section, in which you and about twenty others will meet with your Teaching Assistant for this course, **Ayca Boylu** (ab9ug@virginia.edu), a graduate student in the Philosophy Department, to enhance your understanding of the material covered in lecture and in your reading. This is the place to raise questions you may have about the readings or lectures, as well as to try out the views you may be preparing to defend in your papers. In consultation with me, your T.A. will also prepare a brief discussion or lecture aimed at providing a different but complementary perspective on philosophical problems from what

I or the readings may give you. Discussion section is also a good place to meet other students with whom you may find it rewarding to discuss philosophy outside of class. In college I learned more philosophy talking with other students than I did from anyone else. It is imperative that you attend recitation regularly and participate therein; 20% of your grade is based on your contribution to discussion section.

About the instructor: I received my doctorate in Philosophy in 1993, and before commencing work toward that degree I studied a bit in England and before that in California. My research centers primarily around issues having to do with representation, expression, communication and cognition, and I study these topics primarily from a conceptual rather than from a primarily empirical point of view. My work does, however, spill over slightly into linguistics, psychology and behavioral ecology. I teach everything from advanced research seminars to a basic introduction to philosophy, with many upper-level undergraduate courses in between. I get nervous if I lecture too long without hearing what students have to say, and I thrive on the give-and-take of group discussion.

If you're terrified of talking in lecture or discussion section: Please work with me or your TA to find another way of participating. One good way of participating if you are shy about talking in class is to submit frequent questions and comments on our reading and discussion via e-mail. You may send them to me and then, if you permit me to, I can broadcast them to the rest of the class.

Required texts:

Plato, *Five Dialogues* (Hackett: isbn 0872206335)

Descartes, R., *Meditations on First Philosophy* (Hackett: isbn 0872201929)

Ryle, G. *The Concept of Mind* (Chicago: 0226732959)

Freud, S., *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (Norton isbn: 0871401185)

Wilson, T., *Strangers to Ourselves* (Harvard: 0674009363)

Damasio, A., *Descartes' Error* (Putnam: isbn 0380-726475)

Herrigel, E., *Zen in the Art of Archery* (Vintage: isbn 0375705090)

An online course packet, available in the materials section of the Toolkit homepage, containing articles and book chapters.

COURSE SCHEDULE (28 MEETINGS) Please note that the reading listed for each class meeting is to be done by that date. This schedule is subject to revision, although I'll make every effort to apprise you of changes immediately if they are made.

1/18 Introduction. Scrutinize syllabus. Get acquainted.

1/23 Socrates and self-knowledge I: *The Apology*

1/25 Socrates and self-knowledge II: *The Meno*

1/30 The Cartesian Mind and skepticism.
Descartes, *Meditations* I-III

2/1 The Cartesian Mind and its relation to matter.
Descartes, *Meditations* IV-VI

2/6 Behaviorist criticisms of Descartes.
Ryle, *The Concept of Mind*, begin (online)

2/8 Advancing behaviorist criticisms of Descartes.
Ryle, *The Concept of Mind*, continue (online)

2/13 Limits of behaviorism.
Ryle, *The Concept of Mind*, continued (online)

2/15 Challenges to behaviorism.
Ryle, *The Concept of Mind*, continued (online)

2/20 Psychoanalytic criticisms of Descartes.
Freud, *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, begin

2/22 Psychoanalytic criticisms of Descartes.
Freud, *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, continued

2/27 Limits of psychoanalysis.
Freud, *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, continued
Paper #1 Due

3/1 Midterm Examination

3/6, 3/8 Spring Recess

3/13 The "adaptive unconscious" introduced
Wilson, *Strangers to Ourselves*, Chapters 1-2.

3/15 Adaptive unconscious continued.
Wilson, *Strangers*, Ch. 3-4. Bargh and Chartrand, 'The unbearable automaticity of being' (online).

3/20 Wilson continued
Wilson, *Strangers*, Ch. 5-7. Wegner and Wheatley, 'The illusion of conscious will' (online)

3/22 Wilson concluded
Wilson, *Strangers*, Ch. 8-10

3/27 Neuroscience and the emotions, I
Damasio, *Descartes' Error*, begin

3/29 Neuroscience and the emotions, II
Damasio, *Descartes' Error*, continued

4/3 Neuroscience and the emotions, III
Damasio, *Descartes' Error*, continued

4/5 Neuroscience and the emotions, IV
Damasio, *Descartes' Error*, continued

4/10 Meditation and the brain I
Austin, *Zen and the Brain*, introduced

4/12 Meditation and the brain II
Austin, *Zen and the Brain*, continued

4/17 The Zen Buddhist approach
Herriger, *Zen in the Art of Archery*

4/19 The Zen Buddhist approach
Herriger, *Zen in the Art of Archery*

4/24 Buddhism and self-knowledge
reading: Shapiro, *et al*, 'Mental balance and well being,' (online)

4/26 Mindfulness and self-knowledge
reading: Shapiro, *et al*, 'Mechanisms of mindfulness' (online)

5/1 Final class meeting: Back to Delphi: Art and self-knowledge, readings tba
Paper #2 Due

5/10 Final Examination, Block 4: 2-5 pm