

PHI-1104-D

THE GREAT PHILOSOPHERS

January-April 2012

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This course is intended to be an introduction to philosophical reasoning through encounters with selected writings of a small but representative sample of the great western philosophers from ancient Greece to the 20th century. We will begin with three ancient Greek philosophers: Socrates, Plato, and Epicurus; then briefly consider the argument for the existence of God invented by the great medieval philosopher Saint Anselm of Canterbury. Next we'll examine the attempt to refute radical scepticism and prove the immortality of the soul in the metaphysical "meditations" of the 17th century French philosopher, René Descartes, commonly regarded as the "father" of modern philosophy. Then we will consider some unorthodox views of the 18th century Scottish sceptical philosopher David Hume. We will conclude by examining a few arguments of some 19th and 20th century philosophers.

Texts: Plato, *The Trial and Death of Socrates*, ed. G.M.A. Grube, (Hackett); David Hume, *The Natural History of Religion* (Macmillan); John Perry, *A Dialogue on Personal Identity and Immortality* (Hackett); plus a dossier of shorter texts available at Laurier Office Mart (226 Laurier Avenue East) the end of the first week of term.

Requirements: Attendance at all classes, and participation in discussion, is expected of everyone, but will not be graded directly. However, the grading of *all* written work for the course will *assume* that you have read all of the assigned readings, and followed class discussions of them. Given the nature of the subject-matter and the difficulty of many of the readings, one should not expect to obtain a good grade, or even pass the course, without attending classes regularly. There will be a final exam in the scheduled exam period worth 50% of the final grade; the remaining 50% will come from *any two* of the following: (1) a Take-home exam (25%) due on Friday the 10th of February; (2) a Take-home Exam (25%) due on Friday the 16th of March; and (3) a 2100-word "Philosophical Journal" (25%) due at the end of the next-to-last week of term. You may choose to do any two of these three assignments; or you may complete all three, in which case only the best two will count towards your final grade. No late assignments will be accepted without proper medical documentation.

You are reminded of the seriousness of **plagiarism**, or the passing off as your own the work of others. You should make yourself familiar with this very important matter by reading the document "Beware of Plagiarism" available on the web: <http://www.uottawa.ca/plagiarism.pdf>